

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OCTOBER 1, 2007
APPROVED**

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

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

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

He then introduced the new Chief of Police, Chief Donald Palma. Chief Palma was sworn in this morning at 9:00 and approximately 50 people attended the ceremony. Chief Palma's first day went well and all the Selectmen gave him thanks.

Special Town Meeting (STM) Public Hearing

Mr. Degen moved to open the public hearing at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.

Mr. Dillon then read the legal notice that was published in the Groton Herald and Groton Landmark on September 21, 2007. He then stated that there were 28 articles and there were 2 nights planned for this STM. On October 22nd there would be 15 articles which would include the money articles and the Charter. The second night on October 29th there would be 13 articles which would include Station Ave. and the acceptance of Chapter 43D. The Selectmen then went through the articles one by one. The articles that had changes and significant discussions are as follows:

Article 4 – Replace Elevator Controller at Public Library: Mr. Mark Gerath was present to inform the Board of Selectmen (BOS) that there would be a change to this article. The Library Trustees met and voted to defray ½ of the cost from the Library's State Aid account. Therefore this article will be changed for the Town to vote on \$17,500 for the repair rather than the entire \$35,000.

Article 6 – Transfer a sum of Money to the Stabilization Fund: Mr. Degen stated that the proposed figure right now is \$0. Therefore this article could be indefinitely postponed.

Article 8 – Adopt and Accept Town Charter: Mr. Dillon informed the public that the meetings of the Blue Ribbon Governance Committee (BRGC) pertaining to this article would be held on Tuesday Oct. 2nd at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall, Wednesday Oct. 17th at 10:30 a.m. at the Senior Center and Thursday Oct. 18th at 7:30 p.m. at the Town Hall. Mr. Cunningham stated that he would encourage people to read the document and get as familiar with and informed about it as possible.

Article 12 – 21 Moose Trail Land Transfer: Valerie Jenkins, Town Accountant, stated that the process that she was aware of was that if the land was foreclosed on it went to auction and that the money was to go to the general fund. Mr. Dillon responded that it could be taken directly to Town Meeting to sell directly. Town Counsel has reviewed the warrant and has not instructed otherwise. Mr. Lyons stated that the Wilson's had been using the property for a long time. After the foreclosure the Conservation Commission had an interest in the property before going to auction. The Wilson's are trying to resolve the matter in everyone's favor. They will buy the property and then the old boat ramp would be closed and turned into a conservation restriction.

Article 13 – Discontinue Point Road: Mr. Dillon stated that the current price to pay for road would be \$900. He spoke with Attorney Bob Collins this afternoon and it was discussed that all costs will have to be covered by purchasers so there would be no responsibilities of town and that taxes would need to be current. Before the Selectmen take positions will have something in writing. Mike Flynn from FINCOM asked how much land there was and if there was a precedent for this type of transaction. Mr. Dillon responded that the parcel was about 100ft and that there have been others done before.

Article 14 – Long Term Lease of Conservation: Mr. Dillon asked Barbara Ganem if there was an answer from Town Counsel about the question of a license rather than a lease and she stated that they had not yet received an answer.

Jay Prager, Chair of FINCOM asked about the financial impact of this article. Barbara replied that the Town would not have to pay to brush this land.

Article 16 – Station Avenue Rezoning: Mr. Dillon informed the public that there would be a meeting regarding this article on Wednesday Oct. 3rd at 7:00 with the Police and Fire Chiefs and the Highway Department. Also on Thursday the 4th would be the Planning Board public hearing.

Article 17 – Accept G.L. Chapter 43D Expedited Local Permitting: Mr. Cunningham stated that accepting this expedited permitting would allow the Town opportunity for State Aid to study the area and encourage development. Mr. Dillon noted that if article 16 for the Overlay District did not pass this article would be withdrawn.

Article 18 – Squannacook Hall Renovations: Bob DeGroot, Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Chair, informed the BOS that the wording on this article would be changed. The appropriation would be from the Community Preservation FY08 Budget Reserve so the change to the article would remove the wording “and/or Community Preservation Historic Resource Reserve”. Mike Flynn stated that the survey taken showed that this would be used for meeting space. He asked why there was a need for this funding for a feasibility study was necessary for such small renovations. Mr. Dillon responded that this would also determine what the building could be used for and what is and isn’t viable. Bob DeGroot also stated that the \$20,000 is a short amount to pay to determine if the building is structurally sound and reduce any risks.

Article 26 – Grant of Easement Over Land to be Acquired from Boston & Maine Corporation: Mr. Ritter stated that this article was requested as a place holder by Town Counsel and then he went on vacation. He requested waiting until Town Meeting to postpone or withdraw this article.

Article 28 – Rezone 797 Boston Road: Donald Van Dyne was present and stated that on October 4th he will be presenting before the Planning Board and he requested that the BOS attend. He also stated that a package had been submitted to the Town Clerk if anyone was interested in reviewing the proposal.

Three abutters spoke out against this article. Their concerns were that there were still vacant buildings on the other corners and they were worried that the intersection would be littered with empty buildings. Also they felt that the wording of the article was misleading in stating that this was a change in the already existing commercial area. The land was residential when it was bought and it should stay residential.

Mike Flynn stated that the Joe Long place has been doing nothing for 5 years and that he is fearful that Shaw’s is not showing any real growth. He felt that the idea that this would be a viable business district is not happening. Mr. Degen stated that Crossroads has been approved for development for offices and businesses and that the Shaw’s land has 2 additional buildings approved. He felt that the Town needed to way carefully the abutter’s opinions until things turn around on already business owned land. Mr. Cunningham stated that it was difficult to make a decision not knowing the concept of what’s being proposed for the land.

The Selectmen decided to hold off on taking positions until the following week and wait to sign the warrant until it is complete. FINCOM moved to a different location to discuss trying to take some positions now.

Mr. Degen moved to close the public hearing at 8:37 p.m. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Approval of Election Warrant

Mr. Cunningham noticed that the warrant stated that this was a Primary and that it needed to be corrected to state that it was an Election. Mr. Degen reminded the public that this was an extremely important election.

Mr. Degen moved to sign the State Election Warrant for Tuesday, October 16, 2007 based on forthcoming changes. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

Building Inspector Update

Mr. Degen stated that he had a meeting with the Interim Inspector to discuss the needs for the department, his job, and the administrative backup. He asked Don if he would be interested in taking the full time position. He then suggested a few different options for the office and the filling of the vacancy. Elizabeth Currier, Personnel Manager,

stated that she had followed up with Don and he gave thanks for the offer and opportunity, however he would like to stay in retirement mode. She stated that they currently have 6 applicants who applied believing that this was a full time position. She followed up with them and 2 would be interested in 32-35 hours per week part time but could not go any less. Mr. Dillon then stated that the question they had to look at was whether to start at 35 or 40 hours per week. Mr. Degen stated that they should hire at 35 and then make it clear that the potential to increase to 40 hours does exist if the economy rises and revenue increases. Elizabeth stated that if the Selectmen agreed to hire at 35 hours then she had a few good candidates to line up for interviews. Mr. Ritter asked Mr. Degen if he would like to sit in on these interviews. Mr. Degen responded that he would and that Thursday and Friday were good days for him to attend. Mr. Dillon then confirmed that the Selectmen were in agreement to hire as full time.

Special Town Meeting Warrant

The Selectmen reviewed the suggested BOS Assignee's for the articles and all were ok with the breakdown. They agreed that the order of the articles was good. They then took positions on the articles.

REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Mr. Ritter informed the Selectmen that the benefits analysis for Chief Palma was complete and he and Elizabeth had lunch with him today. Chief Palma was here for an hour before the meeting to meet with the public and would be meeting with Jeff and the Fire Chief for coffee tomorrow. Mr. Ritter then stated that there would be a meeting at 10:00 a.m. next Wednesday with Bob Collins and Bob Rafferty to discuss the transfer of land on Lost Lake for a possible sewer treatment plant. Lastly, he was drafting a letter to send out to residents advising them of the Selectmen doing a site walk on Saturday, Oct. 27th at 8:00 a.m. and he would also be inviting the Police Chief. The Selectmen decided to change the time to 9:00. Mr. Degen would be present as a resident and not as part of the Board and Mr. Schulman would be unavailable.

SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Degen again noted that he had attended a meeting with Don Kinney the Interim Building Inspector.

Mr. Schulman stated that he had attended an Information Technology (I/T) meeting and then the support staff meeting regarding the server change planned for the end of the month. Jim Selders asked people to clean things up and described set expectations so that everyone knows what's coming. Mr. Cunningham asked if this would be a significant improvement. Mr. Schulman responded that it would and that it would allow the other server as a backup plan.

Mr. Cunningham reminded the public again of the BRGC meetings regarding the Charter. He also stated that the website grotoncharter.com was set up and questions could be emailed to the Committee through that website.

Mr. Dillon stated that the retirement party for Chief Mulhern was a nice event. He stated that it was interesting to listen to Chief Mulhern's 3 sons who were also officers. His father was an officer also. Mulhern was here for the swearing in of the new Chief. Lastly, he would be attending the Lost Lake Dam discussions on Thursday and the Finance Meeting on Wednesday.

ADJOURN

Mr. Degen moved to adjourn at 9:48 p.m. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

Approved: _____
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

respectfully submitted,
April Iannacone
Office Assistant

Date Approved: *November 26, 2007*