

A Special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held on Friday, March 18, 2011 beginning at 11:00 a.m. in the Senior Center of the Town Hall. Mr. Berry and Mr. Timson were absent. The following members were present.

Nancy Mackenzie, Chairman
Eric Kraus, Vice Chairman
Clifton Snuffer

Also, present:
Michael Boynton, Town Administrator

Mrs. Mackenzie called the meeting to order.

Walpole Woodworkers, Public Forum

Mr. Kraus introduced the members of the Board to the audience. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public as to where the Board is with the Walpole Woodworkers property proposed purchase.

Mr. Boynton spoke to the fact Walpole Woodworkers have been in town for over 80 years. The town became aware they were going to sell the property approximately five years ago when Fairfield wanted to buy the property. The cost was seven million plus and they proposed to construct a 200 unit 40R facility. A lot of work had been done and they spent over one million dollars. In the end, they found nothing on site that would stop them from moving forward. The economic times is what stopped them. Last summer the town heard that Walpole Woodworkers maybe on the market once again. They came to the town and the town made an offer on the property. The question is, does the town have an interest in the site.

Mr. Kraus wanted to the audience to know it is not just their initiative. They held a joint meeting with several representatives from Finance Committee, School Committee, Economic Development Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission and MPIC, which included approximately forty people. All who gave their support to purchase this property. They met with several members of these Boards to unveil this plan. The purchase is in no means finalized. It must meet the approval of the Spring Town Meeting and the voters. One thing I have always done is taken a look at the proximity to the downtown. We really have to take a good hard look at that.

Mr. Boynton showed the Google Earth Map that shows the property in question. The Street property owned by Woodworkers is not part of the discussion. When they met with Walpole Woodworkers, they talked about acquiring the whole site but they wanted to keep a presence in Town. He showed another plan with lots 1, 2 and 3 drawn by John Anderson. The town would purchase lots 1 and 3 and Woodworkers would keep lot 2. There are some buildings on those lots and some may be kept and relocated. There have

been questions about the environmental issues. That work was already done by Fairfield. They put the town in touch with their people. We are confident based on what they did that there is nothing that would prevent them from building. Teta Trec Rizzo plan shows fill that would have to be taken out if you were going to build on it. The site could be used for a 20,000-s.f. building and it would have a minimal impact. There is land with frontage on Kendall Street that could be used for residential. He noted there has been a lot of due diligence by the town staff.

If Walpole Woodworkers stays we would still maintain \$8,000 for taxes. We do not believe they would have any offers for commercial use for this property. Part of the Purchase and Sales discussion we may carry environmental insurance and there is a cost to that which is not built into the purchase price.

The MPIC would like to see a complete plan going on for all the town needs. Based on Financial Director a 4.5 million dollar override would have an impact on the average homeowner of \$44 a year. If you add in the insurance and the study it is about \$46 a year for the average homeowner. By purchasing the land we will prevent housing coming into the downtown and having an impact on every area in the town. We will have control over the downtown. We do not believe housing is the best use for this parcel.

Mr. Kraus asked if anyone in the audience had a question.

Annemarie Bielenin, 15 Eastover Road wanted to know if any of the overrides would be coming off the taxes. Mr. Boynton informed her that within the next three years, Adams Farm would be coming off. Mr. Snuffer noted the original price for Adams Farm was 7.8 million dollars. Ms. Bielenin explained she is looking to see the impact on her taxes. Mr. Boynton noted the Old Post Road project would be off in FY2013 and Adams Farm in FY2016. By the time this project is ready to be financed, we do have debt falling off. Mr. Snuffer noted that if we had 200 units at that site, we would incur approximately \$12,000 per student and we are talking about a possible 120 school age children. You would be getting the land in about six year's time. Ms. Bielenin noted these residents would also be paying taxes.

Doris Foley, 130 Summer Street suggested the town has other property that would be available for a 40B project. To her that is not a good reason to buy the land. She thinks it could foul up the downtown. She has had family member that have been in accidents in that area.

Mr. Kraus explained before they determine the use of this property we would look to that study if MPIC and boards think a public safety facility would impact the area. We would have to put in necessary signage.

Mary Kent, member of the Finance Committee and the MPIC spoke to the MPIC voting to support the purchase of this parcel. Everyone has a different opinion on the use of the land. Everyone has his or her own idea. For now, the idea is do not let the houses come

in. She would like the town to control its destiny. We do not want to lose that identity. Finance Committee voted to put on the web the debt that is coming off.

Mrs. Mackenzie explained the Board has asked the MPIC to look at the present studies.

Susan Maguire, 168 Union Street reminded everyone the discussion is whether you want to purchase Walpole Woodworkers. The people will decide anything that goes on this site later. The last thing we need in this town is a high-density development. She noted there were many pieces of land the town could have purchased and have since been developed. She felt the residents were short sighted as all of these have ended up costing the town a lot of money. Now we have a chance to buy a piece of land and keep Woodworkers there, which keep making the town some money, and she hopes people keep that in mind.

James Taylor, 25 Broad Street wanted to know who is going to pay for the lights that would be needed there. Mrs. Mackenzie explained they are aware of the traffic issues and after the purchase of the land, the MPIC will discuss the traffic and that would be part of any proposal. Traffic is a big concern. Mr. Taylor further questioned why the town was only buying half the property.

Mr. Kraus explained the town is buying fourteen plus acres. We feel it is a good thing. The majority of the parcel will be town owned land.

Philip Sullivan, 1 Eastover road has been there for 45 years. The traffic is horrendous. What he cannot understand is four years ago when Walpole Woodworkers decided they wanted to sell they were very secretive and the town was very upset. We found out you have spent five months meeting with them. Five years ago they did not want to discuss it with the Board. Why would you want to buy 16 acres. He believes there was an order of conditions issued with Fairfield. You want to give them the land out front. He was told the Board was considering a public safety facility, senior center and possibly fields. The traffic conditions are horrible. I do not understand why you are letting them stay out front, as you will be taking away the frontage.

Mrs. Mackenzie explained the Board did hold meetings with various boards for their input. A high-density residential use would bring more traffic and you do not want that. It would not be good for the town. We do not want them to move away from us. They are not going to wait.

Mr. Boynton spoke of the recent question on the November ballot that would have been beneficial for the town, which failed to pass.

Mr. Sullivan has not made up his mind, but does not understand why the town would allow them to keep the prime land in the front.

Mrs. Mackenzie left the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Mr. Kraus reminded everyone it is up to Town meeting and the voters. When we started discussion of what could go on the property, we thought of municipal buildings, fields and a senior center. We do not have the data completed to tell you what is going there. The Board is looking for public feedback.

Al Crosby, 24 Hoover Road explained over seventy years ago he used to ice skate at that property. He does not feel the town should be in the business of real estate. You are buying a pig in a poke. I do not think you need what the land is swamp, marshland. Allen Construction Company owned the land originally. We are against industry and now we are against people. I have not heard anything good yet as to what would be good in there. To get that property in to a position you can build on it you are going to have to take out what is there. A brook runs through there. That is wetland and you are trying to sell this to the people of Walpole. He does not think the Board has his best interest if they are going to buy a swamp.

Merritt Agabian, 59 Old Post Road noticed there only two areas of the property the town is going to acquire and wanted to know if that is satisfactory for a police and fire station.

Mr. Kraus explained if a public safety building is the best use for the site they believe there is ample space.

A resident felt the town did not owe Woodworkers any apology and wanted to know what it is going to cost the taxpayer for the project.

Dave Lehto noted they are talking about 4.5 million dollars for this property. Are we not going to be looking at a 12.5 million dollar override?

Mr. Boynton explained the town does not have a big debt budget. We do not have the ability to construct a ten million dollar project without an override. Will have to go back to the residents. We are currently asking for 4.5 million dollars that is approximately \$44 for the average homeowner. The next step would be to do the study, which will tell us what will be next.

James Taylor spoke about the Post Office approaching the town six years ago looking for space.

Mary from East Walpole wanted to know what would happen if Woodworkers decided to leave after a few years. What would happen to the front property? Mr. Kraus explained the Town would have first rights to purchase.

Al Crosby stated that he believes that a good portion of the land is contaminated. They used to spray the fence sections with spirits. He does not believe they are looking at what the true cost is to the town.

Mr. Kraus explained if the land is not environmentally viable, the Town will not buy it. There is an out clause. We do not want to purchase an albatross. Mr. Boynton stated the

Town has done its due diligence. The Town will not go forward if there is an environmental problem. Mr. Kraus agreed. If the land is not buildable, it will not be purchased.

Mary Murphy stated those that have lived in the town know that there are wetlands and traffic problems. It seems the town has already paid for studies and we should get some of those records out. Why are the Woodworkers selling most of the property, because it is no good.

Doris Foley would like to see an environmental study done on the property.

Mr. Kraus thanked everyone for attending and told the audience they would have more meetings on this subject. He closed the meeting at 12:15 p.m.