

**New Hartford Board of Finance
Regular Meeting – Senior Center
Tuesday, February 13, 2018 @ 7:00 pm**

Present: Chairman Jim Fitzgerald, Members: Dan Charest, Reggie Smith, Jr, Steve Tuxbury, Ben Witte, Regina Wexler; Alternate Bart Baxter, Recording Secretary Penny Miller,

Absent: Alternates Kerry Guilfoyle and Paul Leclair

Others Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy, Town Treasurer Gordon Ross, Madeline McClave (New Hartford Land Trust), Jean Cronauer and Caren Ross (Open Space Commission), Jim Brett (Economic Development Commission), Members of the Public: Denton Butler, Bruce Gresczyk, Jr., Ann Hall, Rusty Warner, Sue Lundin, Shelley Lloyd, Bill Michaud, Aulay Carlson, Maria Moore, Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican American) and several members of the public.

Chairman Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm

Seating of Alternates:

As the full board was present no alternates were seated.

Adoption / Revision of Agenda:

No revisions were made to the agenda.

Presentation to the Board of Finance – Butler Farm preservation initiative Open Space Preservation Commission

Jean Cronauer (Open Space Commission) spoke on purchasing the peninsula between the East and West Branches of the Farmington River at the Butler Farm. Since last year's presentation the Open Space Commission revisited ways to improve the project. She said there are now two new sources of grant funding. One from the Connecticut Farmland Trust (\$25,000) and the other is the New Hartford Land Trust (\$41,310) for a total of \$66,310.00. The Open Space Commission is asking that the Board of Finance send the Commission's request to purchase the property forward and let the town's voters decide at a referendum. The Department of Agriculture has now given them a deadline of May, 2018 to approve this project or those funds could be given to another town. She asked the Board of Finance to make a decision based on community values. The Town of New Hartford has set-up an open space ordinance showing that open space is important to us. The purchase of this property goes along with some of the goals of the Plan of Conservation & Development. She mentioned some of the goals to protect natural resources that the Butler Property fulfills: protect our natural resources, protect surface & ground water resources, protect the Farmington River, create open space, create trails, support farming, etc. These are the goals that the town set and we said we wanted to work on.

Madeline McClave, president of the New Hartford Land Trust, said the New Hartford Land Trust board feels this project is one of the most important conservation projects for the town. The board has agreed to do the fund-raising and come up with the money needed (\$41,310) for the town to purchase this 8.1 acres along the river. With this purchase the town will have public access to the trail (about 1 mile) and the Farmington River for fishing, etc.

Gordon Ross, Town Treasurer speaking on the town's finances, said that when he goes before Standard & Poor's rating board, they want to know what the town is doing to insure the long-term viability of the town. By preserving key pieces of open space we avoid development. Development is a mixed blessing. While we like to add more people to town there is a cost – the biggest part of our budget is education (around 70%). The average family that builds a new home in town doesn't cover the cost of education with the cost of property taxes. There are many other subsidiary services that need to be added. The amount that the town is being asked to cover would be eaten up by the minimal development. There are two options on how to pay for this. One is to borrow from the Land Preservation Fund and they would pay it back over time from property being sold and

fees generated as a result of these sales. The problem with this is while the money will be paid back over time, we don't know what the repayment schedule will be. It all depends on the pace of new home building in town. The second one is if the Land Preservation Fund is used, it blocks future projects they might want to engage in. Until that loan is paid off they will not be able to act on other properties they might be interested in, for instance, the Rails to Trails. There is one benefit if we use the Land Preservation fund money and that is there is virtually no cost to the taxpayer. Mr. Ross' favorite choice is to put some of the towns' own money into the project - \$148,472.50. Given the state of our current finances this is something we can handle, in his opinion, and it will not have a negative impact on the town's overall financial posture. The town's saving over this last year, the money added to the reserves, was \$403,384.00. In the space of a year our reserves have gone up 13-14%.

Caren Ross, Open Space Commission, her point was very brief and it would be unconscionable not to put this before the voters. We are asking tonight that you allow this to go before the voters. This has been going on far too long and it needs to be finalized.

Bruce Gresczyk, Jr. of Gresczyk Farms spoke about the value of soil on the Butler property. Gresczyk Farms, a member of the Connecticut Farmland Preservation (CFP) program, does farming on this property. What limits the amount of funding is the importance of the soil. The soil on the main parcel of the Butler farm is a rare soil for this area of the state. Through this program they have preserved 45,000 acres of farmland soil. Currently there are 64 projects waiting to be funded by this program. The Butler project is at the top of their list because of its uniqueness.

Presentation to the Board of Finance – Rails to Trails, Economic Development Commission

Jim Brett, Economic Development Commission, spoke on the Rails to Trails. His presentation dealt with what they have been working on, what the benefits of the proposed trails are, and the path forward. The use of these multi-use trails is of benefit to businesses along the trail and the peripheral area. One trail would be from Satan's Kingdom (the gorge) down to Canton line and the other from the downtown area to Satan's Kingdom. The trails drive traffic bringing in new customers which then benefits our businesses. They provide an economic opportunity for new businesses. These businesses seek out property near these trails which adds to our Grand List.

CAPEX: Capital subcommittee CAPEX plan draft (Dan Jerram, Kerry Guilfoyle, BOE Superintendent, Representative or Chair) capital plan submissions.

Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy presented the capital for the Board of Education. Included in their request for \$113,000 is: \$45,000 for a Sonora rubberized floor in the gymnasium at Antolini; \$15,000 for preventative maintenance at the 3 schools; \$36,000 for Technology which includes \$20,000 for Access Points in every classroom and \$16,000 for Chrome Books for the 6th graders; \$10,000 for a Zero Turn Mower for Antolini School; and \$7,000 at Bakerville for the stairs going down to the boiler room. Mr. Murphy said he has a few quotes for some of these items.

First Selectman Jerram presented the Town Capital Plan. The Capital Project List 2018-19 totals \$445,000. It includes \$60,000 for Revaluation as required by state law. Other items includes \$35,000 for a Foreman Truck (the current one is a 2006 Chevy Pick-up Truck C1500 which needs major repairs); \$65,000 for a Utility Pick Up Truck; \$45,000 Police Car; \$10,000 Technology (recurring); \$20,000 Town Hall Equipment (replace 3 heat pumps in the Town Hall); \$30,000 Recreation Dept. (general park improvements); \$40,000 DPW gates/fencing (security gates for garage & Antolini sites – items have been stolen from these sites); \$30,000 Downtown Improvements (sidewalks & lighting); \$45,000 Bruning Road Drainage (replaces failing pipes on Bruning Road @ Grey Road); \$35,000 Mini-Excavator (replaces a 15-year old unit w/larger model. Price off-set by trade in); and \$30,000 Rails to Trails (continued development of trails – Wickett St. / Satan's Kingdom).

Mr. Jerram said that the five-year capital plan is on-line for people to review. The Board of Education's proposed five-year plan was supported by the Capital Advisory sub-committee. The sub-committee reviewed

the recommendation from the Open Space Planning Commission to acquire the Butler Farm and voted in favor of this recommendation. They also reviewed the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures Ordinance and noted several inconsistencies. They voted to send it back to the town counsel for review and possible modification.

Mr. Tuxbury asked for a breakdown of the work to be done at the parks. Mr. Jerram said they are meeting this week and will have the information after that. Mr. Tuxbury also asked for an inventory of the trucks. Mr. Jerram said it is being updated. He also mentioned that the town has taken possession of the Senior Van and the replacement of the Blazer needs to be included. Following approval at a selectman's meeting, the old Blazer will be sold through an auction site. Ms. Wexler asked what was missing from the DPW in terms of cost. Mr. Jerram said it is in the \$2,000 - \$3,000 range. Items such as chain saws, batteries, small items have been taken. Cameras have been installed at these facilities.

Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the Board of Selectman is behind the initiative of the Rails to Trails and Mr. Jerram replied they are. Mr. Jerram said they have asked for funding in previous years and we gave them money for the Malone & McBroom study.

Mr. Fitzgerald said that Mr. Ross had mentioned that the town was doing well and had some surplus this year. However, after the budget was approved the town was hit with a negative \$250,000 in ECS. We know they are discussing a hit to Town Aid Roads and again to ECS.

Opportunity for Public Comment:

Aulay Carlson, 455 West Hill Road, (letter & attachment on file) said one of the greatest sources for pollution to our rivers is agricultural run-off. We certainly don't want that. He read a letter that spoke about a projection of FY2019 state funding projected for New Hartford. He spoke about the purchase of the Butler property and said if we close off this property from development is that in the interest of the town. He said that the Board of Finance should ask the Board of Education for the documented educational value of keeping three schools open when there is one that will hold all the children. The state score for our school system is down again. He said we have a local police force while other small towns like ours do not. Two state troopers would be less expensive than the local ones we currently have.

Sue Lundin, 428 Town Hill Road, said regarding the Butler Farm and the price value assigned to it. Was that the price the Butler's wanted or was an appraisal done on the property and the sale price determined from the appraisers? The second question is for Supt. Murphy. Do we go out to bid for items and at what level of threshold cost is this done.

Shelly Lloyd, 29 Pioneer Drive, she urges the town to be fiscally responsible and forward thinking. Think about what will benefit our town and where will we be ten years from now.

Bill Michaud, 249 Town Hill Road, said he supports the Butler Farm Property project. He also addressed some misconceptions. The financing in terms of one of the options being considered is to have a temporary loan from the town's funds to the Land Preservation Fund. No taxpayer dollars are used to fund the Land Preservation Fund. As far as the cost of the land, the state did the appraisal of the property.

Ann Hall, 511 Town Hill Road, in the opinion of the board of the land trust, the group felt they could raise the funds in a short time. It would be an embarrassment to the town if we lost this property to development. We pride ourselves as a 'Town for All Seasons'. To lose a mile of recreational ability, it would be a disservice to the town. Maybe this town is a little schizophrenic and this needs to go to the town for a decision. Member Smith asked if the \$41,310 had been raised. She said it hasn't but they do intend to raise it but if it isn't they do have their own endowment where it can be taken from.

Rusty Warner, 35 Country Lane, supports the Butler Farm project and Rails to Trails. The key word is the sense of value and what brings people here to town and what makes it vibrant. We have dragged our heels on some things that bring people to our town and we need to move forward on this. This is a pristine property that needs to be protected.

Maria Moore, 104 Town Hill Road, (letter & attachment on file) wanted to follow-up on comments made previously. She agrees with what brings people to town - it is the recreational opportunities that the Farmington River offers. She suggested that before a decision is made a written report needs to be done by the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) about the impact on the Farmington River from the nutrient and pesticide run-off from the intensive farming taking place at the Butler Farm. As of tonight the FRCC, she spoke with Alison Murdoch our representative, hasn't indicated their position on this acquisition. Ms. Moore then spoke on the Multi-trail presentation. The return investment in dollars and quality of life speaks for itself. If there is a slam dunk that is being proposed tonight it is the multi-trail project to Canton. She does truly value the importance of the Butler Farm.

Madeline McClave, 335 Cotton Hill Road, presented to board of the Farmington River Coordinating Committee last week and has spoken since last summer of their potential support of the Butler Farm project. She heard today from Alison Murdoch that the resource development committee has recommended and that they will support the New Hartford Land Trust in raising money for this project. The Butler Farm is a private farm. She isn't sure that the FRCC measures pesticides into the Farmington River. This money has been set aside by the state. She encourages that a decision be made tonight so that the Open Space Commission can move ahead and start holding many informational sessions along with fund raising.

Denton Butler, 465 Town Hill Road, commented on two points about the farming on the property and the potential for pollution. The Farmington River Watershed Association monitors the water quality on the Farmington River. One of the checkpoints is at the headwaters on his brother's property at the bridge abutment ends at Black Ridge Road. The next testing point is at Satan's Kingdom. The additives to that water sampling area include the fact that our sewage plant is in that area. The water quality actually improves from Black Ridge Road to the next measuring point at Satan's Kingdom. He said the second point is that the Gresczyk Family Farms has been operating since 1984. During that time all regulatory agencies including the EPA, Dept. of Agriculture, Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection have never registered a single violation having to do with mismanagement and pesticides mismanagement in the farm operation.

Jean Cronauer said she wanted to clarify that they already have on file a letter of support for a public project from the Farmington Watershed Association.

BOF: discuss and take any action on consideration of approving the Butler Farm preservation initiative, subject to approval by the Legislative Body at a Town Meeting

Chairman Fitzgerald asked board members for their opinion and comments.

Mr. Baxter said his opinion is that it has been a year and they have done their work. The cost is minimal and we don't know what the future holds. We should put it to the people for a vote.

Mr. Witte said it was his understanding that the river front parcel would be an outright purchase and the town would own it. Ms. McClave said the Land Trust will raise the money and give it to the town so the town can purchase the 8.1 acres along the river. For that the Land Trust will have a conservation easement in perpetuity to protect the parcel.

Mr. Charest asked is this was an agricultural easement in perpetuity. Ms. McClave responded the town will own the trail portion. Mr. Charest said in his opinion we have the financial wherewithal to support this and it needs to go to a vote. The public needs to be educated and have their questions answered.

Ms. Wexler said the biggest issue here is not necessarily the lack of benefits of this project but our commitment to the democratic process. It is an important enough issue that the people of New Hartford need to weigh in and make a decision as to whether we go forward on this or not. The only risk is that the town won't get paid back on the loan. She said she isn't sure who is paying us back. Ms. McClave said the money will come from the New Hartford Land Trust. Ms. Wexler continued by saying it is a small risk and this board shouldn't impose a

value judgment on this. Once the value judgment is made and we lose our opportunity to benefit from the grant money but it will be gone forever.

Mr. Smith clarified with Ms. McClave that the \$41,310 coming from the New Hartford Land Trust will be applied to the 8.1 acres. Concerning with a previous comment by Mr. Ross, many of the board members thought this would be paid back through a loan. He asked Mr. Jerram (representing the BOS) if it is the selectman's thought that the loan would be paid back, or is it a grant, or would it come from the town's surplus or other source of funding. Mr. Jerram responded the request from the Board of Selectman is to approve a loan. Commenting on what Ms. Wexler said he believes in the democratic process but he is not entirely comfortable with the purchase or some of the other parcels that were purchased. As a member of this board he is looking past other issues. The funding mechanism is at a hard time and he doesn't know what the state will do. He will support it if it goes to a town meeting and then to referendum.

Mr. Tuxbury said we can't continue to avoid development. Towns or governments buying up development rights are not something he can support. He said it can lead to problems down the line.

Mr. Fitzgerald in rereading the agenda item and said that everyone is interested in the democratic process. That everyone should have a part in making a decision instead of having a town meeting where just those with a vested interest make a decision. He commented that he would like the entire town make this decision. He is concerned about the payback as it has been a few years since we approved the WPCA and we haven't seen that money back yet. He has a problem when the WPCA is short, the WPCA chair Denton Butler, asks the Board of Selectman to defer the payments that the town is already paying. He is concerned this will happen with this project.

Ms. Wexler said this isn't the issue before us tonight. The WPCA isn't paying us back the \$148,000. After the market crash in 2008 we went from optimistic financial situation to a very pessimistic financial situation with cause. She hopes we can stop assuming the worst. Connecticut is slowly recovering and the only way to move forward and continue with our recovery is to look at opportunities like this. How we vote on this will tell how we go from here. This is one parcel that shouldn't be developed because of its unique nature.

MOTION: by Witte that we authorize expenditures of up to \$150,387.80 from Designated & Undesignated Fund Balance (\$50,833 is from designated - Return of Settlement Funds) to be used in conjunction with funding sources already committed totaling \$328,887.50 to purchase the Butler Farm Agriculture Easement and Purchase of Riverfront Parcel of property between the East & West branches of the Farmington River, subject to approval by the legislative body at referendum. Details of said transaction are as set forth on the document entitled 'Butler Farm Agricultural Easement and Purchase of Riverfront Parcel' filed with these minutes. Said funds totaling \$150,387.80 to be repaid via the Land Preservation fund future proceeds. Second by Wexler.

Aye: Wexler, Witte, Charest, Smith; Opposed: Tuxbury, Fitzgerald; Abstentions: None

Motion passes

FY 2018-2019 Budget Discussion, Grand List, quick review of the budget timeline for 2018

Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed the Grand List Changes 2016 v 2017 (filed with these minutes) saying the change for the Real Estate is minimal at 0.60% - the increase was \$3,463,510, Personal Property is \$1,984,968 and Motor Vehicle is \$873,700 for a total increase of 0.95% which will be added to the budget as we go through it. The timeline for the budget is our regular meeting on March 13, the budget workshop with all boards is on March 17 and a special meeting on March 27 to look at changes and adoptions.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION by Charest to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2017 regular meeting, second by Smith.

Unanimous

MOTION by Charest to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2018 meeting, second by Witte.

Unanimous

MOTION by Smith to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2018 special meeting, second by Witte.

Unanimous

Communications and other items to come before the Board

A letter was received from Cindy and Bill Bohan in support of giving the townspeople the opportunity to vote on the preservation of the Butler Farm and riverfront trail. The entire communication is filed with the minutes.

The Northwest Regional Mental Health Board, Inc. is looking for a contribution per capita for our town in the amount of \$741.00. This request is with the First Selectman.

MOTION by Smith to adjourn the meeting at 9:33 pm, second by Wexler.

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Penny Miller, BOF Recording Secretary

Attachments on file with the Town Clerk

Butler Farm Agricultural Easement and Purchase of Riverfront Parcel

Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditure Meeting Minutes

Board of Education Capital Plan FY2019 – FY2023

Town of New Hartford Capital Project List for years 2018-2019 through 2022-2023

Town of New Hartford Ordinance 1982 & 1983 – 82-1

Aulay Carlson letter & attachment

Maria Moore letter & attachment

Grand List Changed 2016 v 2017

2017GL as signed

Letter from Cindy & Bill Bohan

Northwest Mental Health Board, Inc.