

January 31, 2005

BOARD AND COMMISSION CHAIRMEN COUNCIL MEETING

Present: First Selectman Dick Sears, Selectman Nick Solley, Sheila Anson (Parks and Recreation), John Allen (Building and Property), Jack Field (Finance), Hank Martin (Zoning), Paul Graney (Historic District), Susie Payne (Conservation), Mark Picton (Inland Wetlands), Ed White (Zoning Board of Appeals), Addie Roberts (Planning).

Welcome and Call to Order: Dick Sears called the meeting to order at 5:15p.m. and welcomed those in attendance. He thanked the board and commission volunteers for their dedication and hard work and expressed the feeling that all are working for the common good of the Town. He feels there is more communication with the public through the use of the Town's website and good press coverage.

REPORTS:

Finance: Jack Field: The Board of Finance is beginning to get ready for the annual budget planning process for the next fiscal year. He expressed the Board's feeling that the Town is in excellent financial shape but wants to take a close look at upcoming initiatives and what will be required. Two members from Roxbury, Bridgewater and Washington's Boards of Finance are working closely with the Regional #12 School District office and Board of Education and are coming to a common ground on educational expenditures and what the towns can afford - specifically dealing with the renovation of the three primary schools.

Conservation: Susie Payne: Expressed gratitude to Dick Sears for his support of the commissions for the work they are doing. Conservation repeated the desire to have liaisons from the other town commissions as they work in an advisory capacity. Also invited the other commissions to use their expertise to advise on various issues. Susie feels that Conservation has a very good team and has established various sub-committees. They are currently working on the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development and Natural Resource Inventory Report recommendations. A request was also made at today's meeting to resolve the signage issue on West Mountain Road and Nettleton Hollow Road.

Zoning: Hank Martin: Zoning interrelates well with other Town commissions on such issues as ridge line protection (Conservation), special exception matters such as generators and pool motor noise (ZBA), Lake Waramaug Agreement requirements, discontinued roads (Selectmen). Currently Zoning is working on evaluating and implementing POCD recommendations in regard to ridgelines, commercial district regulations, condominium (high end and affordable) and multi-family housing units.

Zoning Board of Appeals: Ed White: Working very well with Zoning. Ed has a concern about legal costs involved with lawsuits but he and other commission chairmen present feel it necessary to be firm and consistent with enforcement of each commission's regulations. Ed reported that the Town recently "won" a suit and one has been withdrawn. There was some discussion of speaking with Attorney Mike Ziska about negotiating his law firm's rates as all commissions now seem to be using him (currently charges a preferred municipal rate). One of this commission's biggest problems is "policing" - example: approving of a variance and then property owners go further than variance stipulates.

Building and Property: John Allen: John has served under three administrations and he and his other commission members feel that their "purpose" can no longer be adequately done by a volunteer commission. They are currently working with the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance to hire a person to oversee the maintenance and construction projects associated with Town buildings and

properties. This commission feels that one of the most important projects done was an extensive study of the Town Hall infrastructure and code compliance. John is fearful that nothing will be done as the general public is not aware of all that is needed to be done to the building.

Planning: Addie Roberts: This week interviewing of firms will begin for the Depot Study Project. Addie expressed her support of Building and Property Commission especially in regard to the Town Hall upgrades. She has requested a copy of the reports John referred to.

Parks and Recreation Commission: Sheila Anson: This commission is doing well - great members who work well together and working well with the schools. Numerous programs are held throughout the year that are very successful. The Pavilion Project (bathrooms) is hopefully going to begin this spring. This has taken longer than hoped but Sheila expressed her feeling that it is difficult for volunteers who are not fundraisers to go out and raise the amount of money they needed to. The goal is nearly reached and she has expressed her gratitude to her commissioners and to those who have contributed so generously.

Selectmen: Nick Solley: The Board works well together and Nick specifically feels he is helpful in assisting Dick oversee the highway department and the numerous projects that fall under that department. The Board has accepted bids for the Town Hall Elevator and ADA Upgrade Project and will award the bid at the next Selectmen's meeting. The STEAP grant that will provide funding for projects in New Preston, the highway department property and Depot is moving along. Nick mentioned his personal endorsement of hiring the property manager to oversee the Town properties.

Historic District: Paul Graney: The Commission is attempting to establish a reputation of being more forceful with its regulations and enforcement of same. There is also a membership issue in that some members have been on the commission for many years and are thinking of "retiring". Recruitment of historic district residents, architects, lawyers would be beneficial. When a Certificate of Appropriateness is applied for the Commission now notifies adjoining neighbors (at HCD expense). The suggestion was made to have the applicant take care of this notification step (and prove it by registered mail receipts) at their expense as other commissions require. Paul also mentioned that the scope of their work and responsibilities is much different than years ago - much larger projects. There are currently two outstanding Applications for C of A's - one is a fence issue that HDC is working with Zoning on and the other is the Ross project on Sunny Ridge Road. Following the discussion earlier on the Town Hall renovation and upgrade, Paul suggested that an application be made to place the building on the National Register of Historic Places. If this designation were granted, some of the new building codes would not have to be conformed with. Paul asked for advice on having a "pre-application meeting" with property owners. Zoning will occasionally do this but always has at least two people present and the property owner must be told this meeting is "non-binding".

Inland Wetlands: Mark Picton: This is a diligent Commission and all who serve take their work very seriously. Mark complimented Mike Ajello and Janet Hill for doing an excellent job with the administrative and enforcement work of this Commission. He feels that the Commission is trying very hard to educate the public and the beneficial result will be to protect the natural characteristics of our Town as much as possible. The Commission attempts to be firm and consistent and bases their decisions and issuances of permits upon facts and information in the public record.

First Selectman: Dick Sears: Upcoming: the next Town newsletter will be mailed on March 1st; the Town is working closely with the State regarding the Lake Waramaug Agreement; the Shepaug River Case is nearing an end according to attorneys; and the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance are gearing up for the budget process for fiscal year 2005-2006. Dick would like to have another meeting of this Council in late March or early April.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Anne Greene

Selectmen's Secretary