

# **Sterling Senior Center Design and Building Committee**

Butterick Municipal Building - COA Room

August 1, 2013 - 6:30 PM

## **MINUTES**

Present: Co-Chair Jack Chandler, Co-Chair Maureen Cranson, Ronald Cote (A=6:39), Richard Maki, Judy Reynolds (A=6:38), Peter Watson, Weymouth Whitney, Kevin Beaupre. Absent: Robert Bloom, Karen Phillips.

Open Meeting: Ms. Cranson opened the meeting at 6:35 pm.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of July 11, 2013 were approved as written. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Chandler and seconded by Mr. Whitney. Vote: YEA = 5, NAY = 0, ABS = 0.

Discussion of Webster Building: Ms. Cranson reminded the Committee that the reason for revisiting the Webster Building was in response to a request from Selectman Cutler, who was interested in the current status and price of the property. The consensus of the comments by those visiting the site was that the property was very well maintained and that the price was presently listed at \$1,800,000 with some room to negotiate. There was discussion about a potential property purchase by the SMLD. It is unknown if they (SMLD) are actually prepared to discuss leasing a portion of the building and when those details might materialize. Ms. Cranson stated that the goal of the Committee was to build a senior center and other members thought that we were going "off track" from our mission.

Returning to the Muddy Pond site, Mr. Beaupre felt that possibly \$400,000 might be secured via "raise and appropriate" and bonding the rest. Ms. Reynolds spoke to providing the Planning Board with a site plan starting with the existing plan and completing it with the addition of plans for lighting, tree schedule, scrub plantings, exit locations, number and location of parking, septic design, drainage and sight distances. She felt that an engineer could be engaged to prepare a more robust site plan for formal submission to the PB.

Ms. Cranson made a motion and seconded by Mr. Whitney, referring to the Webster building discussion to the effect that "We don't move forward (with the Webster site), except to notify Selectman Cutler" and answer his two questions. Vote: YEA = 5, NAY = 2, ABS = 0.

Discuss Other Proposals: Ms Cranson spoke about a potential site on School Street, but it was deemed not a suitable location. Mr. Beaupre informed the Committee that a local person might be willing to purchase and refurbish the former Sterling Inn and lease it back to the town, possibly with the option to purchase. The details need to be worked through, but the Committee wanted to meet with representatives of the interested party. While specifics of the offer are unconfirmed, Ms. Cranson offered to make the appropriate contacts to bring all parties together, possibly including member(s) of the Finance Committee & Selectmen next week on August 8, 2013 or the week thereafter. Mr. Chandler was supportive of the offer to bring the former Inn up to our "specifications", but cautioned that any attempt to avoid paying state-mandated prevailing wages was unwise. Mr. Maki further informed the Committee that the use of an executive session for the purposes of discussing

the details of a potential real estate agreement was an appropriate exception granted under the Open Meeting Law. Ms. Cranson made a motion to invite the interested party, FinCom and Selectmen's liaison to meet with the Committee. Seconded by Mr. Watson, the vote was YEA = 6, NAY = 0, ABS = 1 (Ms. Reynolds).

**Traffic Count Report:** Mr. Maki presented his preliminary summary of the traffic count conducted by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission on June 11, 17 & 18, 2013. Representative traffic data at the Muddy Pond/Boutelle Road intersection was shared in tabular and graphic form. As a general conclusion, there was little significant adverse interaction between the times school children and seniors arrive and depart. An exception, on one day of the week, was identified as a potential conflict time, but could be resolved by advancing a senior activity forward by 15 minutes. An assumption in the analysis was that the primary entry/exit would be on Muddy Pond road. The final MRPC traffic study will include the traffic count and other pertinent factors such as road conditions, sight lines, traffic speed and numerous environmental factors beyond the scope of a traffic count. The final MRPC study report is anticipated before the fall of 2014.

**Report on Tasks:** Ms. Cranson reported that she has discussed use of the Griffin Road building site with the DCR, the Sterling Recreation Department, and persons familiar with potential restrictions on the property. Ms. Reynolds spoke with James French (DCR) who indicated that land swaps of equal value are possible. The consensus of the discussion was that the site posed too many negative issues to warrant moving forward.

**Survey Questions:** Ms. Reynolds was unable, at this time, to assemble suggested survey questions intended to reach out and educate the public and assess their support for a construction project. Some members felt that a survey may not be necessary depending upon the Committee's final course of action.

**Open Discussion:** A representative of the press asked several clarifying questions and there was a desire to fully understand what was expected to be in a site plan presented to the PB. It was reported that a study in 2007 estimated the cost of renovation of the Sterling Inn for the purposes of a senior center was \$1,400,000.

**Next Steps:** Ms. Cranson will (1) arrange a meeting with the principal parties interested in use of the Sterling Inn as a senior center, (2) inform Selectman Cutler regarding his questions about the Webster Building, (3) talk to ConCom about the Griffin Road site.

**Adjournment:** Mr. Chandler moved adjournment at 8:00 PM with a second from Mr. Watson. Vote: YEA – 7, NAY = 0, ABS = 0.

Respectfully submitted,

**Richard H. Maki**

Richard H. Maki, Clerk

