

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS MEETING
December 13, 2004

The meeting was called to order by First Selectwoman Maryann P. Boord at 7:05 p.m. in the Durham Public Library.

Board of Selectmen present: Maryann P. Boord, Ernie A. Judson, Renee J. Primus.

Nextel Tower

Scott Wright has prepared an independent in-depth study of the proposal to enhance the Nextel Tower on Old Blue Hills Road. He has found some discrepancies in the Nextel application to the CT Siting Council, such as an increase in the height of the tower by 8'. He has spoken with Derek Phelps of the Siting Council, who noted Mr. Wright has raised important questions in his report; Mr. Phelps will do interrogatories and a site visit.

Mr. Wright had initially felt no public hearing was necessary. M. Boord said she recommends sending a letter to the Council requesting a Public Hearing.

R. Primus asked about the residents' concerns such as the height. Residents can certainly see the tower. M. Boord said she heard from five residents, who were displeased with the increase in the tower's height. The Board sent letters to the abutters/visual contact neighbors. She wants it said it could be seen from all over town.

S. Wright said that comparing the Nextel tower with the other tower in town is like comparing apples to oranges; this tower already existed; the process is different. G. Colegrove explained that in the previous tower application in the southern part of town, the two towers were too close to each other so only one was chosen; Planning and Zoning no longer has any say over towers -- decisions are up to the CT Siting Council.

Radiation concerns were addressed. G. Colegrove explained that these concerns are part of the application process and he explained how radiation could be deflected.

S. Wright said that Nextel is a system issue, i.e., there has been an explosion in subscribers and this location is one of the most effective spots for a tower from which we use for town services. The financial agreement went into effect when the tower went into effect. A question was raised if our 911 (emergency) coverage would be compromised. Mr. Wright said they would need to put up another tower if it is not elevated in height; the tower covers 4 of 5 servers in the industries.

M. Boord explained that many of the questions would be answered at a Public Hearing. The Siting Council makes the final decision but the Public Hearing will be held in the library. We do not believe the application was purposefully in error.

E. Judson stressed that the town is in a very favorable position with the tower. M. Boord said we also want abutters to have their views expressed and to receive answers. Craig Mansfield noted that the town is fortunate to have Scott Wright handling these matters.

MOTION E. JUDSON, SECOND R. PRIMUS, TO SEND A LETTER TO THE CSC REQUESTING A PUBLIC HEARING; APPROVED WITH THREE AYES.

M. Boord said she would send out the letters to the abutters.

Capital Improvements

Letters (attached) from Frank DeFelice (Chairman of the Public Safety Committee) and William Milardo (Town Sanitarian) were read into the minutes.

M. Boord expressed her desire that the elected officials, commissions and agencies can hope and dream together tonight. She asked that in the future those presenting capital requests should attached monetary figures to their needs. Would like everyone's help in considering the priorities of the town's needs, perhaps delaying some needs to meet others more pressing.

Note from Geoffrey Colegrove, Town Planner

In 2111-2112 an update in the Plan of Development will be needed at an anticipated cost of \$100,000.

Laura Francis, Town Clerk

The Town Clerk's office will be joining with other departments for big ticket items for renovations to town hall. She received a \$7,000 grant to purchase a workstation and locking cabinet to house vital statistics and papers that need to be locked up. She is updating records -- entering scanning technology but that will be handled through the normal budgetary process. The grant will cover the conversion of back data. After renovation, they will concentrate on microfilming.

John Philip, Assessor

Mr. Philip said that computers are the biggest issue in his office. Munis is housed off site, no annual fee, they will provide all maintenance and management. He noted the town is doing a reval this year and he doesn't have to update the software. M. Boord asked him to provide budget figures.

Chet Raczka, Board of Education

The bonding for the 34 million school renovation project will come to an end in the next few years (including computer software to follow students from K to 12.) The track needs to be refurbished. E. Judson concurred that the track is in very bad condition; we are fortunate there have been no injuries. R. Primus said the repair work should be done now. Mr. Raczka said the tennis courts also need repair and increased parking at Brewster School is needed. He noted the parking lot at the high school will need to be expanded in about five years. He said an influx of students could cause a real problem.

Emergency Management

Chris Soulias, Emergency Management Director, said his department is pleased to have use of the fair facility at the medical building but it is the Fair's property. He said the Emergency Management office should be part of a larger public safety facility; using the fairgrounds is not the long-term answer.

Barbara Olsen, Cemetery Committee

They have had \$5,000 in matching funds for two years and restored three brownstone obelisks and the Center Cemetery historic tombstone. They do not have any present plans to purchase more land.

Scott Wright, Ambulance Corps

Mr. Wright said the ambulance corps building is totally inadequate. Real maintenance is put off because they have been told they will need a new building. A major problem is the diesel exhaust. There is not enough room for meetings and equipment. He suggested the town do something to support the 18-20 year olds being able to stay in Durham and volunteer for the emergency services. They are being forced out of town because they can not afford to live here.

They need a four wheel type of vehicle for first responses. The defibrillators are near the end of their cycle...they need new ones. Craig Mansfield added that even grant money will only replace one a year. They are \$2,500 each.

S. Wright noted Durham has lost Middlefield volunteers due to the tax abatement. R. Primus asked if Durham could have a mutual facility with Middlefield. S. Wright said it wouldn't work--the area is too large. Durham needs its own central location.

Martin French, Tax Collector

Has a new computer system to be connected to the Assessor and finance department. His dreams: one day we can prevent anyone's town transactions if they haven't paid their taxes, even the purchase of dog licenses. He said the capacity of the tax collector's office is important due to the increase of residents in town. Otherwise, we are in good shape.

Frank Behrens, Trustees/Fire Company

He said the trustees are in charge of the building and grounds only. There is a problem with diesel fumes in the building but they are working to correct that. They need to hook into the town's water system...they will be coming to the BoS on that issue later. There are storage problems in the firehouse. Organizations are using the building and need to store their equipment; may need space committee to study this problem. The parking area needs to be enlarged - there are 54 parking spaces now. They need a driveway to the north of the building. He feels the public safety groups will all have to be combined at the firehouse site in the long run. The town's infrastructure must be worked on.

Steve Levy, Fire Chief

He said they will be spending money for trucks because they need to replace the ones they have. They went to a fifteen-year plan and now need to be replaced. The fire company is busting out of space. They are not in compliance; they need a dedicated classroom with tv sets for training, locker rooms, bunk rooms, storage space, offices, and a room for meetings. They need a committee to explore the expansion of public safety services. They need a line for fire equipment and for town communications. F. Behrens added that the original building was a design/build construction to last for 25 years and at a maximum of 30 years. After 50 years, you need a new building.

M. Boord added that the number one issue is the town hall renovation as well as the senior center and the public works department building. She said the selectmen need to review the previous report from the public safety committee, which recommended housing all emergency services at the firehouse location.

James McLaughlin, Historic District Commission

He would like \$50,000 in the reserve fund. (statement attached)

Jane Eriksen

1. the compressor for the air conditioner needs to be replaced;
2. the removal of the underground oil tank will cost \$5,000 to \$6,000;
3. there are major problems with heating/air conditioning in the building; they have had technicians in but no prices have been received to fix the problems; it has cost the library about \$1,000 a month to have the one man who can work with this; the library is used very much by the townspeople;
4. we need to examine the alarm system.

M. Boord asked them to submit numbers and years involved with her budget request. She asked the fire, ambulance and emergency management groups to meet and come up with numbers.

F. Behrens said he recommends using Cromwell Energy for the town's fuel needs; they have saved the fire company much money.

Laura Francis, Town Clerk

L. Francis spoke about elections.....the town will be getting new machines. They hope to replace all their machines (we are in two districts).

Ernie Judson

He spoke to the subject of the 6.2 acres of land on Ozick Drive to park the school buses, giving us a saving of \$100,000. His thought is that it should be shared by the Town of Durham and the Board of Education. He views it as land banking. The Public Works Dept has the same OSHA problems as the fire company. The Ozick Drive property would cost @\$179,000. Chet Raczka said the Board would fund it through the school district; the Ozick site is an almost perfect plan.

It was announced that a joint meeting between the two Boards of Selectmen and Board of Education would take place on 12-20-04 at 6 p.m. in Strong School.

Maryann Boord

The town has been awarded a \$750,000 Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) grant to make necessary repairs to the Durham Center Water Co. The engineering will be done in April.

We have need for a senior center and the needs of the public works department must be addressed as their facility is grossly inadequate. She recapped the requests of the town members.

Renee Primus

She stated that this is going to come down to priorities. The fund balance has been used for several years and we can't continue to do that. The budget needs cost cutting and prioritization. She said Bob Hall's property was offered [for town purchase] and should have been considered. She is happy to hear that the consolidated plan has come back. We need to consider how to stop spending money, she concluded.

Jane Eriksen said that Durham needs new businesses.

In her closing remarks, M. Boord thanked everyone for attending this meeting, noting that although the common desire was to maintain our rural character, there is a difference of opinion as to how to manage that while broadening our tax base, continuing to provide for our excellent educational system, maintaining our infrastructure, and responding to our ever-growing needs.

Adjourn

MOTION M. BOORD, SECONDED BY E. JUDSON, WITH THREE AYES, TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9 P.M.

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