

A Regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 beginning at 7:45 p.m. in the Main Meeting Room of the Town Hall. The following members were present.

Nancy Mackenzie, Chairman
Eric Kraus, Vice Chairman
Michael Berry, Clerk
Christopher Timson
Clifton Snuffer

Also present:
Michael Boynton, Town Administrator

Mrs. Mackenzie called the meeting to order.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC FORUM WALPOLE WOODWORKERS

The Board was pleased to see the number of people in attendance. Informed the audience the Fin com approved this. The purchase price for this is 4.5 million dollars. Mr. Boynton showed the audience the property in question. Woodworkers would retain 1.5 acres out front and the town would purchase remaining property. There are three lots involved in this plan. Lots 3 and 2 are what the town would purchase. This property has a history with the town. They have been here for eighty years. Mr. Boynton reflected on the Fairfield project which included 200 units.

The Selectmen have not just had conversation amongst themselves, but with other departments in town. They have spent time working within the P&S agreement to be sure the concerns were addressed. This map shows within the property boundaries what Fairfield had. They know the wetland lines, know about concerns for soil. Talked about the Fairfield project having to remove and bring in new soil that would not be required of the town. Environmental concerns were talked about. All has to be investigated and we have certain out clauses if we do not feel it is a clean site. The town has spent a lot of time going thru the P&S. No one is going to tell you we know everything on the site. Once a P&S is signed and it is successful town meeting will vote. The financial impact to the town is 4.73 million dollars.

It is broken down as 4.5 million is the purchase, the MPIC wants a study completed for future building projects, we have municipal facilities and school needs what is the right way to handle that. It is time to have an independent tell us what we need. That study is

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\$180,000 and \$55, 000 for environmental insurance. The Town has spoken with our carrier. It is added protection for the community.

The town can not take on a multi million dollar project without debt exclusion. The residents asked to take a look at the debt and what is falling off. As of today the Finance Department was able to provide a list. Mr. Boynton reviewed the list and explained there will be some debt dropping off.

Mr. Kraus spoke to the purchase of the property being a defensive move as much as offensive, if we do not buy it someone else will. A large housing unit could go in. We would like to control our own destiny. If it were not in this location, we would probably not have this discussion. We feel this is a good idea.

Mr. Snuffer spoke to when you look at an asset you look at the highest and best use of the site in the market. That site could hold 200 apartment units. That could bring in 117 school children at a cost of \$12,000 per child. The income the town would receive from that site would be about \$400,000. If the town is going to get the bill of 1 million, it makes sense for the town to lead with its own destiny. What we said at A. Farm, is if you are going to get the bill you might as well get the land.

Mr. Berry looked at it as a financial burden of debt exclusion being short term but a high density apartment complex would be forever. The type of apartments at this site would not be financially sustainable and keeping with the community. I think taxpayers recognize the burden such a project has on our community. This is a defensive reaction to something I felt compelled to support; in the long run it makes the most sense for the taxpayers.

Dave Clark, Precinct 7- what is the road access as Woodworkers is keeping the frontage? Mr. Boynton explained there are two lots with sufficient frontage, the old house and barn that would be the access to the town. Mr. Clark wanted to know what the width of that is. Mr. Boynton explained it is 134' for the town; we would have one access from East St. Mr. Clark wanted to know would that be sufficient for multiple uses of the property. Mr. Boynton explained that would be determined at a later time. There is also access off Kendall St but there are not plans for use. There is frontage on Kendall St. Mr. Kraus explained there is no plan at this time to do that.

Mr. Clark asked is there anything that would preclude the town from using that. Mr. Boynton stated it is feasible, but a future cost issue.

Mr. Kraus noted that part of the purchase is two potential buildable lots. Mr. Clark wanted to know what was happening with the existing buildings on there, what is the disposition of those. Retained by town, tear down?

Mr. Boynton explained there are few newer buildings there that could be reused by the town, and the few older that have no value. Mr. Clark noted so those are storage type facilities. Mr. Clark noted they mentioned \$453,000 a years what is that for an individual? The amount is \$46 a year for average home. Mr. Clark wanted to know what

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the original P&S price was in 2007. Mr. Boynton explained they believe it was north of 7 million dollars. Mr. Clark what portion of the land is considered not usable because of environmental issues. He wants to know how much acreage remains usable. Mr. Boynton explained approximately 8 acres are usable.

Jim Taylor wanted to know if there has been 21E done on this property. Mr. Boynton explained it will be done as part of the P&S. You do that before closing.

Mr. Timson explained the environmental issue is a contingency and we do not have to buy if we are not happy with the environmental conditions. The 21E statute makes people who own property with hazardous waste on it clean it up. You would be subject to clean up, if there is an environmental problem with the property. The Town is getting insurance and the insurance company will not insure you unless they feel that land is fine.

Al Crosby, Hoover Rd- Does not see it as an opportunity when you are going to raise his taxes. He does not think the town has a clue as to what is buried on that site. He does. That is a swamp, and all kinds of contamination. You have no idea what it will cost to clean it up. Another override, more taxes, you want to keep out 40B. Why do we keep hearing that threat? It is no longer an issue.

Mr. Kraus explained take 40B and put aside, we will not buy it if it is not buildable. If things are buried there we will not buy it, we have insurance to cover that, if anything is found. We would like to control our own destiny. Before we talk about uses, we need to have a study done for all available buildings in the town. We will not purchase if we can not build on it.

Mr. Crosby felt it made sense to know exactly what you are buying. Mr. Kraus stated we do not purchase if there is anything on it. Mr. Crosby felt that if they are proposing for the residents to buy it would it not be proper to know what has to be done.

Mr. Timson explained having dealt many P&S agreements, when you are doing one of these types of purchases, you have to take it in stages, and we are trying to get an agreement in place. We have to get to that point before we spend town money. We are going to know what we are getting into before we buy it. It is how you have to do an agreement like this.

Mr. Boynton understands the concerns, what we are presenting to you is due diligence, that property will not be bought until we are satisfied with what is there. We have to do a study before we put our name on the dotted line. We do not want to spend money on the site until we get the yes. The next step will be to confirm what is on that site. We have to do it this way

Philip Sullivan wanted to know if the Board had changed it's mind about a specific facility for this land. He believed he had heard it is for a fire-police station.

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Mrs. Mackenzie explained each of us have our own thoughts what would be good for that site. That is why we have charged the MPIC to review the studies we have in the office. Mr. Sullivan suggested they have a survey of what the people would like to see at this site. The biggest thing is public safety bldg. My personal opinion, if this land was cleared and people accept, a combined public facility would be my preference. Have the chiefs been in on any negotiations on this. He wanted to know if there is a stipulation in the P&S that if Woodworkers decides to leave the town has first rights.

John O'Leary, based on 4.5 million dollar acquisition a cost that is over \$500,000 an acre is that reasonable price. Mr. Kraus explained we are not actively searching for parcels of land. This property is close to the downtown and there is the ability for various uses.

Mr. Timson noted you are not wrong in your analysis that is high for average piece of land. You have to look at this differently. I understand, if you look at this what could this be worth from a defensive posture, do not have any other downtown parcel that could accommodate a public safety building, the numbers may make more sense. If there was a developer who was willing to pay over 7 million, I think it would support a developer coming in and paying what we are paying. Is there someone else out there that would pay this money, potentially.

John O'Leary, so there were negotiations to lower to this price. Mr. Kraus explained they met several times with Woodworkers. Mr. Snuffer talked about the negotiations with Woodworkers. What Mr. Crosby said is true Fairfield is gone but talked about another one. A 40B you loose control over your zoning.

Mr. Berry spoke to whether the board has a specific use, we have not. He has talked about for the need for a long term vision for our facilities. We are committed to a long term vision. There is no use right now earmarked for that site.

Ken Guyette, Hitching Post Drive, concern seems there is an override every spring. He is wondering if it is time to think about sales. We are talking about A. Farm 360 acres, if we sold some of the land as an opportunity. I think this town owns plenty of land and part of the Master plan would be to sell some land.

Mr. Timson explained that Mr. Snuffer has put together a schematic of parcels we own.

Mr. Snuffer explained that A. Farm is for passive recreation as well as conservation. It was one of the best things the town could have done.

Ken Guyette we are sitting on 360 acres and he is interested in knowing what it is worth. I look at A. Farm and I think it is under utilized. It is worth looking at. We know the purchase of the land is the first step; you will be coming back and asking for more money.

Mr. Kraus thanked everyone for attending and ended the discussion at 8:45 p.m.

Use of A. Farm, Cat Clinic

MOTION moved by Mr. Kraus to approve the use of A. Farm for a spay/Neuter clinic, seconded by Mr. Berry

Mr. Timson explained he would need more information, when I think of the pavilion this is not a use I would think of. He is concerned about level 2 biohazard at the farm. Concerned, he sees the public service issue, put something into A. Farm that is a fee for service type of set up, that does not seem to go with the nature of uses. Are we then going to have other fees for service? I know they support it. I would have to hear from these people as to what they are doing. Mr. Snuffer would like to learn more about it.

VOTED 0-5-0 (Motion did not pass)

The Board would consider at a later

School Budget Discussion

Superintendent Lynch, Ed Thomas, Nancy Gallivan, Brian Walsh, Michael Ryan present.

The School Committee appeared before the Board to discuss the recent action at the Finance Committee meeting. The Finance Committee took \$308, 000 from Free Cash to balance the School Department budget. The Selectmen did not feel it was an appropriate use of Free Cash as it is to be used for one time emergencies not to balance a budget. They also noted the Municipal side has many needs and they could have proposed to use those funds for new police officers, firefighters or DPW workers. They explained there currently is not enough funding to maintain the fields properly and purchase much needed equipment as well as other issues. The funds are not reoccurring and the DOR stated that communities understand the role of free cash. There is concern this could damage the credit rating. The School Department will be receiving 77% of the total budget and the municipal side will have 23%. They do not feel municipal government can be sustained on those numbers. The deficit problem will be there next year as well.

The School Committee explained looking back over 10-12 years, the average was 6.5 %, in a healthy economy, since FY08, the biggest difficulty is lessening mutual aide. They need to stay a strong school district. The budget request exceeds the available revenue today, and they are trying avoiding teacher layoffs. The request to use free cash was necessary. Medicaid reimbursement has decreased dramatically. The pressures and mandates are rising and population of Walpole is changing. The free and reduced lunch has increased SPED has gone down but the needs are greater. They rely on fees to subsidize transportation, and full day kindergarten. Over the past four years they have reorganized while still providing the best for students.

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Superintendent Lynch spoke to them trying to work with the budget without impacting the children. In the past three years they have reduced health insurance by 15%, and we collaborate with other towns for transportation. They have reduced hours for instructional aides. Have cut Middle schools support for technology by 50%, no woodshop, positions have been eliminated in English, guidance, eliminated custodial positions. The Sped budget is over 10 million and is mandated by regulations, and have kept their end of the bargain but the state has not. Circuit breaker is lower, however mandates continue. They have not kept SPED free of cuts, re-negotiated contracts, eliminated out of district placements. The overall special needs are 614 children. He reviewed the top ten tuitions, \$234,841, \$154,615, \$191,033, \$133,780, \$228,891, \$153,230, and \$110,723 for SPED.

There was a \$308,595 gap in the budget and they would have to have reduced four Classroom Elementary teacher, reduction of library coverage, and closing library at middle schools, reconsider additional bus and sports fees. These are real issues that will require conversations. They are concerned they may not get \$325,000 in circuit breaker. The needs have not been reduced the mandates have not changed. The students need and they should provide the services.

Mrs. Gallivan spoke to the many questions centering on the teachers contract. She handed out a sheet showing salary scales for surrounding towns and noted Walpole is spending below the state average. She felt it was unfair to blame the problem on the salaries. It is a complicated issue.

Larry Pittman spoke to the Finance Committee touring all municipal and school buildings. They were not pleased about using free cash to balance their budget but it was the best way to support the schools. They felt in the end they did the right thing.

The Selectmen felt this is a band aid approach for this year and no one wants the 77/23 split to continue. Mr. Berry spoke to keeping the community affordable. He spoke to the towns used in their salary scale comparison and felt when you looked at their tax bills you have to be doing well financially to live there.

Susan Lawson spoke of the need to change the unfunded mandates. It is not right for the State and Federal government to create these mandates. She plans on becoming more involved in this issue.

The majority of the Board members would support this use of free cash funds for this one year. They along with the School Committee would like to have conversations about the budget. Mr. Timson spoke to being the one who asked that money be put in to the OPEB fund as he believes the town needs to do this. He is concerned about putting extra money into the school budget as they want to be very cautious about that. When everyone sticks to the split you know the rules and now we are looking to change numbers. He wanted to know if there was any money coming in later that could be turned back and Superintendent Lynch said they would consider it.

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The Board had voted at their meeting of April 5, 2011 3-0-1 to support the budget number put forth by the Town Administrator for the Schools.

MOTION moved by Mr. Kraus for Reconsideration of the April 5, 2011 voted on the school department budget, seconded by Mr. Timson

Mr. Snuffer wanted to know what the vote requirement for this motion to reconsider is. Mrs. Mackenzie stated it is a simple majority, Mr. Snuffer is voting against this for reasons he stated.

VOTED 3-2-0 (Mr. Snuffer and Mr. Berry opposed)

Mr. Boynton recommended the Board vote the final budget 67,225,411 as voted by Finance Committee.

MOTION moved by Mr. Timson to rescind the Motion of April 5, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Mackenzie (The Motion did not go forward as both Mr. Timson and Mrs. Mackenzie withdrew motions.)

The Board will address it on April 19th.

MOTION moved by Mr. Kraus to Adjourn at 10:25 p.m., seconded by Mr. Timson
VOTED 5-0-0