

Standish Town Hall

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Town Council Meeting Minutes 8/28/2012

**MINUTES
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
STANDISH, MAINE
TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2012
STANDISH MUNICIPAL CENTER
7:00 P.M.**

CALL TO ORDER at 7:00 PM followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilor Pomerleau

ROLL CALL All present

PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS There were none.

REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER the Manager announced that the Manchester Road rebuild effort by the contractor should begin in September. The Public Works crews will perform the shoulder work and replacement of culverts. This effort will raise the first 1,500 feet of the road to address the occasional flooding from heavy storm events and will complete the total rebuild of the entire road. He indicated that he recently attended a sub-regional meeting of the Sustain Southern Maine initiative conducted under a \$1.6 million grant from HUD. The initiative is looking for 6 pilot projects in the region from Kittery to Brunswick to focus on Transportation, economic development and growth planning. They want a rural location. He suggested Steep Falls would be a good candidate since the residents there show strong civic pride and have indicated willingness for future planning.

PUBLIC HEARING(S)

84-12 Authorize Town Manager to Dispose of Real Property [Spencer]

Public comments were received from many interested individuals.

Pam Slattery-Thomas said she was pleased at the communication from members of the Council and the Manager to keep members of the public informed. She noted that MaineDOT has recently nominated the building to the State Historic Preservation Commission for inclusion on the National Historic Register indicating she believed it would make the building eligible for State and Federal tax credits. She expressed concern that someone could purchase the building and subsequently tear it down.

Glenna Jamison, President of the Standish Historical Society, testified that they had tried to lease the building from the Council and understood there were questions regarding the Society. She indicated they have 65 members with 55 in Standish. They have a treasury with checking and savings accounts plus CDs. She discussed the museum on the second floor of the Old Red Church which is not handicapped accessible. The Society wants a visible location. They feel they have done all they could to get this facility. They would like feedback on why the Council might feel they were not capable of maintaining it. She requests that we protect the building with a protection clause. Any funds from the building should benefit the Town.

Claudia White testified that she operates a farm market on her ancestral homestead. She has seen many changes in the Town, some nice, some not so nice. She asks the Council to reconsider the Society's request. She referenced the Historic and Cultural Goals of the Comprehensive Plan and commented on adaptive reuse of the building.

William Orr commented that he has problems with the financial arrangement that would dedicated the funds to a reserve account and not to the general fund. He noted he is not a history buff but wanted to point out the building has been revenue neutral to the Town.

Michael Lyons of Tower Publishing, a Standish based Company, indicated he has interest in the building for business expansion but the wild card is the money to bring it back. He felt that his interests and the interests of the Historical Society were not necessarily mutually exclusive. It could be possible that the Society could take a room or two in a collaborative manner. He has historic publications that he too would like to display. He would like to have and

architect cost out the necessary renovations. He would add 8 to 10 employees more employees to 10 already working a project to supply items for the Air Force and Army. He feels the structure seems structurally sound but would modify the first floor for office space.

Helen Sawyer stressed the mission of the Historical Society and pointed out that they have a new curator, a young professional, who has invigorated the group. He has identified the need for more space. She asks the Council to take a second look at their request.

Terry Christy likes preservation of the building and sees the need for economic growth. Recalls the days when John Jacob Astor visited the Pavilion in Sebago Lake Village and that Standish once was a destination location. Wishes it could become one again. He is supportive of the Council trying to help the Historical Society in its need for space.

Charles Ruby introduced himself as the curator of the Marrett House and of the Society. He pointed out that many visitors view the archives during the summer searching their lineage. He indicates the Society is expanding to bring in the kids with educational programs. He was asked specifically how much space is necessary. He did not have a square footage but indicated as much as possible.

Claudia White indicated she is professional and can determine their space needs.

Councilor Pomerleau suggested the concept of approaching the owners of the Marrett House to use the apartment there for space for the Society.

Nadine Blake identified herself as a life member of the Society and pointed out that if they had more space people would donate more items.

Terry Christy said he likes the way Councilor Pomerleau is thinking. He recalls that when the School got the Marrett House and lands from Dr. Marrett there were conditions on the deed that might be helpful.

Councilor Stack indicated that the Society said it had considerable resources. The building had been previously appraised at \$300,000 which would equate to taxes in the \$3,000 range and he asked if the Society could afford \$2,500 to \$3,000 per year to lease the building.

Glenna Jamison indicated she felt the Society would have ways to raise that much. At the moment she did not feel they had the means to maintain it year round. She added that she has 8 boxes of items from Dana Edgecomb and Mary Chapman currently stored in her garage since they don't have the space for them.

Pam Slattery-Thomas indicated that if the building were on the National Register that Federal Funds might be available.

Terry Christy indicated the Council should consider earmarking some of the proceeds of a sale to future space needs for the Society.

Jan Hill from the Buxton Historical Society discussed the tax credits and indicated it takes an expenditure of at least \$250,000 to qualify. She went on to point out that to be included on the National Register a building must retain its original windows and cannot be redone with vinyl siding but has to have clapboards. There are green initiatives too that could help. She said the old Bar Mills School in Buxton is currently under consideration.

Carolyn Biegel said that it could take up to six months to get approved for the National Register of Historic Places. She felt the Town could have a preservation easement on the building. In particular the vault and second floor stage and auditorium should be protected.

Seeing no further public discussion Councilor Spencer closed the public comment period and opened the discussion to Council comments.

Councilor Pomerleau pointed out that the building has provided many good jobs over the years. We've lost many jobs. This building and parking lot in the rear fits the vision created by our Standish Village design effort and GrowSmart Maine Model Town project. He agrees that we need to preserve the character of the building, to work toward a solution and to stipulations to protect the historic features of the structure.

Councilor Sargent said we have heard a lot of good input. Agrees he has heard the needs of the Historical Society

before. But feels we need a call to reality. All our bonds proposals were defeated and he heard from the voters, don't spend money. He agrees to protect the character of the building.

Councilor Olson says lots of ideas have been generated. It was unfortunate the bonds were voted down. She has heard creative problem solving. She believes the building is not handicapped accessible. Heating is costly but the building must be heated to avoid deterioration.

Councilor Stack asks what is this last item on the Order on capital.

Councilor Pomerleau indicates that as identified under the Maine Model Town project we need to create a walkable village. He envisions banners, sidewalks, parks, etc. Maybe 25% of the proceeds could go the Society's future space needs.

Councilor Stack said it is hard putting money away when people can't pay their taxes and when we don't know what it is for.

Councilor Blanck noted that at a recent workshop two citizens commented that the Town shouldn't own property. He suggests modifying the order for a preservation easement. Agrees the proceeds should not be designated for capital. He has heard a lot of compelling arguments but believes in jobs and tax rates.

Councilor Thompson feels that there would be more foot traffic from visitors to the Society that there would be from 15 to 18 employees. The Society said it would be part time. As an employee herself she doesn't go out for lunch because of the expense. Visitors should be a benefit. She note Mr. Orr pointed out the building has been revenue neutral.

Councilor Stack moved to amend to delete the second paragraph that would dedicate the proceeds. Second by Sargent. 5 yes, 2 no, Pomerleau, Spencer

Councilor Spencer moved to amend to have a covenant on the deed to protect the historic character of the exterior of the building with language developed by the Town's attorney. 7 yes

Order approved, 6 yes, 1 no Thompson

PUBLIC ITEMS Councilor Stack wanted to inform the public of an upcoming initiative from the American Legion to make Christmas Wreaths available under the Wreaths around America program.

ADJOURN at 8:55 PM

Submitted by: G Billington