

MINUTES  
COMMITTEE OF CHAIRPERSONS  
JANUARY 24, 2011 – 6:00 P.M.  
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Present: Bates, Ebbin, Martin, Pritchard, Rafferty, Scott, Sherrard (6:21p.m.)  
Staff: Murphy, Norris, Quinn, Silsby  
Also present: Fitzgerald, Munn, O'Beirne

Acting Chairperson Bates called the meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS – None

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF October 18, 2010

MOTION: To approve the minutes of October 18, 2010, as amended.

Motion made by Rafferty, seconded by Scott, so voted 5 in favor, 1 abstention (Ebbin abstained).

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Property Maintenance and Blight Prevention Program – Update

Staff stated that OPDS is working with the Town Council on developing a town-wide approach to blight prevention. The town is hoping to move toward a blight type prevention ordinance, not a property maintenance code like the Fort Hill model. He noted that a blight code ordinance is not as expansive as a property maintenance code. Information was distributed. Staff stated that definitions for this ordinance are necessary. Exemption, penalties, and appeals would be factored in. Staffing issues will be a concern going forward. The ordinance process was mentioned. The level of enforcement is currently being discussed in Town Council Group II.

Sherrard arrived at 6:21 pm.

Relating to particular violations that are being looked at, staff stated that several properties were given to the Town Council for review. OPDS is assisting Town Council Group II in determining the problematic areas town-wide, which may include historic properties. This topic will be discussed at the Group II meeting in February. The public will have an opportunity to weigh in at a later date.

2. Mystic Streetscape and CONNDOT Bridge Rehab – Update

As part of the bridge project, Staff stated that the road is still alternating one-way traffic until no later than April 15<sup>th</sup>. Sandblasting will begin shortly in preparation for painting. The 54-hour shut down to traffic (closed to car and boat traffic) will probably begin around the middle of March. Pictures were distributed. An update was given about the Central Hall Block. A concrete cap will be poured on the wall and new conduits will be installed underneath the sidewalk. Due to tidal issues, a de-watering plan is in place. Staff stated that utility work (sewer) is still on-going on West Main Street. A revised schedule will soon be available. The Town's Certificate of Permission has been modified to allow more subsurface work, which has been approved by DEP. Updates are available on the Town's website. Details were given about funding.

Future water views were discussed and the installation of a bench was suggested at the Central Hall location. Options were discussed relative to not replacing the green wall. Staff noted that the owners of Central Hall are now working with OPDS in finalizing their site plan. Staff will talk to the owners about suggestions regarding a chain link fence along West Main.

3. Ethics Workshop Draft Report – Update

Distribution of the draft report and the process of finalizing this document were discussed. It was noted that the committee members have not yet received this report from the committee. Staff will get an update if the committee chair does not provide the report and add this topic to the next agenda.

4. Spicer-Pulaski Open Space Acquisition – Update

Staff stated that the Town has been awarded a \$650,000 grant for the purchase of these properties. Approximately \$225,000 is available from open space funding. Because the appraisal came in at \$1.4M, other funding options will need to be discussed with the Town Manager over the next several months. The Town's match requirement is only 25%. Grant opportunities will need to be explored.

Discussion ensued about the Spicer and Copp Properties. The grant process for The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Fund was brought up. Suggestions were given as to how the Town may want to proceed.

5. Thomas Road Bikeway – Update

Staff is currently focusing on submitting permits and Public Works is doing the design work.

6. Identification of Topics for Discussion

Town Councilor Mick O'Beirne summarized the Town Council Public Hearings related to repairs on Thames Street, repairs to the bridge on River Road, and the school proposal to build a new middle school. He noted that the speakers were mostly in favor. Some details were given about the projects themselves. Possible costs and mill rates were explained, as well as pros and cons of these three projects and whether they may be sent to a referendum in May. How these projects would affect the town's budget and debt service were noted. The high costs for these projects during a difficult economy had been brought up by public speakers at the public hearing.

Discussion ensued about the proposed baseball field at Fitch High School and the proposed middle school. It was noted that the proposed middle school would need to utilize Poquonnock Plains Park for its athletic facilities. Discussion ensued about the school proposal, which included redistricting, busing students, and the high costs involved.

Staff explained that the Planning Commission has looked at these bonding proposals and staff review has been done. The Planning Commission approved the Thames Street project unanimously and the Commission referred Phase II to the voters for action. The Commission noted some concerns it had with Phase II but noted the need to address infrastructure concerns.

The issue of whether or not guard rails are required, relative to the River Road project, was discussed. O'Beirne noted that the consultants design has been sent to the Town Attorney for review. Regarding blight issues, it was noted that a property near the China Kitchen Restaurant is in terrible shape and should be looked at. O'Beirne explained that the Town Council feels that the voters of Groton should have an opportunity to vote on these issues.

Staff will add the following items to the next agenda: blight prevention, streetscape, update on ethics, and open space acquisition.

V. REPORT OF CHAIRPERSONS

The issue of the erosion of shore lines was brought up. An update was given about the Climate Change Task Force. A request was made to follow up on distribution of the Climate Change Task Force Report. Staff will give an update at the next meeting.

VI. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff stated that the Green House Gas Emissions/Carbon Footprint Report is currently being edited for its final format. Relative to the draft report as part of the climate adaptation process with ICLEI, Staff stated that the report is being finalized by the DEP. Bates would prefer a better cover photo on the report. Murphy will check into this.

Staff noted that the new updated FEMA maps go into effect on July 18, 2011. A letter of final determination has been received. The new maps will be in digital form. All zoning jurisdictions in Groton are affected.

Staff stated that the Town has been awarded a Sustainable Operations; Alternative and Renewable Energy Initiative (SOAR) grant, which will enable the Town to hire an intern for several months. He noted that he has been asked to serve on the State-wide Adaptation Resource Toolbox Steering Committee, relative to climate adaptation. It was noted that benchmarking has been done by interns. An inquiry was made about whether the new Senior Center was up and running when the carbon footprint was done.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to Adjourn was made by Rafferty, seconded by Scott, so voted unanimously at 7:58 p.m.