

**Board of Selectmen
Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 24, 2016**

Minutes

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay, WPCA Chairman Bud Butler, Economic Development Commission member Dave Krimmel, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Others Present: Tom Buzzi, Sue Lundin, Pat Spaziani, Bill Michaud, Jean Cronauer, John Burdick, Rusty Warner, Jen Benaitis, Joe Toro, Glenn Phillips, Beth Phillips

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Minutes:

MOTION: by Garay to approve the minutes dated May 10, 2016; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Dave Krimmel – EDC re: communications

Economic Development Commission Member David Krimmel was present to discuss the issue of improving town wide communications. He noted that it is a challenge to keep residents informed of events that are occurring in town. The EDC would like to find ways to promote town events to residents and non-residents and encourage community participation. He asked, “how do we get the town to join each other and improve communication?”

He stated that the Town of Washington, CT has recently developed a community calendar that is available on their website. This calendar has all kinds of information regarding all kind of events – i.e. political, Churches, Scouting, Non-profits, etc. They all seem to have access to having their events posted in one centralized location. The calendar also includes information regarding meetings. Mr. Krimmel felt that if there were such a calendar available, it could be beneficial in planning events. Folks would know when there were competing events and they would also be aware of when things could work well together.

The Selectmen were in agreement that it is very difficult to keep track of the events and happenings and noted that many times the information is shared too late for optimal promotion. They agreed to support efforts of improving communication if someone has any ideas on how to proceed. They felt that collaboration with the EDC on ways to improve communication would be a good thing to do.

Request from Open Space Preservation Commission re: Open Space tax incentives:

Members of the Open Space Preservation Commission were present to discuss the idea of an ordinance that would provide tax abatements for individuals who are interested in preserving their land as Open Space. Member Bill Michaud gave a brief background regarding the origin of this initiative, noting that several years ago, Former member Bill Ducci, former First Selectman Bill Baxter and he went before the CT State Legislature to discuss the idea of preserving land and abating taxes. Legislation was passed that

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allows for towns to adopt a tax abatement for this purpose. Mr. Michaud noted that a process was put in place to residents to express an interest in seeking this abatement. He also noted that this is not a “right” for an abatement; it would be a proposal that would go through due process and be accepted or rejected after consideration.

Chairman Cronauer noted that this abatement allows for the property who is “land rich and cash poor” to have an opportunity to preserve their land and lessen some difficulty with tax liability.

Such an abatement has fiscal impact and would need to be presented to the Town for consideration. It was also noted that the Open Space Commission maintains a ranking of parcels that they would consider for preservation. Concern was expressed regarding how many parcels would be proposed for such an abatement due to the fiscal impact. Chairman Cronauer explained that the town could decide how many abatements they would consider. Mr. Jerram stated that he has no objection to ‘having another tool in the toolbox’ that would encourage preservation of land, but wondered how may the town could afford. The Board of Selectmen was intrigued with the idea and all agreed that it should be reviewed further before taking any formal action. It was also agreed that the town attorney would be asked for his opinion as to whether this abatement would be best served as an independent ordinance or whether it should be included as part of the current Open Space Ordinance.

Appointment to Subcommittee to investigate sale of WPCA assets:

First Selectman Jerram noted that there has been ongoing discussion regarding the financial status of the Water Pollution Control Authority and the concern regarding the possible future expenses that might be incurred due to an aging system with limited revenues. There has been a decision to investigate the possible sale of assets of the water and sewer systems. Assistance has been provided in funding or support service to the WPCA to help develop an RRF for the consideration of the sale of the assets. A subcommittee shall be formed to assist in the process. Discussion ensued regarding the responsibility of the committee and the make up of the group. A smaller group of about 5 would be optimal, with 2 representatives from the WPCA, the First Selectman and 2 “at large” members – one being a ‘user’ and one a ‘non-user.’

The Charge of the group was also discussed.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the charge of the Asset Evaluation Subcommittee which includes the following: (1) To gain a working knowledge of all town owned water and sewer assets, (2) review and/or modify the proposed RFP for sale of said assets and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen pertaining to the release of said RFP, (3) review all submitted proposals obtained from the release of the RFP for the sale of said assets, and (4) make a final recommendation to the Board of Selectmen pertaining to the sale of said assets; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

MOTION: by Kennerson to appoint Joe Toro, Bud Butler, and Dan Jerram plus 2 members at large to serve as members of the Asset Evaluation Subcommittee; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Oak Hill School Lease Agreement :

First Selectman Jerram announced to the Selectmen that he and Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy had a very productive meeting with representatives of the Oak Hill School. Jerram noted that the lease agreement with Oak Hill School and the potential for an increase in their needs had been briefly discussed at a prior meeting. Oak Hill has presented an agreement for consideration that doubles the space leased (from 1.5 classrooms to 3 rooms) and allows for a graduated increase in rental fees. The phased agreement allows for the rent to double over 3 years; affording them the opportunity to gain additional students to support their increased expense. Mr. Jerram noted that the Board of Education has the final say in the matter, and that he was presenting this information as a status report on the proceedings. Jerram stated that there has been a 25 year relationship with Oak Hill and he hopes that this can continue. Selectman Kennerson agreed, adding that this is a good opportunity for New Hartford; Garay agreed that this is a good relationship to continue.

Operations Updates :

First Selectman Jerram presented several updates to the Board.

He noted that there are several activities taking place over Memorial Day Weekend. There are two ceremonies on Memorial Day – one at Chapin Park at 10:00 am and the other at the Memorial Bell on Hoppen Road at 11:00 AM. There is also the David Childs Fishing Derby and the Race around the Lake. A new Town Jeep will be purchased at a cost of \$18, 275.00 – well below the approval given by the Board of Finance for this purchase.

The Trails committee met and finalized the RFP for services to assist in evaluating the proposed trail path.

There are several fire cisterns in town that need to be maintained. The Town highway crew are not qualified to perform this kind of maintenance due to confined entry, therefore this will need to be bid out.

Three downtown lampposts need to be replaced and this is estimated to be a cost of about \$8,300.

The Carpenter Road Bridge bid package is in final stage of development and will be available soon.

The Grant that was written to seek funding for a Senior Van has received approval from the Northwest Council of Governments and can move forward to the state for consideration of funding.

The pavilion quote is complete and has been distributed to some local contractors and is advertised on the town website.

The Parking Lot at the Surdam Property on East Cotton Hill is in near stages of completion.

The Dunkin Donuts proposed for the down town corner lot will be brought before the Architectural Review committee soon.

The permits are all in place for the 50,000 square foot storage facility along Route 44.

The Mobil Station on Route 44 is moving forward with its renovation.

The Community Club has been approached regarding granting an easement to the town to allow use of their property for additional parking near the Post Office which would be beneficial to the downtown area.

First Selectman Jerram asked his Board members if there were any questions or comments related to the Operations updates. Selectman Kennerson replied that she would like to have additional

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information related to the issue of the 27th payroll; something that has come up in discussion at recent Board of Finance meetings. Ms. Kennerson noted that there seems to be some confusion and misunderstanding regarding the fiscal impact an extra pay cycle has. She would like to put the matter to rest and ask that the bookkeeping department calculate the gross value of the extra pay cycle. She feels that there is a misconception that the costs of this additional pay cycle will result in an overexpenditure that cannot be covered within the existing budget. Mr. Jerram noted that he feels that the question that is being asked regarding the “overage” is being misunderstood. He stated that the 2015-2016 had some excess funds due to a vacant position in the highway department which can cover some of the expenses. Ms. Kennerson asked for a spreadsheet to be developed to show that there will be no need for worry.

Opportunity for Public Comment:

Resident Jen Benaitis raised concerns regarding the bathrooms at Browns’ Corner. She felt that they need some extra attention and are not properly maintained. Mr. Jerram replied that he will check with the Recreation Director and see if arrangements can be made to increase the frequency of cleaning.

Ms. Benaitis also asked whose responsibility it will be to maintain the trail that goes from the town owned Surdam property to Antolini. Mr. Jerram replied that the Town is responsible for taking care of that.

Chairman of The Board of Education Sue Lundin addressed the Board regarding the Oak Hill School and their request for additional space at Antolini School. Ms. Lundin stated, for the record, that the Board of Education had no idea that Oak Hill was interested in additional space. She felt that by having this as an agenda item for discussion at the Board of Selectmen meeting, it was premature. Mr. Jerram responded that the Superintendent of Schools was aware of these discussions and had been present at a meeting that was held to discuss the request. Ms. Benaitis echoed Ms. Lundin’s sentiments stating that Board of Education members should not have to come to a Board of Selectmen meeting to learn about potential contracts that are a Board of Education issue. Board of Education Member Pat Spaziani added that “it’s a lease between the Board of Ed and Oak Hill” and is up to the Board of Ed to negotiate the terms, not the Selectmen. Ms. Spaziani termed the discussion to be out of order and was dismayed to have this being discussed publicly prior to the Board of Education addressing it.

Member of the Public Tom Buzzi questioned the Board of Education members, asking them “Why didn’t the Board of Education pursue this issue to begin with?” He noted that the idea of increasing space to Oak Hill had been discussed as an option for additional revenue and asked “who would start the process if you weren’t going to?”

Mr. Jerram replied that he felt that a relationship with Oak Hill is a good example for all of our students. It teaches them how to be compassionate and how to treat others with dignity and respect. He wished the Board of Education good luck with Oak Hill.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 9:05 PM, seconded by Kennerson *Unanimous.*

Respectfully Submitted, Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant