

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 8, 2021

At the Selectmen's meeting held on Monday, March 8, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. the Selectmen participated via Zoom:

Stanley Holz is at his home in South Carolina, maintaining social distancing.

Peter Corey is at his home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Shawn White is at this home in Whitefield, maintaining social distancing.

Chairman Holz called the Meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Gerald Winn of Century 21 attended the meeting to discuss the 87 Brown Street property. Reg Abbott is interested in having Gerald talk to the Board to see what the town would like to do with the Brown Street property. Gerald said that he would like to help all parties and have an action plan. Gerald said Reg knows he needs to do something. He would like some guidance as to maybe coming to some agreement with a plan to try to do something with it. Stanley said it has been discussed many, many times. The property could be useful to the Town and it has been discussed using it as a garage facility or a storage facility. The basic problem we have is the rather exuberant amount of back taxes and interest and the amounts owed for unpaid water and sewer bills and it is Stan's understanding when EPA was on the property the amount of the bill from EPA was never paid. It is Stan's understanding it is not only the debt to the town but the debt to the EPA. Stanley said those factors hampered any further discussions. The issue we have with the property is because so much is owed to the town and EPA that we are afraid to getting into a real disaster. Gerald said that Judy had mentioned that maybe there is an inquiry that went out to EPA to see what is going on there. Stanley said we got an indication that the town would have first dibs for the property taxes owed, and the problem is if the town takes the property does the town assume the responsibility for the EPA debt or does it go with the owner of the property? We never got a real clarification on that. Peter said this has been going on a long time. He is going into his 6th year on the board and this has been an issue for the last 5 years. People wanted the town to take the property. Stanley explained back 5 years ago there were barrels of hazardous materials that had to be removed, and the building and property does not have a clear environmental assessment so we would not want to take on a property that owes \$150,000 to the EPA. Could it be environmentally hazardous and expensive and would there be a clear path forward to clean up the property? We did work with DES last fall and NH DES (separate from EPA) did a Phase I environmental review. The liability to the town for taking this property on is great, and the town doesn't want to take on that liability. To the best of Peter's knowledge, Mr. Abbott hasn't pursued selling the property at an affordable price to get out from under it and cut his losses. Not sure why he expects the town to unload him from this burden. He has not proactively tried to unload the property. Stanley said Mr. Abbott has made no effort to resolve this issue. The longer it goes on, the more interest and more debt accrues. Would the

value of the property even cover his debt load? There are still serious questions about the property. The DES report is not back yet. There are a lot of issues that have to be resolved before the town or any potential buyer can look at it seriously, i.e. environmental safety, the debt to the EPA, and the debt to the town. Not sure how to resolve that. We may have the environmental report this week. Gerald says he can see a stand-off here a little bit. Gerald said that he might be able to ease into this, and he could be like a temporary intermediary and have some conversations for some possible options to at least get this off dead center. He would like a copy of the environmental report if possible. Stanley suggested that he have Mr. Abbott send us a letter giving Gerald permission to act on his behalf. Gerald said that he no grandiose ideas right now. The building and property value have been encumbered pretty heavily with the questions about the EPA issue and tax liability. Somehow it has to be resolved in a way that everybody comes out whole somehow. Stanley said that no maintenance has been going on at the building. The roof leaks and the windows are broken. Gerald said that he will let Mr. Abbott know we had a visit and try to get something going. The Board is amenable to that.

Peter Corey said one more comment, unrelated to the old furniture factory, with respect to Mr. Abbott's other property at the old knitting factory. There have been repeated issues with the dumping of used mattresses, items of furniture, etc. in the parking lot at that facility. There is a couch way up on top of a snowbank that has been up there all winter. That is disrespect for the neighborhood and people in the neighborhood have complained about it. The board would appreciate mentioning to Mr. Abbott that he might want to be a better neighbor and not to let used furniture and mattresses to be strewn all over the property. Gerald asked the Board about the two lots abutting the Brown Street Factory lots. The Town did take the two abutting lots, and there are no plans for those lots at this time. One of the lots across from the town garage is where we are storing some of the materials from the sewer treatment plant project. Shawn said he wouldn't want to go out and sell those until we know what is going on with the rest of the property as it could add value to that property. Mr. Larson had stated at one time that Mr. Abbott did make an agreement with Park Construction to store some materials on his property. It is common practice that contractors make agreements with private landowners for those purposes, for staging areas for materials. Peter said from the board's perspective, any positive activity to clean up that site and to possibly reuse it and try to generate property taxes again would be helpful. Peter said in the five years he has been on the board, we have never known Mr. Abbott to approach the board with any type of plan. Gerald said he will have a discussion with Mr. Abbott and he will get back to us. The Board said they appreciate Gerald being here and appreciate his help on this matter. Gerald said it is not going to fix itself.

A motion was made by Peter Corey to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 Selectmen's Meeting. The motion was seconded by Shawn White. Roll call vote: Holz-Yes; Corey-Yes; White-Yes. All in favor, 3-0. Motion passes.

Stanley Holz said that this is his last meeting and it has been a pleasure to serve the town and being able to help. Shawn and Peter thanked Stanley.

Meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.