

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES SEPTEMBER 10, 2007
APPROVED**

Present: Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chairman; Stuart Schulman, Clerk; Peter Cunningham; Mihran Keoseian

Absent: George Dillon, Jr., Chairman

Also Present: Jeff Ritter, Interim Administrative Officer; April Iannacone, Office Assistant

Mr. Degen called the regular meeting of the Board to Order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the public.

Groton Community Foundation RE: Community Center Update and Reports from other Community Representatives

Steve Webber addressed the Board to give them, and the public, background information on where the Community Foundation stands in regards to the Community Center project planning. The committee was formed in 2004 to address the senior center and upgrade their facilities. The task of the committee then changed to look into the benefit of a community center. A criterion was created for different locations to develop a survey to determine the interest levels of people in Town regarding the need for a community center. A feasibility study was done on the Country Club site to determine if the site could be enhanced to have a senior center as well as a community center. The amount of money needed to complete the project is still unclear. Currently they are talking with 3 different architectural firms to come up with different ways that the parcel can be used. More thorough research needs to be done on the traffic patterns, parking and how to situate the buildings. The Community Foundation will be launching a fundraising campaign to see if the public will help with the costs of these studies. They have been talking with other communities and Doug McDougal from Weston is present tonight to give an update on how building a new community center affected the Town of Weston. They were hoping to have at least one other representative from another town attend tonight but schedules did not allow for it.

Mr. McDougal stated that he has been the recreation director in Weston for 18 years. The recreation department had been running out of an office in the basement of an old school that had been shut down but the school committee decided in 1991 to turn the building back into a school. The department then moved into the old library building and ran about 15-20 programs out of that building. When the Town of Weston decided to renovate the High School the School Department learned that if you do your homework and have all information then people will support you. The recreation department then spent 1-2 years gathering information before asking to form a committee. They knew that at Town Meeting there would be other projects that would also be coming up looking for funding. When the Town looked at how much could be afforded it was determined that \$2.4 million would be paid for the building and another \$3,000 – \$4,000 would be spent for design fees. The Town would give the recreation department \$2.7 million to build a 22,000 square foot building which would be a bottom line building with no extras. The Committee would then fundraise for the addition of any extras to the building. The building also had to generate revenue as one of the conditions. To do this the committee created a 3600 square foot carpeted great room with a full functioning catering kitchen to rent out. The great room is booked 1-2 years in advance at this time and is rented for \$1,200.00 and evening. This room alone generates \$25-35,000 per year in rentals. The first floor of the building is the council on aging which has about 3,500 sq. ft. and 2-3,000 sq. ft. classroom space. The second floor is the recreation department, some offices, the great room and a conference room. The Third floor has 4 classrooms. Looking back he believes the building even for the size that it is, was built too small. The biggest group of users is the seniors as part of the council on aging activities. During construction and planning there were many concerns about seniors and children in the same location. After many different options were looked at it was decided that they would not schedule certain senior center programs at times when kids would be around most, such as during the after school program, and then they would schedule the kids programs around the senior programs. This approach has worked well in keeping the building jointly used. As long as all groups give their input as to what is important everything runs well. The committee fundraised \$1.2 million dollars over a 16 month period and they created a maintenance account from that money. A determination of the needs for the funds has to be

determined before fundraising in order for the fundraising to be more successful. The population in Weston is approximately 11,000. The recreation department has a \$1.3 million enterprise account set up. They have a set budget and set revenues need to come in. They also take care of the total costs of the council on aging for heat, electric, etc., but the council on aging has their own budget for their programming and staff. There is a shortfall in funds of about \$300,000 per year. The recreation department needs to bring back 70% in revenue and then the Town gives a 30% gift transfer of funds to cover the full time staff and custodian that oversee the building. Mr. Degen thanked Mr. McDougal for his valuable information.

Mr. Keoseian asked Mr. McDougal if he could give a breakdown of participants locally vs. surrounding town participants. Mr. McDougal responded that the senior population has the most out of town participation at 20% out-of-town participants to 80% in-town. The recreation department programs have about 10% out-of-town and 90% in-town. After a program has been posted for 2 weeks and hasn't filled up they then open the program up to non-residents. The way that Weston is running the building is that the town agreed to pick up the deficit, there are other communities that the building has to self sustain and then others that split the expenses 50/50. Mr. Cunningham asked if when the construction was approved at town meeting with a bond of \$2.4 million, was there revenue generated debt service on that bond. Mr. McDougal responded that there was not and that the town did have to cover some costs on that end. Mr. Schulman noted that there was funding available to help with the building of senior centers and asked if Weston had tried for any of these grants. Mr. McDougal stated that they had not gone for any grants at the time of construction, but they are currently applying for other grants for the seniors. The recreation department has received numerous donations as thanks for having a building to be able to use. Mr. Degen commented on the recreation budget of \$1.3 million and the shortfall in terms of the operating budget. He asked Mr. McDougal if he were to look at the building maintenance upkeep separate from the council on aging use what would those costs be. Mr. Webber responded that in terms of the costs of the building the Community Foundation will try to pick up the costs completely and they will do fundraising to cover the construction. They would also look at the senior center, recreation department and the country club to try to create the operating budget from all three. There might be some small funding needed to cover operating expenses. Mr. Degen then clarified that in terms of what the town might be required to participate in the operating he wanted to know what the actual costs to run the building in Weston were. Mr. McDougal then responded that the senior center costs average about \$45,000. The total operating expenses of the building are \$175,000. Mr. Degen then stated that the operating expenses for the total building were \$175,000 minus the council on aging expenses of \$45,000 the net to run the building is then \$130,000.

Mr. Degen then asked if there were any other questions or comments. Mr. Webber stated that there were foundations out there that will help them come up with the money. Ashland got reimbursed 100% of the funding for the senior center program. Martha Campbell stated that she was excited that the Town was looking into this option and felt that moving forward on this is much needed. She has received a lot of input from seniors and would like to research the option of opening a social daycare for seniors to give them a place to spend their days. There are approximately 1400 seniors who participate in the programs at the senior center which consists of about 987 residents and 447 non-residents. Mr. Degen asked Ms. Campbell if she knew how many square feet the senior center building was. Ms. Campbell did not know but she knew that the capacity of the building could house 120 standing up and 119 sitting down. Mr. Frank Belitsky a member of the council on aging stated that he believed that the recreation center was a good thing. He felt that there should be one section for seniors, one for children and then a middle section for intergenerational. He stated that they were requesting voluntary donations from people in town and that those who did not donate would not be discriminated against. He then offered the first donation gift check to Karen Tuomi for \$1,000. Mr. Schulman then asked if someone did want to give a donation who would they contact. Mr. Webber stated that there would be a press release coming out soon to explain how and where to go. The Selectmen then gave thanks to all for their efforts and information.

OTHER BUSINESS

Employment Agreement with new Chief of Police

Mr. Ritter informed the Board that Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Degen and he had met with Mr. Palma and reviewed the contract and personnel policy with him. Mr. Ritter requested that the Selectmen make a formal motion to approve the contract and have all remaining Selectmen sign it. Mr. Keoseian stated that the Town was

extremely fortunate to have a highly confident and qualified individual. He gave thanks to all who participated in the search. Mr. Degen wished Chief Mulhern the best in his retirement.

Mr. Schulman moved to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Groton and the new Chief of Police Donald Palma Jr. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Review Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles Received to Date

Mr. Ritter informed the Board that the 2 articles from the Planning Board regarding the Station Ave. rezoning and the Chapter 43D approval was received today. There will be a Public Hearing on October 1st for more detailed discussion of the articles. This copy is just the first draft and is not complete. Mr. Keoseian asked who determined the names on Article A because Don Palma should not be recognized for service to the Town he should be recognized for coming on as a Town employee. His name does not coincide with the other 3 names. Mr. Cunningham noted that this article was asking for people to vote to recognize and the recognition should be done anyway. If the Town were to vote no then what. He suggested reviewing the policy that was created for recognition of people to determine if it was necessary to make this and article to vote on. The Selectmen then reviewed each of the articles as listed in the draft. It was noted that Article C regarding current year transfers was not complete and there would be more listed by the Public Hearing. Article E regarding the Chapter 43D would only be voted on upon the passing of Article D for the Station Ave. rezoning. Of the 13 articles that were submitted for the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) there were 3 that would not be moving forward to the Warrant, 2 were incomplete and 1 was withdrawn. Should Town Meeting choose to fund these the funding comes from the CPC funds. Mr. Cunningham noted that there would be a fundraising event for the Florence Roach Playground. The new Town Charter Article was discussed by Mr. Cunningham as Chair of the Blue Ribbon Governance Committee. He gave some background information on what some of the changes to Town Government would be. He then announced that two Public Hearings would be held on September 20th at 7:30 and October 18th at 7:30. If this Article passes the next step will be to request permission of the legislature to put this on the ballot for the Spring 2008 Annual Town Meeting. There was discussion regarding the changing of the Finance Committee (FINCOM) from 9 members to 7 and the quorum from 5 members to 4 members. Ms. Valerie Jenkins informed the Selectmen that there has been a continuing problem with retaining 9 members and because of this there are too many times when a quorum cannot be met. There have also been problems maintaining a quorum with the Capital Planning Committee. This is especially problematic where we are heading into budget season. Her recommendation was to reduce the number of FINCOM members and then it is up to the Selectmen to decide if they would like to remove the Capital Planning Committee all together. Mr. Steve Webber stated that if the reviewing of capital articles presented by the Town Manager was still going to go through FINCOM then Capital Planning would not really be needed. There is also an overlap of members from one committee to the other so it would make things simpler to only have one. It was decided that the FINCOM Article would be left on the warrant but the deletion of the Capital Planning Committee would be reviewed after the adoption of the Town Charter if it passed. Article X regarding the Adjusting of Principal and Interest for Surrenden Farms Debt was there to correct the exact numbers that were passed during the last Town Meeting. There was an adjustment of more interest due the first year but less principal.

REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Mr. Ritter informed the Board that an orientation schedule had been created for the new Chief Palma. He also informed them that he would pay for the lunch on the first day. Mr. Degen stated that the schedule seemed a bit aggressive. Mr. Ritter stated that he continued to revise and confirm with people to finalize appointments. Since the morning is a busy time on Main Street Mr. Ritter suggested a ½ hour for the public to come in to meet and interact with Chief Palma before the Selectmen's Meeting. Thank you letters will be sent out to all members of the Police Chief Search Committee and invites to the swearing in ceremony on October 1st. Thank you letters were also prepared and sent to Michelle Collette and Tom Delaney for their efforts regarding the 319 Stormwater Grant Award for \$134,450. He will be meeting with Peter as liaison to Bill Shute to review Mr. Shute's Performance Evaluation and create a final document and set up a meeting with Bill to review it. The FY09 Financial Planning Committee met with representatives from the Town, Dunstable, and 6-7 representatives from the school. The meeting went well and everyone agreed to meet again on October 3, 2007. Mr. Ritter then reminded the Board that he would be at Jury Duty next Monday the 17th and if he was

sequestered he might not be able to attend the meeting on Monday night. He has spoken with Don Kinney who has agreed to fill in as Interim Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer until the position is filled. All arrangements have been worked out and he would like the Board to make a formal motion to approve the change in Mr. Kinney's status.

Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Donald Kinney as Interim Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer until the position is filled. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Lastly, in regard to the Kenneth Pickard Award given by MMA, the projects and ideas deadline is this Friday and he is looking for consensus from the Board to submit the Surrenden Farms application for approval. The Board then consented to allow Mr. Ritter to submit the application.

SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Degen announced that the Station Avenue Redevelopment Committee would be meeting on Wednesday the 19th and their Public Hearing would be held Thursday the 20th where they would be going over the traffic study and how the traffic patterns will work after the redevelopment. There will be a fundraising campaign for the endowment for the Trust for Public Lands to the Town of Groton and all contributions are voluntary. Also there will be fundraising for the Community Center and endowment for land. Donations should be made with 2 separate checks with a notation of the allocation on each check.

Mr. Cunningham announced that the Blue Ribbon Governance Committee would be holding Public Hearings and a website would be launched shortly. He also stated that in consideration of the change of the sign bylaw to the Building Inspector there would need to be a change to the bylaw to do that. If this is what they were looking to do then they might want to look at putting this onto the warrant for the change. Since there have been a number of recent sign issues this might be a good time make the change. Mr. Degen responded that while they were hiring a new Building Inspector it could be created as part of the job description. Rather than just Zoning Enforcement it could be stated as Zoning/Sign Bylaw enforcement. It was agreed that Jeff would follow up with Michelle to look into the options.

Mr. Degen then announced that there had been preliminary input received from the DMR for the affordable housing project on Jenkins Road. They feel that the square footage of the house could house 4 or 5 bedrooms but should definitely support 4. The details will be confirmed within 1-2 weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Schulman moved to adjourn at 8:46 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Approved: _____
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
April Iannacone
Office Assistant

Date Approved: *November 5, 2007*