

**Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes
10/06/08**

The Board of Selectmen met this evening at the Easton Town Offices, Selectmen's Office, 136 Elm Street, with Chair Colleen Corona presiding.

Members present: Colleen Corona, John Haederle, Chuck King, Irwin Cohen, Ellen Barlow and Town Administrator David Colton

Corona called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Cohen was not present at this point of the meeting.

One day liquor license request – Sodexo at Stonehill College

Colton referenced the one day beer and one license request for luncheon at the WB Mason Stadium Tent at Stonehill College on October 18, 2008 from 11am – 3pm. No Easton police detail is required for this event.

On King's motion, seconded by Barlow, the Board **voted unanimously of those present** to approve the one license as requested.

One day liquor license requests – Stonehill College, Inc. (3)

Colton referenced the three one day all alcohol license requests as follows:

- * Hall of Fame Dinner at Alumni Hall – 10/17/08
6:30-9:30pm
- * Alumni Council Event at the Martin Institute –
11/1/08 from 6-11pm.
- * Alumni Reception at Donahue Hall- 10/18/08
4:30 – 6:30pm

No Easton police detail is required for the events.

On Barlow's motion, seconded by King, the Board **voted unanimously of those present** to approve the licenses as requested.

Contract with Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. – Engineering Services for the Foundry Street Roadway Improvement Project

Colton referenced the contract in the amount of \$80,000 for design/engineering for the work on Foundry Street; part of the PWED grant we are applying for. In order to get the grant, we need to do some pre-design work to support the application. Corona noted that this is standard procedure to do some work to help with the grant. DPW Director Wayne Southworth was presented and suggested that that this is excellent groundwork for the project.

Corona asked for an update on the Foundry Street project to the Norton line. Southworth gave an update on the project and specifically noted that a preconstruction meeting will take place next week. Shortly after that meeting, a project schedule will be in place. Drainage work may begin this fall and signage along Rt. 495 and the five corners intersection will be placed to alert everyone of the project because of all heavy traffic in this area each day.

On King's motion, seconded by Haederle, the Board **voted unanimously** to approve the contract in the amount of \$80,000.00.

Special Town Meeting warrant

Colton referenced the first draft of the November 17, 2008 Special Town Meeting Warrant dated 10/6/08. Eleven articles have been placed on the warrant so far. Colton suggested that the Finance Committee may meet on October 15th to begin reviewing the articles. Colton gave a brief overview of the draft warrant articles and asked the Board not to make recommendations on the articles until next meeting.

Town of West Bridgewater's Regional Task Force

Corona spoke of W. Bridgewater's Selectmen's concern over the proposed power plant and their request to have a member of the Easton Board of Selectmen serve on their task force.

Cohen arrived at this point of the meeting. 7:20pm

Barlow asked if this is something Easton should be concerned about. Corona noted that we don't have enough info yet. Corona asked that we check with the Town of West Bridgewater to see when the next meeting of their task force will take place.

Report on Vacant commercial and industrial properties in Easton

With the state of the economy, Colton asked Planning Director Marc Rousseau, Staff Planner Alice Savage and GIS CAD Specialist Adrienne Edwards to review Easton's commercial and industrial properties and put together a report. See attached. Of the parcels that are occupied as commercial/industrial, 16% of the parcels have some level of vacancy; 9.3% of the square footage is currently unoccupied. Colton suggested that having a lot of vacant storefronts is not good for the town. The next step is to make sure that we are helping property owners find tenants; we need to be more proactive. Corona asked if Colton could talk about residential collections. Colton noted that the residential tax collections are down this past year. People are having more trouble paying their tax bills. This is a new problem this year and we need to make sure that we are aggressive as we can with these collections. We need to look closely at the foreclosures. We currently have 38 cases in tax title and the Collector/Treasurer has hired an attorney to work on our behalf.

Colton suggested that with respect to businesses, he doesn't have a specific program in mind at this time. With all the economic issues right now, we just want to raise the warning flags that there is a storm coming that we need to be ready to deal with. With the commercial property issues, we need to have a business program to help the businesses. The need to establish an economic target development area was discussed. Corona explained the concept of the economic target development area. She noted that she and Colton met with officials from the City of Brockton and understands that it would take a vote of the membership to allow us to join Brockton's target area.

King referenced the assessments and asked if there was a way to assess the commercial properties differently. King suggested that not all properties are equal. Colton replied that he doesn't know how you can make that judgment. Colton explained the tax breaks and the process in determining certain kinds of incentives.

Corona noted that the more businesses we have functioning at full level, the more it helps financially with the unpaid residential taxes. We collect so much more from the businesses. Colton reiterated that this is a problem with the economy in general. Corona noted we are going to follow up with the City of Brockton on this issue.

Frothingham Hall Steering Committee presentation

Steering Committee Chairman Wayne Southworth, COA Director, Dolores Kent, Director of Recreation Jennifer Hruniak, Historical Commission Member Ed Hands and Frothingham Hall Trustee Member David Ames, Jr. were present. Southworth noted that the committee has been meeting over the past year and they have gone out to other communities to see what they have done with the senior/recreation centers. Architect James Thomas was hired to help with the design of the new center. After meeting with Thomas over the last several months, the committee is at a point where they would like to present their proposed schematic designs. Corona asked if the schematics were created after having specific conversations about what programs are proposed to run at the center. Southworth replied yes, many hours have been spent speaking with Kent and Hruniak about their plans.

Thomas distributed additional information. See attached the information. Thomas referenced the detailed explanations that he received from Kent and Hruniak on how they currently work and how they anticipate to work together in the future. The needs were studied very carefully. Often times, it was found that their functions were quite similar in nature. All of this information has been condensed into the shared summary. Thomas suggested that a lot of the needs can be accommodated in terms of scheduling. Versatile furniture can be purchased so that it can be set up in different ways and then stored later. There is a great deal of interest in preserving the exterior of the building in terms of preserving Easton's history. The current interior lacks a corridor to help access other areas of the building without going through other rooms. He showed the proposed change on the map. The possibility of relocating the main entrance was discussed; a side entrance may be proposed. The larger gym is the best space in the building and it can be set up for many different activities. The kitchen area will need to be modernized and new restrooms are proposed.

Barlow asked if any of the improvements made by the library will be maintained. Thomas noted that a lot of the changes made by the library will be useful. They have done electrical and wiring updates and the floors have been secured for modern occupancy loading.

Cohen asked about the proposed restroom facility area and if this space is sufficient. Thomas noted that it is sufficient by code.

Haederle asked about the covered drop off area as proposed on the plan and asked if this is separate from the main building. Thomas clarified that this is separate structure; four posts and a roof. Thomas spoke of the history of the building and the fact that this budget has a small repair allowance for the exterior; the Phase II should show a lot more. Thomas spoke of the history of the stone rock quarry at the Frothingham Hall site.

Corona asked about parking spaces. Thomas noted 64 spots are proposed. There is a small area that we may be able to expand on to in the future.

Haederle asked about the expanded parking, curving out the back and if there were any soil borings or geological studies. Thomas stated no, maybe for subdivisions but not for any other use. Colton noted that the costs associated with Phase I may be lower than what was anticipated. Haederle note the costs involved with the parking. Corona noted that this is why this is proposed in Phase II.

Colton followed up that we are proposing to put the design budget on the Special Town Meeting warrant. It was noted that the committee members are happy with the progress so far. Corona thanked the committee members for their work to date.

Commission on Disabilities appointment

Ms. Jeanne Parrinello of 3-2 Christopher Drive is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Commission on Disabilities.

On Haederle's motion, seconded by King, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to appoint Jeanne Parrinello to the Commission on Disabilities. (term expiration 6/30/2010)

Cohen-Parrinello; Haederle-Parrinello; Corona-Parrinello; King-Parrinello; Barlow-Parrinello

Audit Committee appointment

Mr. Michael Sullivan of 40 Spooner Street is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Audit Committee. If appointed, Mr. Sullivan would fulfill the previous term of Henry Mehler (6/30/09).

On Barlow's motion, seconded by King, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to appoint Michael Sullivan to the Audit Committee. (term expiration 6/30/09)

Cohen Sullivan; Haederle-Sullivan; Corona-Sullivan; King-Sullivan; Barlow-Sullivan

Cable Advisory Committee appointment

Mr. Stephen Borsher of 10 Robin Lane is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Cable Advisory Committee.

On Barlow's motion, seconded by King, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to appoint Stephen Borsher to the Cable Advisory Committee. (term expiration 6/30/2011)

Cohen-Borsher; Haederle-Borsher; Corona-Borsher; King-Borsher; Barlow-Borsher

Municipal Building Committee appointments

Mr. Dennis Kenny of 245 Center Street is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Municipal Building Committee.

On King's motion, seconded by Haederle, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to appoint Dennis Kenny to the Municipal Building Committee. (term expiration 6/30/2011)

Cohen- Kenny; Haederle-Kenny; Corona-Kenny; King-Kenny; Barlow-Kenny

Historical Commission Interviews

Paul Fitzpatrick of 48 Pond Street is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Historical Commission.

Corona noted for the record that another applicant that originally applied for the vacancy has withdrawn.

On Haederle's motion, seconded by Barlow, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to appoint Paul Fitzpatrick to the Historical Commission. (term expiration 6/30/2010).

Cohen-Fitzpatrick; Haederle-Fitzpatrick; Corona-Fitzpatrick; King-Fitzpatrick; Barlow-Fitzpatrick

Capital Planning Committee resignation – Paul Dombrowski

Corona referenced Mr. Dombrowski's resignation letter which indicated that he has moved out of town and therefore, resigned from the Capital Planning Committee.

On King's motion, seconded by Barlow, the Board **voted unanimously** to accept with regrets Mr. Dombrowski's resignation. A certificate of appreciation will be issued.

Planning & Zoning Board appointment

Mr. John Duggan of 38 Welch Road is the only applicant for the vacancy on the Planning & Zoning Board.

If appointed, Mr. Duggan would fulfill the unexpired term Carol Symmons (6/30/09).

On Barlow's motion, seconded by King, the Board **voted unanimously by roll call** to appoint John Duggan to the Planning and Zoning Board. (term expiration 6/30/09)

Cohen-Duggan; Haederle-Duggan; Corona-Duggan; King-Duggan; Barlow-Duggan

Discussion re: Ballot Question #1

Corona spoke of the ballot question which proposes to eliminate the state income tax beginning in 2009. Under this proposal, we would lose state aid; non school aid. This would have a huge impact on our community. She would like the residents to know where the Board stands on this issue.

Barlow noted the temptation to vote in favor of something like this and suggested that the voters must know the ramifications. There will be a loss in public safety and teachers. The Board discussed the likelihood of increased property taxes if the question passes.

Corona agreed that we need to remember that a percentage of the money we pay in taxes, does come back to the community. Corona spoke of the money we currently get for snow plowing and the other certain programs that are funded by the state.

Cohen suggested we look at the state of New Hampshire as an example and understand that they pay higher property taxes.

Haederle agreed that with the economic climate, this may appeal to some people. A yes vote would go beyond fiscal irresponsibility. He suggested that people really don't have a clue with the impact would be.

On Corona's motion, seconded by Cohen, the Board **voted unanimously** to vote in opposition to Ballot Question #1 and let the opinion known to the public.

Proposed RFP – Library Lease

Corona summarized where we stand with the library lease issue. We can continue them as tenants at will or put out the RFP. Colton spoke of the RFP and the competitive process recognized by law; it is anticipated that the only likely bidder would be the library.

Corona asked for the Board's thought on the options available at this time. Corona stated that the library provides a service to the community at a bargain rate. We only pay about half the library services; the trust pays the rest. The library would like us to do the RFP. Colton noted for the record that the library has paid the rent through October 2008.

On Corona's motion, seconded by King, the Board **voted unanimously** to submit a RFP.

Colton will begin to prepare a draft possibly for the next meeting.

Town Administrator's notes

Colton referenced the second community visioning session which was held on Saturday, October 4th. It was very good and lot was accomplished at the session. More information will placed on the website. The third phase will include the public; giving them the opportunity to weigh in on the issues.

Press notes

None

Selectmen's notes

None

Public participation

None

On Corona's motion, seconded by Cohen, the Board voted unanimously by roll call to go into executive session for the purpose of discussing litigation, not to return to open session. (8:15pm)

Cohen-yes; Haederle-yes; Corona-yes; King-yes; Barlow yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Southworth