

MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF CHAIRPERSONS
APRIL 13, 2015 – 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Schmidt, Stebbins, Bates, Pritchard, Scott, Sutherland, Rafferty,
Dowling

Staff: Norris, Galetta

Acting Chairperson Pritchard called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF October 20, 2014

MOTION: To approve the minutes of October 20, 2014 as written.

Motion made by Scott, seconded by Schmidt. Motion passed 5-0-3, 3 abstentions (Dowling, Sutherland, Rafferty).

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Board of Education School Facilities Plan – Update

Norris stated that the School Facilities Initiative Task Force has adopted a plan. Several scenarios were discussed and the Task Force chose to support building a new middle school and two new elementary schools. A possible location for the new middle school is adjacent to the high school on the Merritt property. Cost of renovations and changes in the reimbursement rate from the State make it more advantageous to build new elementary schools on-site. There is enough room to build new schools while the middle schools are in place to house students. The projected cost is \$180 Million, of which, \$80-\$90 Million would be the responsibility of the Town. However, if one elementary school is designated as a magnet school the reimbursement rate would be 80% for that school.

Norris noted that a referendum will take place after the first of year. The likelihood of it passing will depend on the voters. There will be public information sessions that will try to cover the five different areas of Town. A survey will also be mailed out.

The Committee discussed the land that will be used for the school and what property is available to replace it. Norris advised that Mark Oefinger is working on that with CTDEEP and he will get some answers on this for the next meeting. The Committee had questions on the possible entrances to the middle school if it is built on the Merritt property. Norris explained the reasons why the only two options are entering from Fort Hill Road and through the Grasso Technical School property. There are also some wetlands impacts that show up on the plan which will be addressed. At this point the plan is not ready to go to the Council. Relative to a question regarding the racial distribution and bussing issues, Norris clarified that the Board of Education and the architectural consultant have done the review. That is why one of the schools is potentially a magnet school but it is understood that this may not resolve all the educational equity issues.

2. Acquisition of USS GROTON Sail

Norris stated that the Committee continues to meet and is in the process of hiring a consultant to do a feasibility study. One or two primary sites under consideration are the Costa property on Thames Street, which backs up to the Fort on the West side, and the Groton Heights School site because of its proximity to Fort Griswold. Chad Frost, of Kent & Frost, will develop some renderings and rough cost to help select a site. Both the Town and the City have provided \$5,000 of seed money to begin a feasibility study. Currently the sail is still in Bremerton, Washington. There is a cost to transport it to Groton and it needs to be reassembled, sandblasted, and painted. The rationale for the project was discussed. The total cost of the project is approximately \$800,000 – \$1 Million dollars. The Committee won't really know how it will proceed until the feasibility study is done and Frost puts his information together.

3. Navy Excess Property on Gungywamp Road

Norris advised that the US Navy has identified that the Shepherd of the Sea Chapel has become excess property and has placed it on the excess property list. The parcel is approximately 13 acres and could be a valuable asset to the Town. The Town Manager has been contacted by the Park Service and asked to provide a letter of interest which he has done. When the GSA puts property on this list they offer it to other federal entities before it is offered to the municipality. Deb Jones from OPDS will continue to follow up on this.

4. Hyde Pond Dam Removal

Norris recommended postponing this item to the next regularly scheduled meeting. The Committee had no objections.

5. Airport Development Zone – Update

Norris provided a map of the Airport Development Zone to the Committee and stated that our Economic Development Specialist, Kristin Clarke, is involved in discussions with the State and New London regarding shifting the Zone. She is working with a consultant and State Representative Andre Baumgartner on this project. Norris explained that currently 1500 acres to the south are underwater because of how the Zone is defined. Shifting the Zone will result in a larger area for the Town and allow some of New London to use the benefits. The benefits to the Town will be similar to those of the Enterprise Zone. Clarke worked with Representative Baumgartner to submit legislation and provided testimony to convince the State that the Zone should be moved. In addition, we need to provide estimates of jobs that could potentially result from the shifted Zone as well as investments in property, and such. Clarke is continuing to work on this. More data can be provided at the next meeting.

Sutherland mentioned a study that shows how people are modeling the airport area and looking at a potentially serious problem because of rising sea level. The time frame is 69 years. Norris noted that Deb Jones is looking at this type of issue relative to the updated Coastal Management Plan.

6. New Recreational Facilities in Town

Norris had no information available on this item and suggested postponing the discussion to the next meeting. The Committee had no objections.

7. Market Analysis and Zoning Audit

This project is in progress. OPDS put out an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) in October. The revenue for the project was issued by the Town Council. A Selection Committee chose the team of VHB and Camoin Associates as our consultants. The next step is to form an advisory committee that will meet four to five times over the next six months. The contract is finalized and OPDS will have a kick off meeting in May or June. The Committee and the consultants will be looking at economic development, various zoning regulations, and doing an inventory assessment of what and where properties can be developed.

8. OPDS and Budget – Update

Jonathan Reiner has submitted a budget that comprises moving the position Norris holds to the Public Works Department. This position will then head up the Town's sustainability efforts. The budget also includes hiring a manager to oversee Community Development and Economic Development. The position will provide oversight and allow Clarke to do more economic development. A planning manager position remains in the department which could be filled after Norris' position moves to Public Works. Additionally, a vacant Inspection Services Technician position may be filled by a Planner I position. In summary, no full time employees are being added but the department will be more streamlined by the reorganization.

Norris briefly discussed how the sustainability effort will be organized. The plan is to hire a grant writer to replace a current Material Control Specialist position to support sustainability. An administrative support position in Public Works will be eliminated. The expectation is to be able to do more with energy savings for the Town and work on sustainability projects.

9. Identification of Topics for Discussion

- School Facilities - update
- Merritt Property Ball Field - update
- Mystic Art Association – parking redesign and construction report

V. OLD BUSINESS

Norris discussed Mystic Streetscape Phase II. He acknowledged that the wooden tops for the sidewalk seats, bike racks, and trash cans on Water Street still need to be installed. He indicated that sidewalk in a few areas also need to be caulked.

Norris stated that there is still the potential for a Phase III project; however, it would not be a continuation of Phase II but rather a brand new project. Therefore, Phase II must be finished out first and then determine what monies are left for a Phase III. Reiner is also assessing what other things that may be needed in Mystic as well.

The Committee discussed the issue of truck deliveries and garbage pickup in Mystic. Norris acknowledged that there are still parking issues in downtown Mystic.

The Committee also stated that Water Street parking is not enforced near the Oyster Club and the Art Association. Norris will look into this and discuss it with Reiner and Oefinger.

The Committee also discussed the area adjacent to 28 Water Street. There are questions concerning what property belongs to the homeowner and what property belongs to the State, and therefore, available for public use. Norris stated that except for a 12' state right-of-way along the street the property belongs to 10 High Street.

VI. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSONS

Sue Sutherland Zoning Commission Chairperson shared the recent zoning amendments she and the Commission worked on. With the help of Reiner and OPDS they are trying to simplify the Special Permit process. Also approved at a public hearing were changes to the WDD, Open Space Subdivision lot coverage, Flood Protection Standards, Erosion and Sediment Controls, and the NMDD. The written regulations should be made available shortly.

VII. REPORT OF STAFF

Norris advised the Committee that Public Works Director Gary Schneider is looking at energy projects. One identified is street lighting. He is looking at replacing 1400 street lights in CL&P service area. At a meeting at COG, the Town learned that CCM signed a contract with Tanko as one of three vendors. Tanko would do an inventory of all the poles and lights. They will provide it to the Town and give an estimate of what the lighting replacement will cost. A street light maintenance program would also be provided. Currently Public Works outsources maintenance of the street lights. This would result in a savings benefit.

The Committee asked about the Energy, Environment and Conservation policy established by the Town. Part of that policy should be to turn off lights when not in use. The Annex parking lot lights are on even when the Annex is not in use. Norris will check with Gary Schneider and report back to the Committee.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn at 6:54 pm was made by Stebbins, seconded by Dowling, so voted unanimously.

Prepared by: Lynda C. Galetta
Office Assistant II