

**Board of Selectmen Public Hearing Minutes
Tuesday, March 24, 2015**

Members Present: Chairman Steve Palmer, Vice Chairman Paul Napolitano, Mark Girard, Clark Whittier, and Alex Carr

Call to Order

Selectman Napolitano moved to enter into a Public Hearing to hear comments from the proponents and opponents regarding the Village Center Development. Selectman Girard seconded the motion.

Vote: 5-yes 0-no

Public Hearing - Village Center Development

Selectman Palmer gave an overview of the proposal, the previous Public Hearing and the ground rules of the meeting.

Comments in support of the proposal:

Daniel Smith, Walnut Hill Rd, thanked the Selectmen for their efforts in preparing and providing public opportunities for information and feedback. He supports the project for the following reasons:

1. It would create a community center (town offices, etc). 2. Having this done with no increase in taxes is important. 3. The school is not a wasted building. 4. Without a tax increase, the village center having a sewer system will be of benefit. 4. Having an opportunity to create senior housing and other property owners' ability to develop their land are both good ones.

Pam Ames, Gray Rd, stated that the contiguous land in the village is an asset for the town to maximize. The efforts the Board of Selectmen to gather information and present information are commendable. She commented on the benefits to create a community center in the village and the benefits for the public, and a variety of development. She supports the use of the school as an appropriate way to develop the village center further and the architectural designs are ones that the community can support.

Katie Murphy, Mountfort Rd supports the proposal and the senior housing concept is a good one. She believes that the Selectmen have worked very hard to come up with a proposal, and providing a variety of options for the community. She supports an RFP process to insure proper development. She urges the community to consider the development, and the future of the community and encourages the community to help with the aging housing stock.

Audrey Lones, Baston Rd, gave an overview of her involvement in the community and indicated that all the information and materials have been made available to the public. She supports the project as it creates responsible, manageable steps to future development of the village center, supports the Comprehensive Plan and has been outlined and recommended by qualified engineers. The school can be repurposed. The sewer system in the village is necessary for development that would protect the aquifer system as well.

Peter Lindsay, Mountfort Rd, stated that he spoke at the last Public Hearing and indicated that the project is in line with the Comprehensive Plan. Initially, he was unsure about the re-development of the school but believes that there are many possibilities with the building. Supporting this proposal opens many possibilities for the community.

Anne Graham, Farms Edge Rd, thanked everyone for their efforts on this topic. She commented on the tax impacts and concerns and referenced the potential changes to school funding and property taxes. Given the difficult choices, it is important to increase the tax base to help share the tax burden. She encouraged bonding and that it would allow all residents to vote for the proposal. She encourages investment in the community.

Steve Morrison commented that a recurring theme in the community from the Planning Board perspective is the issue of density. He stated that he believes this is an incredible opportunity for economic development. He has come to the recognition that this is an important and necessary thing to do and encouraged people to make decisions based on facts.

Rob Wood, Milliken Rd, thanked the Selectmen for all of their efforts. Initially, he didn't support the project, but now does as it is a good opportunity for the community. There are still a number of items to discuss as part of this project but encourages discussion to find the best option.

Al Alhers, North Rd, supports the project. The current Municipal Office is an improvement over the past one but the community has outgrown the space. The public meeting space has become very small for large groups, and at times, unavailable for other use. He commented on staff office space, parking, restroom facilities and heating. Moving to the school will be of benefit to the community. He would ask the Selectmen to review costs and demolition again in the process.

Comments in opposition to the proposal:

Mark Verrill, Walnut Hill Rd, commented on some of the issues. 1. Zoning: He proposes ½ acre lots rather than ¼ acre lots in the village center. The drainage around the school is excellent and doesn't warrant a sewer system. 2. Wescustogo Hall: The building needs to be rebuilt based on an agreement with the Grange and the Town. The building would be paid by insurance funds. 3. Fire Safety: If everything is in one building, and there were a fire, the impact to the community would be detrimental. He believes an RFP should go out for the school and be sold to bring taxes back into the town.

Scott Kerr, New Gloucester Rd, commented on various aspects the report proposal. A development like this brings families until their children are grown. The report doesn't consider a variety of economic perspectives to determine this projects success. While the market is good at present, but would likely change prior to the steps necessary to finalize the project

Marybeth Stuart stated that a public vote/special election to decide this would be a good idea.

Evan Russell, Gray Rd, stated that treatment plants take a lot of maintenance. He doesn't support the sewer aspect of this proposal.

Turner Hansel, Sweetser Rd, expressed concerns that this proposal is being presented as an all or nothing project. He believes the project should be assessed and reviewed in pieces.

Andrea Quinlan, Royal Rd, stated that based on the comments heard is opposed to the project.

Comments neither opposed nor against the proposal:

Dick Sweet, Carriage Hill Rd. stated that he supports the school for the town offices. He commented on the interest in senior housing. He believes that a lot of this development could be done without a sewer system/treatment facility and doesn't support this aspect of the project. It will be very expensive to install and maintain. The potential contamination unknowns with the septic system at the school are important to determine.

Amy Horstmann, Henry Rd, indicated that she moved into the community because it was very welcoming, has an excellent school system, and the taxes were lower at the time. Given the changes in her life and the amenities in the town, she spends less time in her community. She indicated that it would be beneficial to find out why residents leave the community. She would like to see a few more conveniences brought to the community.

Peter Wiles, Memorial Highway, an abutter to the school, commended the Selectmen for their efforts. He commented on the school's septic system and the effluent issues. He would like the Selectmen to gather more information regarding this.

Norman Smith would like to see this development vote broken down into separate questions for residents to vote on.

Nelson Smith commented on the discussion regarding the number of buildings possible on the current town office lot and read a letter regarding this information and the zoning in that area. He indicated that he would like to see the vote broken down into separate questions and would like to see senior housing in the area.

Margie Hansel, Sweetser Rd. supports using the school as municipal space with possible senior housing. She expressed concerns regarding the sewer system and that the Yarmouth Water District still has a number of questions. If the question is a whole one, due to the septic, she would vote against it.

Paul Metivier supports the project but urged caution on the sewer aspect from an insurance aspect as the town would be liable and cited some of the mechanisms used for such a system. He stated that there are additional funds available to rebuilt Wescustogo Hall and it could be rebuilt in a different location.

Dixie Hayes, New Gloucester Rd. stated that she is encouraged by the town's progress thus far. The current proposal is the least favorite to her. She is excited about a number of the positives. She would like to see a TIF zone. She doesn't support this at Town Meeting as there are a number of questions/items that need more information. She urges the Grange Members to work with the town to come to a resolution.

Katie Murphy, Pres. North Yarmouth Historical Society would like the group to be considered a stakeholder in this project given their limited space at the fire station. The Historical Society communicated to the Selectmen their wish to move the Old Town House as part of this project and would enhance the community center proposal.

Claude Carrier urged the Selectmen to be cautious about the expertise they receive on this project. He believes it should be a town vote.

Nelson Smith stated that he doesn't support selling any town land. This is an opportunity for the town to lease the school property. The value of the properties is an unknown. He commented on the existing trees on these lots and that many would need to be removed to accommodate the proposed project. He believes that more research should be done.

Steve Morrison commented on the density issue. He believes that the town's zoning may need to be amended to accommodate density and protect trees, etc.

Scott Kerr commented on the lack of rural aspect of the proposal. He believes that senior housing would be a good use as there are no unknowns with this type of housing.

Dan Smith, Walnut Hill Rd responded to a number of comments by other residents.

Marybeth Stuart commented on the impact of potential zoning changes in the area impacting private development.

Anne Graham thanked the Selectmen and residents for their time with the Public Hearings.

Selectman Whittier reiterated that the motion is only a recommendation and it was always intended that it would go to the public for a vote.

Selectman Napolitano moved to close the Public Hearing. Selectman Girard seconded the motion.
Vote: 5-yes 0-no

Any Other Business

None. Selectman Palmer stated that the Selectmen would be available after the public hearing for anyone who would like to speak with them.

Adjournment


Selectman Napolitano moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting ended at 8:34pm

Recorded by: Nancy Trottier
Town of North Yarmouth Recording Secretary


Board of Selectmen



Steven Palmer, Chairperson




Mark Girard



Alex Carr



Paul Napolitano, Vice Chairperson



Clark Whittier