

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting
Thursday, February 18, 2016**

MINUTES

Roundtable discussion with Boards and Commissions to discuss goals and priorities for the Town

Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay

Also present: Several Members of Boards, Commissions, Public Safety, Members of the Public including, but not limited to, the following: (not all individuals present at the meeting are named in this list- there wasn't any formal attendance sheet –this is a list of those observed to be present)

Commission on Aging: Penny Miller (also on Board of Education), Karen Kuhl, Karen Gauthier, Pam Fitzgerald

Water Pollution Control Authority: Bud Butler, Mary Beth Greenwood, Joe Toro, Jim Surber , Polly Pobuda

Economic Development Commission: John Burdick, Donna LaPlante, Mark Russo, Dave Krimmel (also member of P&Z), , Bill Baxter, David Childs

Inland Wetlands: Jamie Hall, Nancy Perez, Wayne Ryznar, Anne Hall (also Town Historian, Land Trust)

Board of Finance: Ben Witte, Bill Coates, Dan Charest, Bob Nilsson, Reggie Smith, Jim Fitzgerald, Steve Tuxbury (also member of Recreation)

Board of Education: Josh Adams, Jen Benaitis, Jen Zenuh, Stacie Cull

Planning and Zoning: Dan LaPlante, Ted Stoutenberg, Bob Moore, Jim Steadman

Open Space Preservation Commission: Jean Cronauer, Karen Griswold-Nelson, Bill Michaud

Conservation Commission: Alison Murdock (also Farmington River Coordinating Council), Gwen Ashbaugh, Paul Mahoney

Zoning Board of Appeals: Mary Lou Rayno, Scott Goff, Lew Chappel (also Friends of Brodie)

Historic District Commission: Maryanne Gunning

Historical Society: Pat Casey

Stanclift Cove: Carlene Jerram

Regional 7 Board of Ed: Noel Gauthier, Rob Jerram

Public Safety: Nick Maltby (New Hartford Ambulance), Walter Wabrek (Ambulance and Pine Meadow Fire), Steve Sekulski and Bill Bayette (South End/Nepaug Fire District), Bob Goodskey, Ben Marcus (New Hartford Village Fire) Dan Janco (New Hartford Police)

Town Hall Staff: Christy Tellier (recreation director) Debbie Ventre (Assistant Town Clerk) Christine Hayward (Administrative Assistant)

Members of the Public: Troy Lamere, Lori Lamere, Maria Moore, Glenn Phillips, Tom Buzzi, Kim Grustas, Jim Grustas

Member of the Press: Kathryn Boughton, Republican American newspaper

First Selectman Jerram welcomed all to the “roundtable discussion” portion of the meeting. It is noted that there was a dinner held prior to the official start of the meeting. Not all present for the discussion

portion of the meeting attended the dinner. (The attendance list notes those present for the meeting portion of the evening)Mr. Jerram explained that the purpose of the meeting was to engage in discussion to move the town forward by continuing the discussions begun in the Plan of Conservation and Development, Capital Planning and other documents. He encouraged all to participate and asked that everyone be treated with respect and that all act with decorum. He added that “we all know that we are in the midst of a complex issue – the Bakerville School – but asked that this meeting ‘not be about that.’” He noted that there have been several meetings held where input on that topic has been received and further stated that there will be a vote on that matter. Tonight, he stated is a “night to delve into other areas and consider those.”

Mr. Jerram introduced Phil Doyle and Terri Hahn, facilitators for the evening event and turned the running of the meeting over to them.

Ms. Hahn thanked those in attendance for taking the time to attend such a meeting. She stated that “there is a tremendous amount of knowledge” here tonight. She went around the room to ask what boards and commissions were working on. (Note: board and commission members were seated throughout the room; they did not sit as groups. The minutes reflect the comments made by individual members in ‘group’ form for ease of reading.)

Jean Cronauer, Chairman of the Open Space Preservation Commission stated that the Open Space Commission is presently in discussion with four different landowners. Open Space encourages the Town to continue to work on greenways and trails. Member Bill Michaud stated that there needs to be additional tools available to fund open space, not just bonding.

Members of Inland Wetlands Commission Jamie Hall, Chairman and Wayne Ryznar stated that the Commission deals mostly with regulatory matters; but noted that there is deep concern regarding water quality issues at West Hill Pond.

Steve Unger and Nelson Sly, members of the West Hill Pond Association echoed the concerns of water quality; specifically mentioning ground water run off and septic systems as sources of potential contamination issues.

Zoning Board of Appeals Chairman Mary Lou Rayno noted that ZBA addresses variances and special exceptions. She agrees that there are challenges at West Hill Lake with current building in the area. Member Scott Goff stated that there will be a challenge to maintain the character and quality of West Hill Pond/Lake if the issue of septic systems is not further looked into.

Member of Planning and Zoning Commission Bob Moore and Chairman Ted Stoutenberg stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission is engaged in discussion regarding changes to allow mixed use to the Commercial District and adaptive reuse of the “Waring Building.” The Planning and Zoning Commission also recently completed the Plan of Conservation and Development and there is now the need to implement the recommendations. Member Jim Steadman encouraged work to continue on the downtown initiative.

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Members of the Economic Development Commission John Burdick, Mark Russo, and Bill Baxter expressed the need for a concise marketing package for New Hartford and continued work on the Downtown Initiative. Member Dave Krimmel commented on the fact that the water and sewer infrastructure may be viewed by some as a liability, but he views them as an asset. He encourages others to view them as an asset to development and noted that there is a need to promote New Hartford as a tourist attraction so that economic growth can be successful. Mr. Baxter commented that he found meetings such as this Roundtable to be exhilarating and uplifting. He noted the importance of coming together to learn and support what others are doing. He commented that recent test score results released showing that Regional 7 School is a leader in Connecticut scoring is proof that “we are preparing our kids appropriately and thus doing something right.”

Members of the Water Pollution Control Authority Joe Toro, MaryBeth Greenwood, and Chairman Bud Butler commented on the decaying infrastructure; noting that 52% of the existing waterlines were installed prior to 1955. Additional concerns of the Authority are the customer rates; a small customer base cannot support the rates and there is a need for expansion of the lines. Town Assistance is needed to expand the infrastructure. Jim Surber, one of the newest members to the WPCA, informed those present that he “was a complainer” regarding water and sewer in town and that instead of ‘just complaining’ he became a member in order to become part of the solution.

Maria Moore, a member of the public expressed concern with the water and sewer rates; she urged the Town to redistribute the debt service in a more equitable fashion.

Conservation Commission Chairman Alison Murdock stated that the Conservation Commission has been focusing on educating businesses and homeowners on environmental threats; encouraging the elimination of the use of pesticides and invasive plant species. Ms. Murdock, also a member of the Farmington River Coordinating Council, said that the FRCC continues to be advocates for the recreational use of the river and its water quality.

Pat Casey of the Historical Society announced that the Historical Society is commemorating the 80th anniversary of the flood of 1936.

Anne Hall, Town Historian and member of the Land Trust and Inland Wetlands Commission stated that there needs to be a balance between Open Space and intensive mixed use development in the village.

Board of Education Member Jen Zenuh noted that the Board of Ed is currently in the midst of closing a school and asked all to keep in mind that “education is not cheap, but it is the future..” Member Josh Adams added that the Board of Education continues to work on updating curriculum and policies. School renovations at Antolini also continue.

Regional 7 Board of Education member Noel Gauthier stated that the budget process is in progress and a large share of Region 7’s expenses are part of the Town of New Hartford’s budget. He strongly

encouraged individuals to attend meetings and participate in the planning. He also asked that everyone be sure to vote when it comes time to do so.

Nick Maltby, member of New Hartford Ambulance, informed the group that the Ambulance members are always willing to provide CPR training to those interested. He stated that the Ambulance Barn needs some renovation work; noting that 4 people sleep onsite every night. The ambulance barn is staffed 24/7 with a combination of paid staff and volunteers.

Commission on Aging member Karen Gauthier indicated that the Commission on Aging is assessing the needs of the Senior population and currently is assessing transportation issues. Chairman of the Commission Penny Miller added that there are three areas of focus for the Commission at this time and those are: Senior bus, affordable senior housing and a senior center/community center.

Carlene Jerram, Chairman of the Stanclift Cove Authority informed those present of the current tree issue at the Cove. She noted that the Authority has notified the towns of the potential liability associated with the trees. A plan has been developed for removal. The Towns of Barkhamsted and New Hartford jointly operate the beach area that exists due to an easement that was granted to the towns by MDC.

Alesia Kennerson, Selectman, spoke on behalf of the Board of Selectmen. She noted that the Selectmen work with all of the commissions and they appreciate all of the work done by these commissions. She mentioned that a STEAP grant for a footbridge over the river has been submitted. Additionally another grant was recently submitted seeking funding for studies for a proposed trail between Barkhamsted and New Hartford. Ms. Kennerson also stated that capital funding for sidewalk extensions in the village has once again been included in the proposed budget.

Following the completion of 'status reports' from the various attendees in the room, the floor was opened for commentary regarding 'what should the town be looking at?'

Comments were heard from several people.

Steve Sekulski commented that there should be handicapped access for fishing on West Hill and along the New Hartford section of the Farmington River.

Nick Maltby expressed concern that there needs to be additional sports playing fields in town.

Several residents indicated that the lack of dedicated social services is a concern to them. It was noted that overdoses have become more frequent in the area and the question was raised "what is available to the person at risk?" Additional resources and programs for the needy was also seen as a need.

Alison Murdock suggested that the Planning and Zoning Commission add regulations that require composting.

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Anne Hall expressed her concern regarding property taxes and the increased burden being placed on towns that requires property taxes to be increased. There needs to be alternatives for paying for things.

Several comments were made by attendees expressing concern on “how to get information” regarding town events and town news. Many expressed frustration that they find things out after they happen and wanted to know what can be done to improve communication. Polly Pobuda commented on the value of the Town of New Hartford website and expressed her gratitude to Assistant Town Clerk Debbie Ventre for being diligent in providing the required updates to the site as a means to keep residents informed of things going on in New Hartford. Ms. Pobuda stated that residents need to subscribe to news on the site; she noted that information is there for people to be informed.

A lack of teen programs was mentioned as a concern by some.

Town Clerk Donna LaPlante commented that there are more multigenerational families today than in the past. She noted that it can be hard to find services that may be available to those kinds of households.

Facilitator Phil Doyle asked “how do the local churches in town fit into this” Are there programs that they could provide? Several attendees mentioned that there are programs available such as Hands Of Grace which was started and is operated by St Pauls Lutheran Church, the Free Community Meals sponsored by Northwest Congregational Church, and the Neighbor to Neighbor program.

Questions were asked to the attendees based on some of the commentary that was received throughout the evening.

The first question posed was “Is the water quality of West Hill pond a concern to you?” 84% of those in attendance answered yes.

An additional question “should this issue be a priority of the town?” was asked, to which 80.5% replied yes.

81% replied yes to the question of “should the expansion of downtown mixed use development be a priority?”

There were mixed reviews of the question “ should the town as a whole be responsible for the remediation and expansion of the water and sewer system?” 46.2% replied yes, 43.6% no and 10.3% had mixed/neutral feelings.

75% of attendees believed that the Town should actively support efforts to increase communication between boards, agencies, other sources and residents.

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When asked to rate importance on a scale of 1 (High) – 5 (low) regarding the expansion of social services provided by the town; the results were as follows:

32.4% = 1, 16.2% = 2; 8.1%=3; 5.4%=4; and 37.8% = 5

A follow up question of “would you support the expansion of social services if it were done by volunteers?” yielded the following:

(on a scale of 1 (would support) to 5 (not necessary))

38.5% = 1, 15.4% = 2; 15.4% = 3; 7.7% = 4; 23.1% = 5

Phil Doyle stated his summary of the discussions/concerns of the evening:

- Water quality at West Hill Lake/pond is a concern.
- Expansion of the water and sewer services is a concern, but there are mixed feelings about how to pay for it.
- Communication to the public is an area that needs improvement.
- The issue of social services is equally divided

At this point, First Selectman Jerram thanked everyone for attending and stated that he would like to develop some smaller focus groups that can address areas of concerns expressed this evening.

Meeting ended at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant