

Board of Selectmen
Town Office Annex
January 5, 2011
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: Mark Walter, Pete Govert and Emmett Lyman.

Also Present: L. Alt, C. Behilo, E. Blaschik, J. Blaschik, W. Brady, R. Dill, G. Giesey, N. Giesey, A. Hanks, C. Matthew, P. Maxwell, T. Quinn (arrived 7:34 p.m.), C. Smith, D. Stein, J. Ventres, S. Wheeler

1. First Selectman Walter called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of Agenda: Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimous aye.
3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of December 15, 2010: Mr. Govert noted the following change:
 - Revise the last sentence in the 4th paragraph on page 2 to read: *“Mr. Govert stated that he disputed the per capita debt ratios because he felt they were not an apples-to-apples comparison”*.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 15, 2010 as amended. Unanimous aye.

4. Correspondence: Mr. Walter advised that he had received a notification from the Connecticut Department of Transportation, dated January 5, 2011, that work was planned on Route 82, by exit 7 off of Route 9, in Haddam. He stated that the work was scheduled to take place in spring/early summer of this year.
5. First Selectman's Report

A. Middle School Conversion Committee Report – Edward Blaschik: Mr. Walter introduced Mr. Edward Blaschik who provided the Selectmen with a letter from the Middle School Conversion Committee Chairperson, Maryjane Malavasi, which outlined the anticipated costs that the Town would incur to bring the recommended project to a Town referendum. He advised that all of the direct and optional costs listed have already been allocated in the Committee's estimated cost of the project.

Mr. Walter inquired about the cost to test for PCBs and there was a general discussion about the benefits of having the testing done now.

Mr. Walter thanked Mr. Blaschik for the information and stated that the Financial Needs Roundtable was scheduled to meet on January 26th at which time he expected to discuss the Town's 5-year capital needs requirements. He stated the Middle School conversion project would be included in those discussions. In response to a question from Mr. Blaschik, Mr. Walter confirmed that the project could be stifled or other options might be considered.

B. Park & Recreation Report – Tiffany Quinn: Deferred until later in the meeting.

6. Citizen's Concerns: The following comments were made regarding the Middle School Conversion project:

- Mr. Ventres stated that the Town has spent a significant amount of money on studies and analysis of the East Haddam Village and the Town Office Site and that all the reports indicate that economic development in the Village cannot happen until the Town Offices were re-located. He pointed out that the usage cost for the sewer system has continually increased because the anticipate growth/development in the Village has not occurred. He also noted the considerable investment the Town has already made in the Middle School Conversion project and encouraged the Selectmen to, at least, approve funding to acquire bid-ready plans for the project. He stressed that the public should be allowed to vote on the project.
- Mr. John Blaschik stated that one of the incentives for passing the new Middle School project was an assurance that the Town would move the municipal offices to the old Middle School. He said that he did not think that a 5-year capital improvements plan qualified as a long-term plan and, therefore, should not impact any decision to move forward with this project. He noted that he agreed with Ed Blaschik that waiting until the January 26th Financial Needs Roundtable meeting to consider any action on the Committee's recommendation was an attempt to stall the project. He stated that he also wanted to respond to a previously made comment that the Board of Education did not support the project because it would take funds away from education and pointed out that the relocation of the municipal offices was put on hold in order to build the High School. He stated that it was now time to move forward with the plan that had been promised to the Town's citizens.
- Mr. Brady stated that many of the people who were opposed to the project cited the current economic issues. He noted that economic good time and bad times come and go and that a lot of projects get done in difficult times. He pointed out the historic value of the Hale/Ray buildings and said the Town needed to have a sense of vision and purpose for the future. He noted that many of the Town's boards and commissions have little or no storage space in the current municipal offices. He said the Town needed to move forward with a referendum on this project.
- Ms. Alt said that she supported the statements of the previous speakers and pointed out that moving the municipal offices to the Moodus center with the potential to house the regional probate court and the Chatham Health District in the facility, would drive economic development in that area. She stated that the people deserve a choice and should be allowed to vote on it.
- Mr. Edward Blaschik stated that the Committee had recommended Option 1 because it afforded the best per-square-foot cost and because there were no architectural plans for any of the other options that had been discussed. He noted discussions about alternative options and stated he was concerned about sending a message that other options were readily available because it could influence people's vote and a clear decision might not be made. He stated that it has been his experience that it was usually the nay-sayers that turn out for the Town's public meetings but noted that the two meetings on this project were well attended by a mix of supporters and those that oppose the project. He said he felt that was one good reason to bring this matter to referendum.

- Mr. Stein confirmed that Option 2, which utilizes only the Hale building, has not been fleshed out yet and noted that the cost to do so would increase the Town's expense by at least \$198,000.

Mr. Walter noted that there was an option to put an advisory question to a vote to determine if the citizens might consider a less costly option; however, he advised that the bond counsel was not in favor of that approach.

In response to a question from Mr. Hanks, Mr. Govert stated that he did not think the Town should hold a referendum using the existing estimate because that approach had not gone well on previous large-scale building projects and because the citizens have been told a referendum on this project would be done with a firm bid in place.

Mr. Govert discussed the steps that would need to be taken to get the project to referendum and developed a rough timeline. He observed that under the best circumstances, the project could be put to a referendum in June of this year and, the worst case would be in the fall. He noted a recent 60-Minutes segment discussing the bad shape of many state budgets but said that he felt the Town would have some clarity about the State budget by June.

Mr. Govert made a motion to recommend that Board of Finance allocate \$73,200.00 to the Middle School Conversion project in order to get it ready to bring to a referendum. There was no second and the motion failed.

Mr. Lyman stated he was not prepared to second the motion at this time, but stated he was very disappointed that the project was not ready for consideration.

5B. First Selectman's Report – Park & Recreation Report-Tiffany Quinn: Mr. Walter introduced Ms. Quinn who stated that she would like to restart plans for a dog park in Town. She noted that a committee had been formed several years ago that had done a good deal of work on establishing a dog park at Nichols Field; however, some of the requirements imposed by the Planning and Zoning Commission did not match the committee's vision for the park and, consequently, the project was dropped. She stated that she has since visited the Colchester dog park several times with her dog and felt that the concept would be very simple to implement, relatively easy to maintain, and would be a good addition to the Town.

Ms. Quinn recommended locating the park at the Town Beach and advised that the Little League was willing to relinquish the ball field there if they can use some of the other Town fields for their games. She stated that there was a fence around much of the field so that the cost of improvements would be minimal. She further stated that she would write the rules and regulations for using the dog park and also create an advisory committee, under the Parks & Recreation Commission, to manage it.

She stated that before she applied to Planning and Zoning for their approval, she wanted to get the Selectmen's input. The Selectmen were all supportive of her proposal. Mr. Walter recommended she consult with Mr. Ventres and Mr. Toolan before applying to P&Z.

Ms. Quinn advised the Selectmen that the pipes in the bathrooms at the Town Beach had frozen and that a few toilets had been damaged. She stated that she believed the pump and water tank were not damaged. She stated the pipes have since been drained and she will evaluate the full extent of the necessary repairs in the spring.

7. Unfinished Business

A. 4-8 Middle School: Mr. Walter reported that Mr. Moss, Mr. Carroll, and Ms. Varricchio were reviewing the final punch-list and will make a decision on which items must be resolved before closing out the project.

B. Goodspeed Opera House Update: Mr. Blashik reported that the weather had slowed down the grounds work on the new actors' housing sites but, otherwise, the project was progressing.

C. Old Middle School: There was no new update on this agenda item.

D. STEAP Power House Road Grant: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to a copy of an e-mail in their meeting packets, dated January 4, 2011, from Thomas Burgess indicating that the State was working on the supplemental agreement and it should be approved and sent to the Town by February 1st.

E. Rotary Club Donation of Edgar D. Williams Park: There was no new update on this agenda item.

8. New Business

A. Solar Project – 4-8 Middle School: Mr. Govert reviewed materials in the Selectmen's meeting packets regarding the proposed solar project at the new Middle School. He reported that BeFree Solar had evaluated the site and advised that the final cost to the Town, after rebate, would be \$300,000 with a projected payback of 6 years. He called the Selectmen's attention to the following statement in the application for the rebate: *"The intent of the funding is to enable owners of Solar PV systems to 'break even' over the life of the Project, with a fair and reasonable return on investment, compared with purchasing the equivalent amount of power from the utility."* He stated that he has not yet clarified whether or not that will increase the investment by the Town and noted that he will research the answer and report his findings at the next regular Board of Selectmen meeting.

There was a general discussion about the current condition of the school roof and whether or not it would compromise a plan for installing a roof-top solar array. In response to a question from Mr. Walter, Mr. Govert confirmed that rebate funds were still available.

B. CL&P – Optional Midnight Service: Mr. Govert reported that he had analyzed CL&P's offer to reduce municipal rates through a voluntary program that turns off selected street lights at midnight. He stated that his analysis indicated that the Town could potentially save approximately \$30,000.00 over a three year period with the program; however, he stated he had some concerns about the risks of doing so.

Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to an e-bulletin he had received from the Connecticut Council of Small Towns' (COST) Town Leaders advising of legal liability concerns with the program. The Selectmen discussed the potential risks and agreed to table the item at this time.

C. Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Commission (IWWC) Ordinance Amendment: Mr. Walter reviewed the background for IWWC's request to change their ordinance and asked Mr. Lyman to present the recommended revision.

Mr. Lyman advised that the current ordinance requires the IWWC to include one member from the Conservation Commission on their Commission. He noted that they have not had a member from the Conservation Commission on IWWC for some time and have experienced problems achieving quorum at their meetings. He further advised that the existing ordinance does not stipulate the requirements for electing a chairman and vice-chairman for the Commission. He stated that the IWWC has suggested revising the ordinance to remove the requirement for a Conservation Commission member and to resolve the issue regarding electing a chairman and vice-chairman.

There was a general discussion about the proposed changes and Ms. Matthew advised that the Conservation Commissioners agreed that the ordinance needed to be amended, but they did not want to eliminate the requirement to include a member of the Conservation Commission. She stated that the Conservation Commission was not currently in a position to provide a member to IWWC but they did not want to close off that avenue of communication. There was a general discussion about the best way to keep the flow of communication open. Ms. Matthew suggested revising the ordinance to give the Conservation Commissioner the right of first refusal for the membership position on IWWC. She stated that the IWWC and the Conservation Commission have the same goals and objectives and the Conservation Commissioners want to support the IWWC and not distance themselves.

Mr. Dill stated that the request to revise the ordinance was a direct result of the IWWC's challenges around achieving quorum and expressed concern that the issue had become adversarial. Ms. Matthew reiterated the Conservation Commissioners felt that the goals and objectives of the two Commissions were in alignment and it was not their intention to convey anything different in any of their communications. She expressed her regret if the IWWC had been offended by any statement the Conservation Commission had made.

Mr. Walter suggested getting a legal opinion on the proposed revisions. Mr. Ventres noted that Attorney Branse had done seminars for IWWC in the past and he could ask him if he would be willing to do a joint seminar on how the two Commissions could best work together to achieve their common goals. Ms. Matthew agreed that would be a good idea and requested he provide the Conservation Commission with a reasonable notice of when the meeting would be scheduled. Mr. Ventres agreed to do so.

D. Board Appointment (ZBA): Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to an e-mail in their meeting packets from Stuart Wood, dated December 31, 2010, advising that at the December 28th meeting the Board of Zoning Appeals the members had unanimously voted to recommend the appointment of Ms. Laurie Alt as an alternate member on the committee.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to appoint Laurie Alt to fill a vacant alternate position with a term to expire January 2012 on the Zoning Board of Appeals. Unanimous aye.

The Selectmen thanked Ms. Alt for her service.

E. Board Reappointments (BOFC): Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to a letter from the Board of Fire Commissioners recommending a reappointment to their board.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Lyman, to reappoint Daniel Barry for a second three-year term to expire January 1, 2014 as a member of the Board of Fire Commissioners. Unanimous aye.

F. Tax Refunds: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen's attention to three tax refunds.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to award tax refunds in the amounts presented.

- \$227.59 to Nissan Infiniti CT,
- \$ 70.16 to Jason Apostoleris, and
- \$ 72.63 to Nina E. Larsen.

Unanimous aye.

9. Public Comment: Mr. Brady advised that he was the Chairman of the Town's Historic District Commission and that the Commission has been evaluating their cost of posting legal notices. He stated that they currently post a notice of the application and a notice of the decision in the two versions of the Hartford Courant. He noted that, due to the increasing cost of the ads, they have scaled back the content in the notices to a degree that it provides very little information. Mr. Brady stated that other Boards and Commissions may be experiencing the same problem and requested the Town consider a using a single paper of record.

Mr. Dill stated that he understood Mr. Brady's concern, however, the other papers that could be used were weekly periodicals and there could be legal challenges to using that type of vehicle for legal notices. Ms. Alt stated that she did not think it was required to post the notices in both versions of the Hartford Courant and also recommended using the Town's website.

10. Selectmen's Discussion: Mr. Govert advised that the Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge was underway and he distributed a brochure on the project. He stated that volunteers will visit participating homes, spend about one hour evaluating their energy use and make recommendations. He stated that the program was looking to evaluate approximately 10% of the households in East Haddam and that there were some incentives to participate. He asked the Selectmen to encourage residents to participate. Mr. Walter stated that he would ask Ms. Zemienieski to post the information on the Town's website and Mr. Govert stated he would follow-up with her.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional regular business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Govert, to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Unanimous aye.

Respectfully submitted,

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Emmett Lyman, Secretary