

Minutes of the Capital Building Committee meeting of Thursday, June 29, 2022. The meeting convened at 6:10 p.m. at the School Administration Building, One Gardner Neck Road. Present at this time were, Derek Heim, Chris Hajder, James Carvalho, Jim Devol, John Hansen, Marc Lapointe, William Anderson, John Salzillo, and Town Administrator Mallory Aronstein. Robert Alford II and Thomas Blakey arrived at 6:11 p.m. and 6:21 p.m. respectfully.

Mr. Heim called the meeting to order.

Mr. Lapointe **MOVED** to approve the minutes. Seconded by Mr. Hajder and so voted unanimously.

Mr. Alford entered the room at this time.

The Committee gave reports of their site visits. Mr. Hajder stated that he visited the Council on Aging with Mr. Blakey. Mr. Lapointe stated that he was familiar with the Council on Aging building and that the conditions have not improved and it is a black hole. He said the Town pours a lot of money into the building and it still has a long way to go. Mr. Lapointe stated that there have been roof issues since day one that still exist. He said he did go to Sears Road for the possibility of the Highway Department locating there.

There was brief discussion regarding this property, the abutting properties around it including the landfill.

The Committee reviewed the GIS map of the Sears Farm property.

Mr. Salzillo said he had nothing to report. Mr. Devol stated he did not visit any sites and was looking for addresses.

Mr. Hansen said he conducted a query on the GIS system for a list of town-owned properties and reviewed the particular attributes of each regarding size, access, and utilities. He said there are not many pieces of property that will fit our needs.

Mr. Heim stated that he has been in all of the Town's facilities and had the opportunity to visit to see operations within them. He said they do not serve the purpose of the community anymore. He said the Town has been kicking the can for a while and there is not a prospect of donated land or buildings and the Town now has to face this reality.

Mr. Alford stated that both the Town Hall Annex and the Council on Aging/Community Center property were supposed to be temporary.

Discussion continued regarding gathering Town-owned properties. Mr. Devol stated that he did not want to eliminate privately-owned properties that may be good sites.

Mr. Lapointe shared that a proposed site could be in front of the Brown School. He said it is town-owned, there are two driveways and utilities are readily available. He said it was centrally located with no wetlands. Mr. Lapointe stated that nothing would be coming off of the tax rolls and if we did not want a large structure we could build below grade.

At 6:21 p.m., Mr. Blakey entered the room.

Discussion continued regarding use of the softball field. The Committee reviewed this parcel on the GIS system and determined it was about 1 2/3rds acres.

The Committee began reviewing and identifying parcels owned by the town with acreage that would support a municipal building. The Committee agreed to identify only and wait for the evaluation of each parcel.

The Committee identified:

Brown School Site – 1 2/3rds without parking area for busses; 3 and 1/3 with the bus area.

Route 6 Rest Area – 1 acre

Coval Estates (South Side) – 5 acres

The Committee used the GIS system to query other town-owned property consisting of four acres or more.

The Committee identified:

Del Mac Orchard – 33 acres

Wood Street Open Space – 83 acres

Old Stevens Road, Paquette Farm – 82 acres

Medeiros Farm, 1100 Bark Street – 22 acres

Town Hall Annex property – 6 acres

Sears Farm Property – 56 acres

Rear Salvation Army (two parcels) - 8.5 and 9.25 acres

Smokerise – 50 acres

Luther School – 3.5 acres

Bushee Road – 4 acres

Mr. Hansen discussed the open space and recreation parcels that have been identified through the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee reviewed each parcel to narrow down the list.

Mr. Anderson said the Brown School site is a great location but traffic, especially during school ending, is often backed up to Route 6.

Mr. Devol suggested rating the parcels based upon a set of criteria.

The Committee discussed criteria to use to evaluate the parcels. The members discussed acreage as a primary criteria. Mr. Anderson said currently the Highway Garage is on 4 acres, the Town Hall on 2 and the Council on Aging on ¾ of an acre.

Mr. Heim asked if there was an appetite that all buildings not be in one location. Mr. Lapointe said yes and said the COA and the Town Hall should be together.

The Committee further discussed criteria and agreed that in addition to acreage, access, traffic, location and suitability, and utilities would be the criteria.

Discussion continued regarding the conservation restrictions on some of the identified parcels as well as some designated as park land and whether those should be eliminated from the list.

Discussion continued regarding the need for legislative action to remove any restriction on land or to utilize any park as another use, and the length of time that would take to get enacted.

Mrs. Aronstein discussed the process that has taken place with the Medeiros Farm land to be able to lease the property to another entity for soccer fields. She said the Town Meeting vote to purchase took place in 2020, then another Town Meeting vote took place in 2021 for a Home Rule to remove the land from Article 97 protections. Mrs. Aronstein said that the Home Rule has made it through the House but the Town is still awaiting a vote from the Senate and that the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs is holding up the process through the second chamber.

Discussion continued regarding adding centrality as an aspect to the criteria.

Mr. Blakey discussed the flood zone properties and whether using a property in the flood zone makes sense for the town because there isn't another proposed use for it.

Discussion continued regarding the Venus de Milo property currently for sale. There was discussion concerning building in a flood zone, triggering various building codes, cost escalation and scope expansion.

Mr. Hansen discussed rating the criteria and explained knowing the importance of each criterion in a successful evaluation.

There was discussion regarding removing a restriction being prohibitive for time constraints and also the poor perception of doing so.

Mr. **MOVED** to remove the conservation, Community Preservation Act, and Park land parcels from the list. Seconded by Mr. Lapointe and so voted unanimously.

Mr. Heim stated that the criteria was at least 3-acres of buildable area, access, traffic, location, suitability, and centrality, and utilities.

Mr. Blakey stated that the group should be cognizant of how the location of municipal buildings may impact a residential neighborhood. The group agreed that suitability would include the idea of impact.

Mr. Devol mentioned site development costs as a criterion that should be considered.

Mr. Hansen and Mr. Devol discussed scoring procedures. Mr. Hansen said the rankings range from one to six for each criterion and the parcel with the greatest number of high ratings becomes the preferred alternative.

Members of the Committee requested additional documentation, such as the GIS links or maps of the parcels. Mrs. Aronstein stated that she would provide documents for the Committee that would assist them in performing their evaluation, including photos and acreage for each parcel identified. Mr. Hansen would assist in that endeavor. Mr. Anderson said he would identify the buildable area along each parcel before the information was sent out to the Committee members.

The Board discussed the three properties in question for relocation or renovation: Highway Garage, Town Hall and Town Hall Annex, and the Council on Aging.

Mr. Anderson discussed utilizing 5 acres of the Del Mac Orchard for a municipal complex. He showed a proposed plan of where the building would be located. He said this would fit all three at one area with parking and salt storage available. He said the entrance to this area would be separate from the school's proposed entrance. He said if the building needed to be moved back to the Wood Street parcel to the rear, he could work with recreating acreage under conservation restriction.

Mr. Carvalho raised questions about bus traffic and the proposed ball fields locating on the parcel.

Discussion continued regarding the school's plans. Mr. Heim stated that this was just an identified parcel and evaluation would come later.

Mr. Alford asked if the two entrances to the High School currently in use are identified to be utilized. Mr. Carvalho said that they were to remain. Mr. Alford asked if the roadway shown on the parcel Mr. Anderson discussed could be moved or configured differently. Mr. Anderson said yes and there is no restriction to moving the roadway if the school needed that space.

Mr. Heim said that the group will begin by evaluating town-owned parcels and if there is no consensus that those are suitable locations, we will look at outside properties. He said there has previously been discussion on what the Town doesn't own and residents will ask why the Town is purchasing land without exploring current inventory.

There was discussion about the highway garage location and whether that could be in a remote non central location or be located with other industrial uses of land.

Mr. Salzillo asked if the Town had declared what its priorities are for these buildings. He said that he thought everyone was putting the horse before the cart. He asked about utilizing the Junior High School for municipal space.

There was discussion regarding the previous meeting and that the Town has identified the Town Hall needing to be replaced since a 1999 master plan.

Mr. Heim stated that the Committee members spoke briefly about not being able to gain consensus among residents without a plan for what will happen to any vacated buildings. He said general consensus at our last meeting was that Highway, Council on Aging, and the Town Hall and Annex were the priorities and that the Fire Department was not a priority at this time. He said the Library is currently working on their plan and design.

Mrs. Aronstein said this committee's role is to prioritize the buildings and to create the public facilities portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

Discussion continued regarding the financing of this project. Mrs. Aronstein restated the proposed financing plan of borrowing for all new construction buildings at once to minimize the impact of a bond payment, utilizing free cash for the Library project, half of which would be reimbursed over five years, and utilizing the meals tax and marijuana excise tax to pay for the bond and/or other capital infrastructure needs.

The committee agreed that the Town Hall, Town Hall Annex and Council on Aging should be together for this upcoming project.

Mrs. Aronstein discussed the Fire Feasibility Study with the Committee. She said that there was a pre-bid meeting that was well attended and that they had already responded to questions from the interested proposers. She said this study would provide a clear picture of current assessments and needs and a plan in place for future service.

Mr. Devol said that it seemed the school and fire projects fall out of the priority list of us as they are both under study.

Discussion continued regarding the next meeting and whether there was enough time to get all of the information together for the Committee members. The group agreed to cancel the July 13th meeting and meeting on July 19 at 6 p.m. instead.

Mr. Carvalho stated that a meeting should take place with the Superintendent of Schools. Mrs. Aronstein agreed and said she would coordinate that for the next week.

At 7:51 p.m., Mr. Alford **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Blakey and so voted unanimously.



Respectfully submitted by Mallory E. Aronstein, Town Administrator

List of documents before the Committee:

Minutes of June 16, 2022

List of proposed Criteria from Mr. Jim Devol

Town of Swansea Axis GIS system

Proposed drawing of municipal offices Del Mac Orchard as prepared by William Anderson