

February 25, 2010

Special Meeting

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

Present:

First Selectman Mark E. Lyon, Selectmen James L. Brinton and Nicholas N. Solley.

Land Use Chairmen, Commissioners, Staff and Visitors:

David Owen, Steve Wadelton, Addie Roberts, Sarah Gager, Wayne Hileman, Alison Gilchrist, Kelly Boling, Susan Payne, Gary Fitzherbert, Tony Bedini, Allen Kerr, Brad Sedito, Ray Reich, Chris Charles, Janet Hill, Mike Ajello.

Call to Order:

First Selectman Lyon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. welcoming and thanking all those in attendance. Mark explained this would be an informal meeting and an opportunity to share ideas and ask questions.

Highlights:

Board of Selectmen:

Mark Lyon reported that the work at the Town Beach/Beach House is nearly completed and the project went well. Grading and landscaping will take place in the spring. Engineering work has been done at the Town's Highway Department property as part of the plan of to accommodate materials that have been stored on Titus Road. Peter Talbot has been working on a proposal for the Titus Park Road property and will present his plan to the Selectmen and public on March 25, 2010 at 5:30 p.m. at a Special Selectmen's Meeting. Peter is looking for input, comments, etc. Flood plain studies for this property and the Depot as a whole, are being considered for budget purposes.

Zoning:

David Owen reported that his Commission has been working diligently on regulations regarding "inns". He is hopeful that a proposal will be complete by the end of March and will then go to a public hearing process. Janet Hill reminded all commissioners that the Land Use staff is there to help and support when and where needed.

Gary Fitzherbert spoke of several issues that are of importance to him. One of his major concerns is the dramatic drop in the number of children in Washington and the increase of people over 60 coming into Town. Gary feels the Town has to have goals and develop plans to prevent our becoming a "gated community" as it is already one of the least diverse towns in the State.

Planning:

Addie Roberts reported that her Commission has begun discussions on the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development. Planning will be looking for comments from the Town's Boards, including Selectmen, in an effort to facilitate the process of the Plan due in 2013. This new plan would hopefully be an update of the present plan as opposed to a rewriting.

Zoning Board of Appeals:

Brad Sedito reported that it has been a relatively quiet year for ZBA. The Special Exception for generators has been taken out of the Zoning regulations and ZBA is working on re-writing a regulation for Zoning to consider. Brad also mentioned that once a variance is granted from ZBA, it is important to make sure it is proofed by ZBA and the property owner and posted correctly on the property deed with the Town Clerk.

Historic District Commission:

Alison Gilchrist expressed her appreciation to Allen Kerr, her co-chairman. One of the more important issues facing HDC is the enlargement of modest rural homes, especially in the Calhoun/Ives District. Deterioration and occasional loss of historic barns is another concern. Alison suggested a cross-reference of regulations, etc. with other Land Use Commissions and requested a greater presence in the POCD.

Conservation:

Susan Payne and Vice Chairman Kelly Boling reported that they are an advisory commission and have a goal of protecting the rural character of Washington – 30% being maintained as open space (between acreage protected by easements, Steep Rock, State Park, etc. that goal has been exceeded). They reported that a stewardship plan would be developed for 108 New Milford Tpk – recently purchased by the Town. Conservation is hopeful that monies will be put into next year's budget for the Open Space Fund. Kelly is working on designating Route 202 from Route 45 to Couch Road as a Scenic Road. The main reason for this would be to prevent an enlargement of the road similar to what has been done in New Milford on Route 7. Work will be done on Route 45 from the Village of New Preston to the Lake. Discussion took place on the widening of shoulders and repair of a deteriorating retaining wall. Scenic Road guidelines will be used and construction will take place next spring. Susie spoke of the Natural Resource Inventory report, the Greenway Committee and their involvement with other commissions. She also asked those present to look into proposed Senate Bill 206 which would give local land use commissions the authority for determining the siting of cell towers instead of the CT Siting Council. Zoning and Conservation briefly discussed their working together on writing of more comprehensible regulations on cell towers.

Inland Wetlands:

Tony Bedini very proud of his commissioners who regularly attend training seminars, receive training, etc. Apparently there are attorney's that will do pro-bono work by coming to various Towns to give seminars. Tony would like to hold such a seminar in Washington and invite other Land Use commissions to attend. He spoke of New Milford's Walker Brook development project and problems with erosion and sediment controls that are affecting Walker Brook. Mike Ajello, Enforcement Officer, has written to New Milford's Enforcement Officer and our Inland Wetlands Commission has written to Mayor Murphy. Tony asked those present their opinion on Washington's involvement in monitoring the Brook and what we could/should do if the reports were not favorable. He also spoke about speaking with Fire Chief Showalter regarding writing of regulations on the width of roads and bridges. He feels we should be consistent on this. He also mentioned the Fire Department's request for property owners to have dry hydrants installed. This is a public service but some property owners don't come to Inland Wetlands first. This needs to be clarified by regulations and/or ordinances. Sarah Gager offered suggestions on the monitoring and will give information to Tony.

Housing:

Wayne Hileman reported that his Commission has been examining a piece of property that has been offered to the Town for affordable housing. They are also working on Land Use regulations and mapping to put forth a proposal for a new "zone" in town that would accommodate higher density single family dwellings as well as age restricted multi-family dwellings. He reminded those present the Housing Commission is not the Washington Housing Trust and their thrust is not affordable housing. His Commission feels there are two groups that need to be addressed and planned for: young families and

senior housing. Wayne cautioned against plans that are done but not followed through on.

Parks and Recreation:

Ray Reich represented Parks and Recreation and thanked the Board of Selectmen and Nick Solley in particular for the job that has been so well done at the Town Beach. He reminded those present about this Commission's hard work at maintaining the fields, the Pavilion, walking path, etc. Much of this work is done by volunteers on the Commission and has resulted in large benefits for the community.

Visitor:

Chris Charles addressed the fact that there are three alternate vacancies on the Inland Wetlands Commission and no alternates on the Housing Commission. Tony Bedini mentioned that at present there are two interested in candidates for IW alternates and Mark Lyon explained that the ordinance creating the Housing Commission has no provision for alternates but this is being addressed and may be an agenda item on the May Town Meeting.

Additional Thoughts:

Mark Lyon spoke of the Washington Business Association's focus on promoting and sustaining existing businesses in Washington's villages. Some have suggested the creation of an Economic Development Commission that would be involved in attracting businesses to Town – several vacant commercial properties – something to think about. He also addressed Board of Education Chairman Hirschfield's looking for interested residents to examine the future of elementary education in the Region's three towns. This study would address much more than the question of consolidation or not. It would look at the building's infrastructures and what the future holds once the present buildings are "repaired".

The general consensus of those present was that this evening's meeting was very constructive and another will be scheduled in September 2010.

Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m.
by Mark Lyon, seconded by Jim Brinton and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Anne Greene
Selectmen's Secretary