

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING
DECEMBER 19, 2013 – 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Munn, Pritchard, Sherrard
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Zod, Kane (6:22 p.m.)
Absent: Steinford
Staff present: Berry, Cullen, Murphy, Norris, Oefinger,
Robarge, Schneider, Gilot

Chairman Sherrard called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. and stated that there were five voting members present.

II. ITEM OF BUSINESS

1. 2015-2020 Capital Improvement Program – Review and Recommendations

Mark Oefinger, Town Manager, addressed and thanked the Commission for reviewing the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He gave a brief overview of the CIP package and noted that it is a planning document intended to identify projects that the Town needs to consider over the next 6 years. He was pleased the process started earlier this year. The program proposed includes \$2.7 million in reserve funding, not including \$1.3 million the Board of Education requested be moved up to next year, which is not reflected in the document presented tonight.

Oefinger noted some changes from last year. The State has established a new grant funding program, most likely temporary, with about \$1.2 million anticipated for next year to be used for road-related projects. The Pequot Fund, which was started when casinos came into the state, currently provides minimal funds to Groton.

The Commission reviewed each project with Staff, and supported the CIP, as presented, noting the following:

1. Roads, I) Crystal Lake Road/Military Highway – The former Fusconi property was purchased from funding, with a shortfall in funds for environmental cleanup (approximately \$60,000). The acquisition and clean-up should be no cost to Town (other than department staff time). Other construction will not begin for at least another two years. Road improvements, traffic light, intersection will be funded by the Town.

This project was supported by the Commission.

At the request of staff, the Commission concurred to review the Education section next as Mr. Robarge had a conflicting meeting at 7:00 p.m.

5. Education, B) Asbestos removal – Mr. Robarge said it was not successful last year.

Plans and specs for various Education projects which had been moved up, were for engineering and construction. Oefinger said the Public Works Department coordinates with the Board of Education on certain projects, especially parking lot design, and the Town may be able to provide some of the engineering, but it depends on the project. In many instances the Town has the ability or the knowledge, but doesn't have the time due to budget cuts, etc.

2. Drainage and Watershed Protection, D) Fishtown Road Improvements – Mr. Schneider and the Commission discussed trying to identify the alternatives for the stormwater drainage system since the reoccurring flooding events in recent years.

2. Sidewalks, B) New Sidewalk Construction – Thomas Road – Additional costs for engineering, design work, etc., have caused delays and significant increase in costs, particularly for the design of the project, which is being funded 100% by the Town.

The Commission supported this project.

4. Parks & Recreation, B) Trail Improvement Program – Funds requested as a match for trail grants. Funds also requested for permitting and signage for proposed bikeways.

The Commission is supportive of trail improvements.

3. Parks & Recreation, D) Open Space Acquisition and Development – Oefinger noted that with the acquisition of the Spicer Property the account needs to be funded again.

4. Parks and Recreation, E) William Seely School – The Town Manager said the Town should not hold on to Seely. The Town needs to find a location for the recreation events that occur in that building now. He anticipates the Board of Education may turn over the Fitch Middle School building to the Town, which may be used to relocate those events from Seely, as well as possibly some Town departments.

Due to his recent return from the Middle East, Sherrard left at 7:55 p.m.

8. Economic Development, A) Economic Assistance Fund – Mr. Oefinger said no funds have been added over the last few years. The Flanders Road utility extension referendum was voted down; if a future developer needs incentive assistance with utilities or roads, etc., the Town would have an opportunity to assist with incentives.

The Commission supported this fund.

8. Economic Development, B) Mystic Education Center – Oefinger discussed the status of the center. This item will be added to the discussion of the POCD Steering Committee for consideration regarding Economic Development.

10. Energy Efficiency and Conservation, A) Gas Line Extension – The benefits and costs of a gas force main extension were discussed. The

Commission supports consideration of opportunities that reduce energy use and costs.

Mr. Oefinger and Staff thanked the Commission for their input into this year's CIP.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. made by Zod, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously.

Jeffrey Pritchard, Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Debra Gilot
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