

Virtual Selectboard Meeting Minutes

September 14, 2020

Present: Doon Hinderyckx, Pat Harvey, Frank Severy

Guests: David Eberly, Lolly Lindsey, Joan Allen, Dan McKinley, Kathryn Schenkman, Nancy Woolley, Vic Ribaud, Norm Christansen, Rob Gardner, Martha Slater, Jeff Gephart, Troy & Kristen LaPell, Bruce Flewelling, Kinley Tener, Rick Schenberger, Robert Meagher, Orca, Ken & Janice Yelland, Jamin Benson

Doon called the meeting at 6:00 pm

Doon read the State statute guidelines for holding a proper meeting electronically and confirmed the open meeting law conformity.

Additions: Norm- Town roadside mowing in Great Hawk

Prior Meeting Minutes: Doon moved to approve the August 24, 2020 Selectboard minutes. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, voted.

Norm spoke on behalf of the Great Hawk Homeowners Association as President of the group, expressing concerns to come an agreement with the selectboard for future work with roadside mowing in the Great Hawk Community. Norm stated the concerns from the landowners in Great Hawk and how to collaborate in the future to do better. He noted 3 items to request from the selectboard to work towards a better goal. The first one is to either pick up large tree branches or to have them chipped. The second request, to meet with Doon, the chair of the selectboard with the Great Hawk board to strategize and come up with better solutions. The third and final request is to ask the selectboard to consider Rochester as a whole and to consider phasing this form of cutting trees. Norm stressed to look for other methods and resources to get the job done.

Doon noted in response to Norm that safety is a number one priority. Doon noted that if we had to cut trees and branches individually, we would spend 3 months vs. 3 days. Doon noted it does look harsh and would ask to not single out that Hawk is getting a more brutal treatment than the rest of town. Doon agreed and understood the concerns of the community. Doon noted his agreement to work together to mitigate the intensity of the impact. Doon noted in terms of cleaning out the branches, he noted they did follow with the chipper to get all the bigger pieces. Doon stated that after a discussion with Cooter, once the leaves have all fallen the road crew would blow out the ditches so they can drain properly.

Doon noted that one of the reasons the mowing was so intense this year was because the town rented a machine and the town crew did it themselves as opposed to hiring an outside contractor to do it, who gets paid by the mile. Doon noted what they discovered this year was that the contractors were doing a quick job and a minimal job and there was a lot of catch up so this year it was dramatic and would not be this intense every year. Norm voiced the concerns of the intensity. He asked if they could meet and go road by road to assess the trees that would be a threat and selective to what needs trimming. Discussion ensued. Norm suggested they could hire a private contractor to cut back the trees. Doon agreed and noted perhaps the road foreman could ride around with the private contractor as a voice of safety and what tree branches are of concern.

After long discussion, the solution to have both boards meet and collaborate before the cutting is done, both boards were in agreement.

Repurposing of the School: Robert Meagher noted the primary purpose for his request was to get permission from the selectboard for access, which was granted. Rob noted members from the Envision Rochester repurposing group sent out a summary of all the activity to keep the board informed.

Vic spoke, as chair of the repurposing of the school group to share on the reports. Vic noted back in February there was a community Rochester meeting where they looked at several potential projects due to the development and one of the projects that emerged was the repurposing of the vacant high school building. Vic noted after a blessing from the school board and selectboard for this volunteer group to develop ideas and come back with recommendations. Vic noted at that time the pandemic hit and had to pause for other priorities. He noted in early June they reconstituted and additional people joined the group and built momentum for other ideas to explore a good solution for that building. He noted many of the ideas were included in the report. Vic noted at this time the group needed to ask both boards what their level of commitment is to this development for this building. He noted the school board has not yet made a definitive decision about what this building is going to be. He noted a questionnaire was distributed around asking fundamental questions to gather. He noted on the selectboard side, they view this high school building as a valuable asset to the community. He noted they are looking for any kind of indication of intent by the selectboard that they might be interested in acquiring the building for the town. He asked how our three organizations might work in close collaboration to get the best result in a timely way. Kathryn added to the discussion the steps about how the selectboard felt need to be in place before acquisition so that would give objectives towards the goal. Kathryn noted in their last Envisioning repurpose of the school building meeting, they are at a place where they need these boards to work in partnership and indicate the level of commitment with what they are doing. Robert added that once acquired the town will not have a lot of money to devote to this project and that alternative sources of funding will have to be researched. He noted that this will be part of the criteria in accepting the building and how the plan will be financed from here to there for building upkeep.

Doon noted they had given their blessing and encouragement to explore the situation and options. Doon noted that they are not ready to commit. Doon noted, we are 2 ½ years into this 5-year cooling off period and we want to be prepared when the 5-years is up. He noted all this work is critical and much appreciated. He noted with all circumstances currently, he is not convinced and that we may need to flip and use the high school as a school and repurpose the smaller building. Kathryn noted we need to have the conversation even if repurposing the other building. She noted we can start right now applying for feasibility grant money, which is the next logical step. She noted on what ground will this committee have it if we don't have a firm understanding that there is intent for town acquisition. She noted they need to know where the board stands with this and what they need to see before that dollar purchasing of the one school building takes place. She noted they need transparency of what is going on. Frank noted that he is concerned for this big idea to be passed off once the building has been acquired. He noted it is going to take a monstrous effort to bring this through. He is concerned how the rest of the community feels about this as well. He noted his concern that this a financial baring that the

community just can't do. Frank noted concern of closing the high school building and what the terms of use can be for reopening the building for a different use. Frank felt that with the 5-year merger with the Town of Stockbridge, we should see this through and would need more input from the community.

Long discussions ensued. Pat noted upon meeting with the school board a couple time and there are 13 points that she discussed and proposed in the school board meetings of all different types of issues that need to be addressed before the selectboard would start the conversation of transferring either of the building. She noted most importantly the sub-division, under ground fuel tanks and underground tanks, 8 wastewater permits in addition to how to divide up the parking lot and whose responsibility would it be for the school busses to travel through. She noted out of the 13 different points made, only 4 or 5 have been answered. She noted the other points are being explored by the school board currently. She noted the school board will have to present the town with a whole marketable package. She noted that flood zones need to be addressed. She noted that the ball is really in their court right now. Pat noted she didn't want anyone to think they were not addressing the needs and they are addressing their due diligence. She noted this is done in a slow methodical process with all three boards. Both Vic and Kathryn were not aware of the 13 points presented to the school board.

Discussion continued. Doon addressed having monthly meetings to collaborate information as it is in the gathering stage. Kathryn noted that their group is essentially a steering committee and they are working with two wards and all they ask is that they all work in partnership with transparency, so are all informed. Doon noted that Kathryn should start the feasibility grant studies. Robert noted there would be money available and would need to be done through the town and the feasibility studies would include input from the town members. Robert asked if there is commitment from the board so they can continue. Vic suggested that a small representative group with one or two members from the different groups to work together for coordination and knowledge across the way. Doon noted that Pat could be the point person from the selectboard to be a part of the small group. Rob asked if Pat could share the 13 points made. Pat agreed.

Joan Updates: Joan noted that the bids will be opened for the Stream Alterations Repair work for the Mendell property on Zoom.

Joan noted she is still working on the same stuff from the past few weeks. Pat asked about any information for obtaining the reimbursement money from the Bethel Mountain project. Joan noted that she is keeping in touch with the state. She noted the process is slow. She noted there is a difference in her figures and what the state is showing so she will discuss the details with them and get back to the board to follow up.

Frank asked if there was any word from the State for the education tax rate amount. Julie noted that as of today, no word from the State. She noted Brad James from the state explained it could be Tuesday before she would hear back from them. Frank asked if that would allow for us to use the October 15 due date or would it need to be extended. Julie noted the bills would have to allow 30 days by law once they are printed so it all depended on when the rate would be received.

Doon moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:36pm so they could go into Executive Session for Employee issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith