

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 7, 2015, 7:30pm
Town Hall Meeting Room

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, Selectman Dennis Tracey, Selectman David Muller, Town Administrator Tom Landry, Police Chief John Troxell, Superintendent Colleen Palmer, Administrative Assistant Randi Derene, Board of Finance members; Allen Swerdlowe, Melissa Koller, Bob Ferguson and Steve Ezzes

This meeting was recorded and videotaped. The tapes are available in the Selectmen's office. The meetings are available for viewing online via the Town's website.

Ms. Weinstein called the meeting to order at: 7:40pm

Pledge of Allegiance: Ms. Weinstein led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Discussion/decision regarding the re-appointment of Richard Wolf to the Building Committee for a term to end June 30, 2017:

Mr. Wolf has been a chairman and vice chairman of the building committee, and has served on this committee for over 20 years. He would like to be reappointed for 2 more years. Mr. Tracey moved to re-appoint Richard Wolf to the building committee for a term to end June 30, 2017. Mr. Muller seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/decision regarding the appointment of Carolyn Hynes to the Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee for a term to expire May 7, 2017.

Ms. Hynes has lived in Weston for 10 years. She is a runner and a cyclist and has a background in event planning. She has already attended committee meetings. Mr. Muller moved to appoint Carolyn Hynes to the Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee for a term to expire May 7, 2017. Mr. Tracey seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/decision regarding accepting a donation from the Vranos Family Foundation to the Weston Police Department in the amount of \$1500.00. Chief John Troxell.

Chief Troxell would like to use this money to purchase helmets and other items. Mr. Tracey moved to accept a donation from the Vranos Family Foundation to the Weston Police Department in the amount of \$1500.00. Mr. Muller seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/decision regarding an update on the Global Facilities Committee.

The Board of Finance joined the Board of Selectmen for this discussion.

Ms. Weinstein summarized the last Global Facilities Committee Meeting. She said that there was consensus to move the facilities project to the three Boards for their consideration.

Dr. Palmer told Ms. Weinstein that in approximately 8 years, if school enrollment is on trend, the school administration should be able to move their offices into the middle school and function as one unit. A concern, which is shared by Town offices as well, is that when everyone isn't under one roof, things don't run as efficiently as they could. As per Mr. Olenik, the Annex roof was

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evaluated and the report says that the structure can stay as is for another 8-10 years. With the proposed plan the Seniors would be able to stay where they are for 8 years. When the administrators relocate to the middle school, the Senior Center could move to Central Office, giving it a permanent home. North House would be hibernated, in case enrollment goes back up, or if school administrators need additional the space. This could save the school money, and avoid renovating North House, which is very costly. BOE needs to review these plans. A new public safety complex would be constructed and Town employees would move to the vacated police department.

Our goal is to keep our debt down.

If we maintain a reserve fund between 10 and 12 % of the budget, that would mean we would issue a bond of 5.3 million if we maintained 10.5% or 6.3 million if we maintained 12%. This plan also assumes an interest rate of 2.75. Mr. Landry brought up the concern of arbitrage. If we bond the project now, we would need to start within 2 years. We may not be able to make that time frame work. If the town could save that 12% of fund balance, in 5 years we wouldn't need to have a bond for the Land Use renovation of PD. If we came up short, it would be about the time when the middle school would need some renovation work (creating administrative space, renovations in science wing, project lead the way, etc..)

Our total debt service would still be decreasing with this plan.

What does this do to our taxes? If we looked at a median assessed value of \$590,800, taxes would increase next year by \$45.00 from \$17,445 to about \$17,490, with a maximum increase of \$148 a year over the life span of the bond. Ms. Weinstein is concerned that interest rates will go up if we wait too much longer to start this project.

The BOE still has to discuss this plan. It will be discussed at their next meeting according to Dr. Palmer.

Ms. Koller and Mr. Ferguson expressed concerns over the uncertainty of the plans. Ms. Koller wanted a guarantee that the Town would fund the school projects in 8 years. Mr. Ezzes felt that would be unrealistic. Mr. Muller recommended a bi-annual review to make sure we stay on course, and revisit any variables as needed.

Mr. Tracey said that overall, he likes the plan, particularly since we are only doing things as you need them and only spending money as required. Mr. Landry brought up the possible issue of arbitrage issues.

Ms. Weinstein asks for a consensus of the Board of Finance as she would like to ask Mr. Humes to cost out the proposal for the new public safety complex as approved by the Police Commission. We also need to get consensus from the BOE. She stated Jerry Sargent was in favor of the plan. Mr. Ezzes is in favor. Ms. Koller is not in favor but does feel this is the best plan proposed so far. Mr. Grauberd will support but would like the plan in writing before he gives his final opinion. Mr. Ferguson likes the plan for the police station, but he is skeptical that we will get voter approval. He also would like to see all the previous options that have been presented. Ms. Weinstein said she would get Mr. Ferguson copies of all the previous proposals.

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The consensus was to move this forward. Ms. Weinstein will continue to have conversations with the Police Dept. and the Board of Education.

Ms. Nina Daniel stated that she feels the meeting tonight is a big improvement from the last meeting. Tonight's comprehensive plan was more productive and she is in favor of Ms. Weinstein's plan.

Presentation and discussion regarding "Creating a Strategic Plan for Weston's Future – Phase I".

Ms. Weinstein presented her power point presentation (see attached).

Discussion continues after the presentation: Mr. Muller states that there is inherent conflict between a large percentage of the population that wants Weston to stay the way it was when they moved here and the people that are trying to make changes to continue to attract people to the town. Ms. Koller agrees. She raised a concern about people saying "don't raise our taxes but you can't change Weston". She said either we would have to cut back on our schools or incur some sort of development. Ms. Koller stated that this study is terrific, but she questioned the Phase II. Ms. Weinstein clarified it is just a suggestion of a way to go forward. Mr. Chris Spaulding adds that this was a data gathering exercise, and Phase II encompasses suggested ideas of next steps.

Ms. Weinstein adds that she would like to form a select committee and work at the next meeting on the mission statement. Mr. Tracey and Mr. Muller agreed. If any members of the public have an interest in serving on this committee, they should come forward. The purpose of tonight's presentation is to give a sense of statistical and financial sense of what it means if we were to further develop Weston, given our existing zoning regulations. Mr. Tracey supports the Plan. He believes there is a problem in Weston and it needs to be addressed.

Don Saltzman asked "why do we have to do something?" Ms. Weinstein stated that we don't have to do anything. But we do need to garner public opinion, so the research needs to be done. Discussion will continue at our next BOS meeting.

Discussion/decision regarding an update from the Lachat Town Farm Commission; Ellen McCormick

See attached sheet with highlights of 2013 to 2014 and plans for 2015 to 2016

Ms. Weinstein added that Ms. McCormick needs to check with Planning and Zoning to see if they need a permit for the flea market.

Ms. Weinstein notified that the STEAP Grant has been delayed. They are given out on a rolling basis. Three awards were given out this year and we were not in that round. Our application is still pending and we hope to hear in the next month.

Ms. Baldwin received estimates for HVAC systems. It was not part of the STEAP grant application. It will be approximately \$40,000. Mr. Landry said they should take the money from the maintenance fund. (approximately \$150,000). Mr. Muller made a motion to approve taking up to \$45,000 from the Lachat Maintenance Fund for the purchase and installation for the HV system. Mr. Tracy seconded. Motion is carried unanimously.

Ms. Weinstein also added that she would like to see more fundraising towards this project.

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Discussion/decision regarding adopting the proposed Dog Ordinance.

No motion made. The public hearing will be continued on May 21st at 7:00pm and this item will be added the agenda for the BOS meeting following the hearing.

Discussion/decision regarding approval of the language change in Chapter 79, Section 79-3, D(1) of the Firearms Ordinance. Mr. Tracey made a motion to approve the language change in Chapter 79, Section 79-3 D(1) of the Firearms Ordinance. Mr. Muller seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/decision regarding the approval of Property Tax Refunds in the amount of \$2,410.19.

Ally Bank	\$1,041.21
Mercedes Benz	\$538.45
Natalie H. Ross	\$330.46
Bernard Grenstein	\$258.65
Toyota	\$241.42
Total:	\$2,410.19

Mr. Muller made a motion to approve the Property Tax Refunds in the amount of \$2,410.19. Mr. Tracey seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of minutes from the BOS Meetings of February 11th, March 5th, 19th and April 1st, 2015. Mr. Tracey moved to approve the minutes of the BOS Meetings of February 11th, March 5th, 19th and April 1st, 2015. Mr. Muller seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Open Items:

a-First Selectman Updates

Ms. Weinstein gave an update about proposed Senate Bill 1 and other State legislative issues.

Mr. Muller stated that on April 28th the lights were tested again on the fields. The reading was 0.0. He is going to get a committee meeting together and put on the agenda how they will deal with the screening.

Adjourn: 10:22pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Randi Derene
Administrative Assistant

Minutes approved 6/4/15

Crafting a Strategic Plan for Weston's Future

Phase One

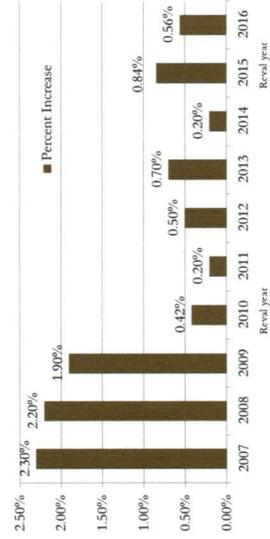
Why the concern?

- Declining school enrollment
- Essentially flat grand list growth
- Lagging housing market

Saturation Analysis

- Hired Dr. Floyd Lapp and the Turner Miller Group to determine the potential for residential and non-residential development, given current zoning regulations.
- Completed Phase One of what is envisioned to be a multi-phase project
- Primarily a data collecting exercise
- The intention of this report is to delineate what "could" be done and not necessarily what "should" be done to promote growth in Weston.

Grand List Growth



Factors that impact migration

- Quality of Education
- Tax rate
- Home prices
- Cost of living
- Quality of Life
- Zoning regulations and population density
- Available/Developable Land
- Convenient transit access
- Social Attitudes and Trends

The Millennials

- The millennial age group, those born between 1980 and 2000, will define the near future housing market. According to a recent white paper by Cushman and Wakefield, "Facing the Millennial Wave":
 - 62% of Millennials choose to live near shopping, restaurants, and offices;
 - 2/3 of Millennials are renters;
 - Millennials choose quality of life first, and job availability second. They prefer to live in the "cool cities", close to other highly educated people their age with a vibrant cultural scene.
 - Millennials are getting married and having children later in life, pushing the average age to bear a first child from 27 to 34.
- Will they continue to opt for home locations that are close to shopping, restaurants and their work or whether the tide will turn once again towards a more rural environment?

National and Statewide Trends

- According to a report from the CDC, the country's birth rate in 2014 dipped to 62.5 births per 1,000 women between the ages of 15 and 44. That is 10 percent lower than the birth rate in 2007, and a record low since the government started tracking birth rates in 1909.
- In 2011, CT had the 4th lowest birth rate in the U.S.
- Focus from the State is on growing TODs
- Focus from the State on "Aging in Place"
- Perception of higher taxes than our neighboring states

Fairfield County Trends

- Population growth is a little better than the State average.
- Population is aging, consistent with state-wide trends and national trends.
- Economic Development is picking up slightly, although not in the financial sectors.
- Housing development and associated school enrollment has demonstrated stronger growth in towns closest to transit, such as Darien, New Canaan, Westport and Fairfield.
- Aggressive building of rental units in Norwalk and Stamford that are easily accessible to transit.
- Traffic congestion and poor transit systems impact the decision to move to Fairfield County.

Fairfield County Real Estate Trends

- Buyers use of the internet has changed the nature of home buying
- If they can get closer to the city for close to the same price, they will choose a town closer.
- Current buyers are not looking for huge homes
- Buyers are looking for new or nearly new homes that are as maintenance free as possible.
- The trend for smaller, easy to landscape and maintain parcels is gaining momentum. Huge parcels of land are not on most buyers' must-have lists at the moment.
- Home buyers are continuing to seek out homes that are close to town or to the train. There is a perception that homes north of the Merritt Parkway are very far away from the 'action'.
- There is a shortage of lower priced homes for end users and first time buyers.

Weston...our challenges

- Low density community: One of our biggest strengths, yet also one of our biggest challenges.
 - Absence of public water supply and sewer system
 - Minimum 2 acre zoning regs
 - Absence of commercial and industrial development
 - Almost 3500 acres of open space
- According to the 2010 POCD, there are relatively few undeveloped, available buildable lots.
- Home buying age (25-49) is in the bottom third of the neighboring municipalities.
- Geographically challenged- proximity to rail and major highways

Weston...on the upswing?

- Sales as a % of all housing units @3.15% was second to Darien @4.3%;
- Second highest share of school age population in Fairfield County (35%).
- Highest average household size in our DRG . In fact, this has increased to 3.25 in 2009-2013 from 3.15 in 2007-2011. For comparison, the 2013 average for the U.S. is 2.63
- The speculative home market in Weston is making a slow comeback. Currently there are 6 spec homes on the market, priced from \$999,000 to \$2,495,000. Three of these homes are proposed for new construction where the builder is waiting for a buyer before they begin construction. There have been 10 land sales in the past year. They ranged in sale price from \$130,000 to \$400,000.

Non-Residential Development Potential

Non-Residential Development

- Commercial development is most successful along major arteries. Given its geographical location, Weston is not, and will never be, a destination for shopping
- Existing zoning regulations:
 - Minimum lot area of 5 acres
 - 300 feet of road frontage,
 - 100 foot setbacks for the buildings,
 - Maximum building size of 8,000 square feet and
 - Specific numbers of parking spaces.

“Weston Center”

- The only area in Town currently zoned for commercial development as a Neighborhood Shopping Center District (NSC).
- Generates very little revenue for the Town. The current real estate taxes are approximately \$145,000 (6 acres plus buildings and dev.) and the personal property taxes collected from all business located in The Center are less than \$18,000 a year.
- Adjacent 7 acre parcel that meets current regulations for commercial development.

“The Center of Town”

- Town properties along Rt. 57 (Jarvis, Onion Barn to Bus depot) were considered along with the privately owned properties on Rt. 57 between Norfield Rd. and School Rd.
- The boundaries of the existing Neighborhood Shopping Center (NSC) District would need to be expanded by the Planning & Zoning Commission to include these properties before commercial development on these parcels of land could be considered
- Concerns with respect to safety given the proximity of the site to the school campus.

Property abutting the Redding and Wilton Borders

- Georgetown Wire Mill Property is in tax foreclosure
- Fromson-Strassler and the privately owned “Weston Farms” were evaluated as potential sites for new commercial or office development
- Neither site has frontage along a major arterial road
- Excessive costs for site preparation to provide access and utilities to these “inland” properties
- Environmentally sensitive areas

Residential Development

Major Public Sites

- **Fromson-Stassler property:** Approximately 85 acres of undeveloped land lies in the northwest corner of the Town, on the Wilton town line.
 - 60 acres are unbuildable
 - Potential for 8-10 homes
- **Moore Property:** 36 acres on Lord's Hwy East
 - Beautiful, flat land
 - Town's deed to this property restricts sale to a third party for residential and/or commercial development
- Several other Town-owned properties were considered and rejected

Conclusions

Major Private Sites

- **Weston Farms:** approximately 97 acres off Osborne Farm Road in the Georgetown area of the town, south of the Meadow Ridge Retirement Community. It contains a vacant 75 acre parcel and several undeveloped 2-acre lots in an approved subdivision.
- **Belknap Property:** approximately 42 acres between Wampum Hill Road and Cindy Lane. It borders property held by the Aspetuck Land Trust. This land could be subdivided into a maximum of 17, two-acre single family lots.
- **Tannery Lane Subdivision:** This lot is west of the Saugatuck River, off of Banks Drive and Smith Ridge Road. Currently approved as a single house lot, it has recently been sold. This land could be potentially re-subdivided into a maximum of 11, two-acre single family lots.
- **Weston Woods:** This 22 acres property off Newtown Turnpike, south of the Singing Oaks Subdivision, was subdivided into residential lots and a 6-acre museum property for the Weston Woods Institute in 2009.

Millennials...Following in their parents' footsteps?

- By 2020 there will be more people in the U.S. in their 30's than anytime in history.
- Millennials made up 32% of home sales in 2014. Up 4% from 2012. The largest segment of buyers.
- Millennial growth in the suburbs rose by 1.4% compared to 1.2% in cities.
- Household formation rose by 1.7 million in the fourth quarter from the year before and increased 1.5 million in the first quarter from the same time frame in 2014.

Non-Residential Development

- Given the minimal land zoned for non-residential development, the opportunities under the existing zoning to supplement the town's tax base with commercial development are nearly nonexistent.
- Changes in zoning regulations could be considered.
- Currently, all commercial activity, including home occupations, represents approximately one percent of the grand list.
- **Could increasing services and amenities make Weston a more appealing place to move, and act as a significant factor in convincing residents to stay long term?**

Residential Development

- Under existing zoning, assuming development of all proposed sites yield 85 2-acre homes, at an average home price of \$1,000,000, we can expect a total grand list growth of \$59,500,000, a 2.6% increase.
- Changes in zoning regulations could allow:
 - Increasing the permitted density within certain areas of the town or the creation of cluster, or conservation cluster design subdivision regulations.
 - Planned Adult Communities: Small detached dwellings (on one-half to one-quarter acre lots) or townhouses, zoning regulations lay out a range of recreation and other amenities to be provided on site to be controlled by a Home Owners Association.
- **Could alternative housing make Weston a more appealing place to move, and act as a significant factor in convincing residents to stay long term?**

Next steps/Phase II

- Form a committee to explore the potential desire of current and future residents
 - Town Meetings, Focus Groups, Market Research
- Town Officials should reach out to all large non-developed private properties; efforts should be made to explore the intentions of the owners/developers
- The Board of Selectmen should collaborate with the Planning and Zoning Commission to determine the interest and feasibility of modifying the existing zoning regulations to promote the potential for housing and commercial changes.
- Conversations should be held with the Norwalk Transit District to determine the feasibility of bus service.
- A planning consultant should be considered to tie together all initiatives that involve "The Center of Town."

Final Thoughts

- The essential question we must ask ourselves is whether it is time to revisit our planning and zoning regulations to allow for more growth.
- If we can nudge our planning and zoning priorities in such a way as to encourage growth and maintain our open space and small town feel, what would be the positive (or negative) impact on grand list growth, home sales and school enrollment?
- And what would be the impact on the character of Weston?

Lachat Farm Vision for Board of Selectman's Meeting 5-7-15
Highlight for 2013-14 and Priorities for 2015 - 2016

Highlights 2013 - 2014

House

Foundation shored up.
Saltbox section rebuilt.
Chimney remediated.
New Roof with red cedar shakes installed.
Interior walls and ceilings sheetrock and plaster removed.
The new sign required by our lease agreement is up and says:
Lachat Town Farm at the Juliana Lachat Preserve. We'd like to thank to
Diane Renaud for her hard work.

Gardens/Farming Grants

2013 CT Ag Viability Grant - Requested \$50K, awarded \$17.5K to be rec'd 2015.

Community Gardens created.
Perimeter Fence put up with low roadside visibility.
42 Raised garden beds built and filled with soil - fully subscribed.
Irrigation system installed for Community Garden.
Brush, poison ivy were removed from House, Barn areas and surrounding walls.

2014 CT Ag Viability Grant - Requested \$50K, awarded \$17.0K to be rec'd 2016.

Farm manager
Free programs to introduce the farm to Weston residents.
Greenhouse, foundation and additional irrigation.
Fencing for production garden.
Composting structure.
Website - design, creation and maintenance.

Kiwanis Grant

2014 Kiwanis Grant for Tractor purchase - \$12,000.

Ct. Trust for Historic /Preservation Grant

Planning Grant
Roof Grant

Crossroads 2015 -2016

Gardens/Farming

LTFC will march in the Memorial Day parade with a chicken and wheelbarrow
handing out flyers for Opening Day and program for the spring and summer

Lachat Town Farm Opening Day event June 14th from 1-3 pm with Senators, Reps, Kiwanis, Town Reps, families and friends

Applied to Weston Educational Foundation for a \$1500 grant

Free programs to introduce the farm to Weston residents.

Place Sign at Community Garden that says: The Lachat Town Farm is grateful for the funding, in part, by the CT Department of Agriculture through the Community Investment Act that helps to make farms possible.

Planning for the 2016 season of planting

Fencing for production garden

Educational programs initiated in a range of subject areas.

First talk by NRCS Rep on composting on June 7th at the Community Garden

Native American Culture and Environment program on June 27th-Speaker,

Cathy Iaccarino

Flea Market on September 12th, 13th rain date

Animal Embassy Vernal Pool Walk for families - DTBD

Plein -air painting class

Gardening 101 with Sal Gilbertie - DTBD

Garlic Festival in July

Family Scavenger Hunt

Children's Gardening Class

Christmas wreath decorating?

and many more...

House

Front facade and porch

Interior layout

Kitchen and bathroom

New Heating and AC

Painting of exterior and interior

Renovation of well house

Grounds

Beautification of the grounds including the circular driveway

Tree removal

Herb Garden