

Board of Selectmen's Meeting

March 31, 2011

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein; Selectman David Muller; Selectman Dan Gilbert; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito;

This meeting was recorded and videotaped. The tapes are available in the Selectmen's office.

Ms. Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:31pm.

Pledge of Allegiance-

Public Comment regarding the cemetery proposal- Ms. Weinstein read a statement from Patricia Heifetz into the record. A copy is attached to the minutes.

Stewart Pearl- Mr. Pearl said that he is concerned about the cemetery referendum handout. The \$30,000 has no creditability. Ms. Weinstein said the number was validated by the Land Use Director. One number came in at \$39,000 and she went out and got another estimate which came in between \$28,000 and \$30,000.

Mr. Pearl said that one of the paragraphs in the draft referendum handout that he thought was really inappropriate and subjective was "the sum is not insignificant and the desire of the Town's residents to support this project is uncertain". He said that the Board said that they want to be neutral. Ms. Weinstein said it was a neutral statement and that is the reason behind bringing it to a referendum. He said he felt that what he put in there was much more objective and he wants to know why they did not accept it. Mr. Gilbert said that it is the wrong number, the handout is not objective and it is the wrong question.

Lucy Bowden- She said that she thought what the cemetery committee did was really lovely. The architect presented a beautiful plan and the Willowbrook woman was well prepared and had a seemingly viable plan. She said that she feels the committee has pulled together something that could happen. She thought it was an excellent proposal.

Harold Mathews- He has been involved directly and indirectly in the pursuit of a Town cemetery for 21 years. When he asked Ms. Weinstein about a Town cemetery she said no and when he asked her the other night, yes or no under her leadership she did not have the chutzpa to say Yes or No.

Richard Wolf- He asked why the vote on the cemetery proposal is being placed on the same ballot as the Town budget questions. Ms. Weinstein said that over 1000 people came and voted last year on the referendum so they are trying to get as many people as possible to vote. When we did the survey, we only got a couple hundred, so this is an opportunity for us to poll the Town. They wanted to make sure any decision going forward was a decision of the community. He asked if she did not think that somehow it

may prejudice the vote due to the fact that they are talking about some significant sums for the appropriations for the school and for the Town budget. He asked if she did not think it would be more appropriate to make it separate and distinct. Ms. Weinstein said no, in order to put the vote together it would cost at least \$1,000 for a referendum vote. She said she has heard both sides of this argument and in fact someone else she spoke to thought we were swaying it the other way.

Mr. Gilbert said it is the wrong question. The number is incorrect and when we get the response back if people say yes we know they support a cemetery. If they say no, we do not know that they do not support a cemetery. The only thing we know is that they do not support \$30,000 to go to P&Z for an application. Mr. Muller said there will be another Town meeting held after P&Z issues its opinion. If they issue a favorable 8-24 report there will be ample time for public comment and there will be a vote on whether it is an appropriate use of Town land.

Discussion/decision regarding the Lachat house- Robert Hatch's report on the Lachat house and what the cost would be on the low end to make repairs would be about \$90,000 and about \$105,000 on the high end. A copy of the report is attached to the minutes. The Selectmen did not act on anything in the report. Ms. Weinstein had a report which she received from Steve Patton from Tallman Building Company and in 2005, Tallman's estimation to make the house livable was \$649, 495.

Dennis Tracy is looking into a grant from the Connecticut Trust Historic Preservation. The trust would allow us to get an estimate of what it would take to fully repair the building. It does not pay anything towards the restoration of the house.

Mr. Muller said having looked at the site and the pictures tonight, the house no longer bears much of a resemblance to a late 1700 house. While there is historic value to components of the house he thinks that rebuilding it in its current condition does not make sense. He has significant liability concerns. As there is no dedicated or decided use for the entire property nor a prospect of an agreement on what that use should be, he feels that we would be throwing good money down a hole. He does like the idea of retaining elements of the building either on that site or a different site.

Ms. Weinstein said what she keeps going back to is "what is the use of the house?" There are many beautiful things in the house and any decision that we made would have to take into consideration preserving the floors, the fireplace mantels and any beams that people feel would be significant going forward.

Mr. Gilbert said the first thing that strikes him when he walks into the house is the three fireplaces. He listened to Mr. Harper's statements because he was interested in whether we have a moral obligation to Mr. Lachat. Mr. Gilbert said the tax payers should not be burdened with refurbishing the house without a game plan in place for who will be responsible for maintaining it. He said the long run is what he is concerned about. If it were reasonable to take the house apart, store it and maintain it and hope that a third party

would come forward eventually then that might be a viable alternative. Absent that he thinks it will have to come down.

Ms. Weinstein said if a third party would come forward and agrees to take on whatever cost associated with it, she would like to give them a chance to do so. At the same time she would like to get someone in the house to take a survey of what would be the historical implications. What should be salvaged and what should go should we decide to demolish the house. Ms. Weinstein said that Steve Patton has issued a letter to the Board of Selectmen saying the Nature Conservancy feels it would be appropriate to use the funds from the Lachat building endowment income fund to do whatever we feel we need to do with the house. The balance in the account is \$73,707. By May 1st the Selectmen will make a decision on the house.

Request for property tax refunds

Kosta & Eileen Pouloupoulos	\$540.00
Claude Bisnoff	\$261.49
Mercedes Benz Financial Services	\$357.28
Toyota Motor Credit Corp	<u>\$92.89</u>
Total	\$1,251.66

Mr. Muller made a motion to approve property tax refunds in the amount of \$1,251.66 as listed on the March 31, 2011 agenda. Mr. Gilbert seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Open Items

Ongoing updates

Grants- Gayle Weinstein- We got notice that we will receive a grant, it's a Leef grant of \$12,000 for mowers.

Ticker File, Discuss as updated

Reimbursement from State for school projects- Tom Landry- No new news

Discussion/approval of the minutes of the Special Board of Selectmen's meeting of February 15, 2011, Board of Selectmen's meeting of March 3, 2011 and March 17, 2011. Mr. Gilbert made a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Board of Selectmen's meeting of February 15, 2011, Board of Selectmen's meeting of March 3, 2011 and March 17, 2011 as presented. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

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At 8:05pm Mr. Gilbert made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito
Administrative Assistant
Approved 04/14/11