**TOWN OF WASHINGTON**

**Board of Selectmen**

**Minutes**

**Special Meeting**

**October 23, 2014**

***Minutes are subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen.***

**Present:** First Selectman Mark E. Lyon, Selectmen Richard O. Carey and Jay Hubelbank.

Washington Business Association members: Fran Kielty, Lisa Stein, Valerie Sedelnick, Loretta Stagen, Howard Rosenfeld.

**Call to order:** First Selectman Mark Lyon called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. welcoming the members of the WBA.

**Discussion:** Mark Lyon began the meeting with an update on the following:

* **Cell Tower:** The tower has been erected and half the branches have been installed. At the present time, AT&T is the only carrier that has signed on. Homeland Towers has estimated service will be provided by the first of the year. Mark is cautiously optimistic.
* **Plaza Committee:** The interviewing process of the firms that submitted RFQs is completed and findings have been submitted to the State. Once the State approves of the firm chosen, the Town can begin to negotiate with the firm for pricing, etc. The Selectmen and Plaza Committee would like to begin working with the selected firm late winter, early spring. It is estimated that construction will not begin until sometime in 2016. The design chosen for the Plaza and River Road should be something that could be carried through the entire Depot. Public meetings will be held giving the public an opportunity to express their ideas and ask questions. Mark explained the complexities and procedures that must be followed for this type of grant. At some point in the future, he would like to see a similar grant applied for for New Preston.

Fran Kielty, President of WBA, and other members, along with the Selectmen, discussed the following points:

* **Parking for business employees and customers:** Enhancing of the Titus Road area would require upgrading the lighting (possibly solar) and carving out an additional area to provide more spaces. Mark Lyon explained the progress that has been made in making a materials storage area on the Highway Department property on Blackville Road. Once completed this would allow the material piles on Titus Road to be moved – creating significant more space.
* **Economic Development Committee:** Mark reported that the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NWCOG) has secured a grant that will provide for a shared economic development consultant over a two-year period “to implement village center vitality initiatives in Canaan, Cornwall, Goshen, Kent, North Canaan, Norfolk, Salisbury and Sharon.” These initiative will focus on supporting existing businesses, creating jobs and filling vacant commercial spaces. Jocelyn Ayer, Assistant Executive Director of COG, will work with the Planning and Zoning Commissions of Towns not covered by the grant (including Washington) to develop ideas. Fran Kielty has attended several of the Northwest Connecticut Economic Committee meetings and has found them to be informative. She invited the Selectmen to attend, if possible. An Economic Development Committee (or Coordinator) could promote what the Town has to offer by sharing of ideas between Administration, businesses, and what works in other towns and then promoting these ideas through press releases, etc.

The following ideas were shared and discussed:

* **Route 202 signage** - directing tourists to Washington Depot and what it offers.
* **Survey (Town Newsletter?)** - asking townspeople what type of businesses they feel are needed in the Depot and what would they most likely support.
* **Town Administration** – working with WBA to allow more businesses to come to the Depot – working with landlords for lower rents??
* **Appointing business representatives to Town Commissions** – (need to be Town residents).

Summary:

* **More cooperation and communication** between the Town and WBA has been requested as well as following up on requests to assure their implementation when possible. The WBA feels that each of the meetings they have had with the Board of Selectmen has recurring concerns/ requests, etc. with little progress being made.
* **Meeting on a more regular basis.**

**Adjournment:**

* **Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 5:30 p.m. By Mark Lyon, seconded by Dick Carey and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Anne Greene

Selectmen’s Secretary