

MINUTES
NOANK SCHOOL REUSE TASK FORCE SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX, COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

- a. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
- b. Members present were Bruce Flax, Ed Stebbins, Hank Steinfeld, June Evered, Anny Payne, Robert McBain, Frank Socha, Carl Reichard, Pat Doyle
- c. Staff: Holly Bridgham, Mark Oefinger
- d. Others: Dr. Ray and Arlene Johnson, Robert Palm, Alexas Dudden, Mark Silvester, William R. Sweeney, Peter Crawford, Deborah J. Tedford, Steve Anderson, Ian Holliday (MRP), Michele Lablin, Archie Swindell (Survey Administrator)

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Bill Sweeney presented a petition and letter regarding the property (attached) - a part of a group called "Friends of Fort Hill." They believe the park should have "low intensity" use utilized for a passive recreation park. He said the immediate neighbors are not in favor of anything but passive recreation. Mentioned he had private pledges of close to \$80,000.
- b. Alexis Dutton was surprised about the petition and Friends of Fort Hill as she lives in the neighborhood and was unaware of the petition and letter. Was curious as to their definition of "Passive Use."
- c. Dr. Johnson shared Ms. Dutton's concerns – he too had never heard of the group, petition, etc. Dr. Johnson had several questions about the survey including the exact deadline for the committee's recommendation to Town Council, what the public's further involvement would be, what would happen from this point forward, will the public be advised of the recommendation before it is presented to Town Council and if the school is demolished for open space, who would assess this.
- d. Debra Tedford stated she supported Bill Sweeney's proposal. Passive use would be low upkeep which would mean less impact on the tax base.
- e. Robert Palm also did not know of the petition. He favors passive use – open space. Wanted to know why some neighbors were left out of signing the petition.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF – July 21, 2011 – Approved.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- a. Discussed the survey results. Archie Swindell was on hand to answer any questions.
- b. Discussed the zoning change the Noank Zoning Board made with specific regard to the Noank School Property. The change basically states proposals for property use for Parks, Playgrounds (municipally owned facilities) are allowed with special exception – listed criteria must be looked at and would also require a public hearing. Under previous zoning, public use was by right of the zone.

- c. We then discussed next steps. Frank, speaking for the Noank Fire District, wanted to explore retaining parts of the building and keep the property open space – for use by the fire district. He opposes houses. Could spread renovations out over time.

Hank Steinford thought if we advise a benefit to the Noank Fire District we would have to do for other Fire Districts.

Robert McBain wanted to look at the possibility of 55 plus Condos, Adult Day Care, private school or professional offices.

There was a motion made by Carl Reichard and seconded by Ed Stebbins – that passed 5 to 3 (against were Steinford, Flax and McBain) to recommend to Council the property remains publicly owned.

Discussed that Frank would need to give us in writing, a paper for Council presentation on how the Fire District would approach the property. Motion made by Bruce Flax and seconded, recommend to Town Council that as publicly owned property we would give the Noank Fire District a 6 month time frame to present a plan for the school and property, for clarification it would be 6 months from the date the Town Council votes on the recommendations. Passed 6 to 2 (against were McBain and Steinford).

Discussed if the Fire District does not want to use the building/property and a motion was made by Carl Reichard that a recommendation be made to Council for the building to be raised and used as open space if the Council votes down the Noank Fire District Plan (or if the Fire District does not present a plan within the allotted 6 months). Passed 6 For, 1 Against (Socha) and 1 Abstention.

Agreed next meeting is October 6th where Bruce Flax will present the Committee recommendation document for discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT at 8:05pm