

**TOWN IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NORTHWEST PARK NATURE CENTER  
February 8, 2010**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Councilor William Herzfeld, Chair; Councilors Matthew Marci and Ronald Eleveld

**STAFF:** Town Manager, Peter Souza; Assistant Town Manager, Emily Moon; Town Engineer, Tom Lenehan; Project Engineer, Victoria Houle; Director of Public Works, Brian Funk; and Chief of Police, Kevin Searles

**GUESTS:** George Greco, Physical Plant Manager for Board of Education and Frank Williams, Director of Business Services for Board of Education

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Richard Brass, 1427 Poquonock Avenue, said that he has spoke to his neighbors and many are against this project. Who asked to convene this meeting and what purpose will it serve? Whose interest will benefit by this project? How will the financing of this project be done? Have you done a survey of Prospect Hill residents to see if they want it?

Mr. Gunther David, 54 Prospect Hill Road, said that taxpayers in this economy should not have to pay for this project. Bikes can use side streets and trucks should not use the road. What attracted us to this property was the fact that we would not have to shovel.

Ms. Bonnie Jean Debelius, 21 Broadleaf Circle, said that she is not a cyclist and she's in favor of the project. She'd like to be able to walk to the bus and to the park. She is happy with the Lang Road projects.

Mr. Leon Alford, 426 Lantern Way, is concerned about the phasing of the project. He is worried about the gap between West Street and Lang Road, especially since that's the section with more traffic and also about bicyclists in the substandard (Phase II) section. He believes that Phase II should be completed first.

Mr. Bob Christensen, 28 Prospect Hill Road, stated that traffic is using the road to get to neighboring towns. The 91 flyover was meant to take traffic out of the Poquonock area. The Town Council should ask the state to live up to their promise regarding the flyover. When Prospect Hill Road gets improved, speeds will go up. He feels that the intersection at Poquonock should be improved and said that residents on Prospect Hill Road feel the burden of the improvements.

Mr. Bill Kirkland, 21 Broadleaf Circle, said that he has walked and biked on the road for over 20 years and it is not safe. He has had to swerve on occasions to avoid pedestrians at night.

Mr. John Camara, 124 Prospect Hill Road, said he was concerned about pedestrians and bike safety on the road.

Ms. Michelle Camara, 124 Prospect Hill Road, said she would love to have a sidewalk, improved lighting, etc. She believes that the town can improve safety on the road. The improvements will make the neighborhood safer by getting people away from the cars.

Mr. Doug Rendock, 311 Prospect Hill Road, believes the road does need to be improved. He has requested information from the MDC and has not received any. He would like the town to petition MDC for sewers. He was told that the town doesn't want to have anything to do with it.

Ms. Regina Wiggins, 64 Prospect Hill Road, was very excited about the possible improvements to the road, but is now concerned about the road being too close to the house and not being able to turn around in the driveway.

### **3. DISCUSSION OF PROSPECT HILL ROAD RECONSTRUCTION**

Town Engineer, Tom Lenehan, gave an overview of the project using a PowerPoint slideshow. He reviewed some of the residents' concerns and responded to those concerns. He reviewed the estimated cost of the project.

Town Manager Souza stated that the town has been approved for federal/state funding for a portion of the project and reviewed the next steps for the project.

Councilor Eleveld asked how many people had attended prior neighborhood meetings and whether tonight's comments were similar to those made at the previous meetings. Assistant Town Manager, Emily Moon, said there were approximately 39 and 33 people at the previous meetings and that the comments were similar.

Mr. Richard Brass, 1427 Poquonock Avenue, asked why the traffic signal was needed. Councilor Herzfeld explained the warrants system and why the signal would be needed.

Mr. Brass asked if town staff would meet with residents individually prior to construction. Councilor Herzfeld explained that the project had not yet been approved and that both the Town Council and staff were in the information dissemination and collection phase right now. Town Manager Souza added that town staff would certainly meet with affected property owners during the design phase.

Mr. Bob Christensen, 28 Prospect Hill Road, asked if the Town Council believed it could get voter approval for the project. Town Manager Souza said the project could require either a town meeting or voter approval, depending on its cost estimate.

Councilor Herzfeld expressed that he thought reinvestment in the town's assets was important.

A resident (no name given) asked if we had a design plan yet. The Town Manager said we only have a conceptual design at this time.

A resident (no name given) asked how far the bike path will extend. Mr. Lenehan said it would end near Bent Road and then we'd have to see if it can be accommodated on the multi-use path or as part of the shoulder on the remainder of the road.

A resident (no name given) asked what this would cost the average homeowner living on Prospect Hill Road. Councilor Herzfeld explained that there would not be an assessment to the residents, but that all town residents would pay for the project's debt service through the annual budget.

A resident (no name given) asked if there were requirements for how large the front yards have to be and how far away a road has to be away from a house. The Town Engineer and Town Manager explained that the town will work to change the cross-sections to keep within the right-of-way and to minimize property impacts.

A resident (no name given) asked whether a multi-use path would be better. Mr. Lenehan explained some of the problems with a multi-use path including safety, actual amount of paved surface areas and federal funding.

Councilor Marci stated that he believes there's a need to do something. He's thankful for the comments from the residents. He would like to get the design for the project done so that everyone could better see the impacts. He is in favor of the project.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) sewer possibilities. Mr. Lenehan explained that the MDC attended the first neighborhood meeting and that the MDC explained their process during that meeting. Mr. Lenehan restated the process. He said he wasn't aware that the MDC had received a letter of interest.

Mr. Doug Rendock said he had attempted to contact the MDC to initiate the process. The MDC did not send a packet as promised. The Town Manager said we could help facilitate the process.

Mr. Walt Stevenson, 1397 Poquonock Avenue, thanked the staff for their work and asked staff to look into the brook's water quality.

Councilor Herzfeld explained that the Council has a difficult job of balancing the neighborhood's concerns with the greater good of the community. The goal would be to work with residents to minimize impacts to abutters but to do what's best for the overall community.

Mr. Bob Christensen said he thought we'd have to rethink the phases due to the sewer situation.

Councilor Eleveld mentioned that the Town Council had recently voted against sidewalks in another project. The Town Council could continue to talk about the need for the improvements (especially after Lord Woods is built) for another 20 years, or we could make the improvements now for the future. He said he was for the project, even though it wasn't likely to be popular. He was considering 20 years from now when making this decision.

A resident (no name given) asked if the bike lane could be less than five feet. Mr. Lenehan stated that it could be narrowed, but that it needed to be five feet to be a designated lane.

A resident (no name given) said that traffic calming is her biggest concern. She sees lots of Massachusetts plates coming up West Street in the morning.

Mr. Brass asked to be included in future Prospect Hill Road notification mailings. Mr. Kirkland and a resident of 1419 Poquonock Avenue also asked to be included in the mailings.

Councilor Herzfeld asked for a five minute recess at 8:35 p.m.

Moved by Councilor Herzfeld, seconded by Councilor Eleveld, to have a five minute recess.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

Moved by Councilor Marci, seconded by Councilor Eleveld, that the Town Improvements Committee approve the Prospect Hill Road reconstruction project as presented and that it give its recommendation that the Town Council review and endorse the project.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

#### **4. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED 2011-2016 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM (CIP) & ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS**

The committee discussed Board of Education projects with Frank Williams, Director of Business Service and George Greco, Physical Plant Manager.

Councilor Herzfeld asked if the CIP takes into account any of the recommendations from the school's task force. The Board of Education (BOE) and town staff said that there aren't any recommendations yet, but that certain projects have been moved out awaiting the recommendations.

The committee discussed opportunities for alternative energy technology to be incorporated in school projects.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the school window and roof replacement evaluations. Mr. Greco, BOE, explained that the evaluations would help plan the future replacement schedule and major maintenance needs.

Councilor Herzfeld asked how much major maintenance is funded in the FY 11. Mr. Williams said it was approximately \$225,000, a slight increase over FY 10. Town Manager Souza also shared that the L.P. Wilson fund does not have a balance that allows us to do any maintenance projects, as the town and Board of Education have not contributed recently more than what's required to cover operational costs.

Councilor Eleveld asked about the public safety complex and wondered why it was in two phases and about the cost of the project. Town Manager Souza explained the land and facility needs, especially for the Fire Department. He explained the costs would be that high (as seen from other similar projects).

Councilor Eleveld and Mr. Funk discussed how much epoxy paint costs and how it lasts 5-6 times longer.

Councilor Herzfeld asked for a clarification of the Safe Routes to School program. Mr. Lenehan shared that the program requires the development of a plan that encourages kids to walk to school and that once the plan is developed, sidewalk construction could be eligible for 80% of federal/state funding.

Councilor Marci said that he would be interested in constructing some critical sidewalk segments, even if we didn't get grants, but that we needed to be mindful of the long-term maintenance and replacement costs.

Councilor Marci asked if we could show the sidewalk segments that are prioritized for repairs along with the Safe Routes to School sidewalk radius map.

Mr. Funk explained that after the six-year period, it was likely that the sign replacement amounts would decrease because the mandate would be met.

Councilor Eleveld said that he'd like to see the offsets in the operations budget for new asset management capital improvement projects.

The committee discussed the parks garage and dog pound relocation needs and opportunities.

Councilor Herzfeld asked about possibilities to respond to the Diamond Club's request. The Town Manager said staff could sit down with the club and discuss their priorities.

Moved by Councilor Marci, seconded by Councilor Eleveld, that the Town Improvements Committee approve the proposed Capital Improvements Plan for year FY 2011 - FY 2016 as presented and give its recommendation that the Town Council review and approve the plan.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

**5. STAFF REPORTS**

None

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Councilor Marci, seconded by Councilor Eleveld, to approve the January 26, 2010 minutes as presented.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Councilor Marci, seconded by Councilor Eleveld, to adjourn the meeting at 10:24 p.m.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

Respectfully submitted by,

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Emily Moon, Recording Secretary