

**TOWN OF HAMILTON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
DECEMBER 7, 2009**

The Board of Selectmen met at the Hamilton Town Hall at 7:04 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2009 with David Carey, William Bowler and Jennifer Scuteri present. Town Counsel Donna Brewer, Planning Board members, Finance Director Deborah Nippes-Mena, Finance Committee co-chair Arthur Oberheim, Police Chief Russell Stevens and Town Administrator Candace Wheeler also present.

Wreaths Across America ceremony

William Bowler described the ceremony that occurred earlier in the day at Patton Park that was part of a national event.

Discuss sale of ambulance

David Carey entertained a motion to approve the sale of the ambulance. Bowler so moved. Jennifer Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Carey entertained a motion to authorize Police Chief Russell Stevens to advertise and seek bids for the new ambulance with a floor price of \$110,000. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discuss long term development planning and impact on Hamilton's property tax rate

Discussion was on the need to bring development growth to the Town. There was consensus that there has been a shift in the constituency's thinking about developing Hamilton due to the increasingly tight budget available to run the Town.

Hamilton has one of the highest property tax rates on the North Shore since the residential tax base primarily supports the Town's operating costs. A comparison was drawn between similar communities that have a great deal of open space and strong school systems.

The Town is comprised of 80% open space and a large percentage of that is chapter land or is in conservation restriction, which reduces the amount of property taxes brought

into Hamilton. Discussion was on the possibility of developing 10% of that land and how this could positively impact the tax rate.

Wenham which provided a rough estimate of about 50% open space has brought in development such as senior housing that significantly contributes property tax dollars to the community without burdening the school system.

Construction of larger single-family homes can be tax-positive with less impact on the school system than traditional sub-divisions. Many times in this scenario families send their children to private schools. The Autumn Lane development in Hamilton built in 1992 has properties with high real estate taxes and a small amount of children in the schools.

Discussion was on the need to make Hamilton's senior housing by-law user-friendlier to developers (i.e., change density requirements) as well as the need to get a PAD (Planned Alternative Development) by-law in place. Planning Board member David Santomenna said his board could have a new PAD by-law ready for a 2011 ATM vote. There was a brief discussion about how overlay districts could be effective.

The development constraints of the pork chop by-law were discussed. This by-law should be reviewed since the Town's financial needs have changed since it was implemented. Also talked about was consideration of changing per acre zoning in the RA district in Town from two to one acre per parcel.

Agricultural Commission chair and Brick Ends Farm owner Peter Britton said some large landowners in Town are making decisions now as to what to do with their properties since their children who will inherit the land are not interested in living in Hamilton. He suggested that incentives be created so the larger properties could convert their use of the land (i.e., agricultural to a country inn).

Britton discussed missed development opportunities by the Town of Hamilton with mention of purchasing the Brackenside property (i.e., when offices were located at the Brackenside property).

Britton commented on how Wenham had arranged zoning to coincide with development that was going to occur and others noted that Wenham has the advantage of being located nearer to Routes 1A and 128.

It was agreed that the Town has to be politically courageous in order to affect change and should put a formal steering plan in place similar to what is being done in surrounding communities.

Discussion included reference to findings from the Cecil Group's charrette on Hamilton's downtown where zoning ordinances such as height of buildings (35' maximum) and parking requirements were thought to be too restrictive to encourage development.

Town officials thought they could get going now with smaller projects and that they should meet regularly to begin setting due dates.

Sign thank you letter to Apple Lane Foundation

Carey entertained a motion to sign the letter to thank the DeSieves family (for the \$6,000 contribution to the Town). Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Sign consultant agreement with Jim Hexter

Carey entertained a motion to sign the agreement with Jim Hexter, a financial consultant, to produce an economic pro forma on the development of the old library into 10 to 20 units of senior affordable housing. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discuss signing electricity contract renewal

Carey entertained a motion to authorize William Bowler to sign an energy contract, if necessary. Scuteri so moved. Carey seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discuss Energy Coordinator position

Carey entertained a motion to allow the Capital Management Committee to make a decision on the hiring of the part time individuals to serve as the Energy Coordinator for Hamilton. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Discuss Hatfield Road property

Discussion was on whether or not to try and have a developer build affordable housing on a Town-owned parcel on Hatfield Road. This could potentially be done by Habitat for Humanity. The abutters have expressed opposition to an affordable housing project. The perc tests are good for the site but no septic system plan has been created.

Town Administrator Candace Wheeler will communicate with one of the neighbors to assess abutter interest in buying the parcel. Town Counsel Donna Brewer said bidding laws do not allow the Town to offer the property outright to the neighbors.

Minutes approval

Carey entertained a motion to approve the executive session minutes for August 24, 2009. Scuteri so moved. Carey seconded the motion. VOTE: 2 in favor. Bowler abstained because he was not at the August 24 meeting.

Carey entertained a motion to approve the regular session minutes for November 2, 3, 6, 9, 16, 23, and 30. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Carey entertained a motion to approve the executive session minutes for November 2, 3, 9, 16, 23, and 30. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. VOTE: Unanimous.

Carey entertained a motion to go into executive session at 8:40 p.m. not to return to open session to discuss litigation strategy. Bowler so moved. Scuteri seconded the motion. The roll call vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Jane Dooley, Minutes Secretary

ATTEST: _____

Clerk