



SELECTMAN'S OFFICE
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Deep River, Connecticut 06417

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DEEP RIVER TOWN HALL

Special Informational Meeting – Thursday, July 28, 2011, 7:00 pm

Background: The Board of Selectmen had scheduled this meeting in response to a letter of inquiry concerning the purchase of the Town-owned property at 34 River Street. The building, which was commissioned in 1899 to be Deep River's fire headquarters, has had many uses during the ensuing century: Public Works Garage, Deep River Ambulance Headquarters and, most recently, as the home of the Deep River Fire Department Museum. It is also the site of the Town's Emergency Operations Center and has served for many years as a headquarters and practice area (on the second floor) for the Deep River Fife and Drum Corps.

The Special Informational Meeting for discussion of the possible sale of property at 34 River Street was called to order by First Selectman Dick Smith at 7 pm, with 62 residents in attendance. Also attending were Selectmen Art Thompson and Dave Oliveria. Residents' comments fell into three general areas. The names of those who spoke are grouped by their major concerns.

- 1] The property should remain in the Town's ownership for the following reasons:
 - a) its historical importance;
 - b) its current uses as Fire Department Museum, E. O. C. facility & as a base for the Fife & Drum Corps;

John Ely, Bob Johnson, Dick Kollmer, Jan Kollmer, John Kollmer, John LaPlante, Bill Morris & Bob Raymond.

2] The property should be sold, but with conditions:

- a) equivalent space should be found for the current occupants;
 - i] space for the Museum and the E. O. C. could be included in any design currently being considered by the Fire Department Study Committee;
 - ii) revenue generated by sale of the property could help to offset the cost of alternative space for those organizations;
 - iii) alternative space for the Museum might be found in an arrangement with the Deep River Historical Society.
- b) conditions of a sale could include maintaining the historic nature of the building, including restoration to its original appearance.

Sally Carlson-Crowell, Jim Hogan, Peter Howard, John Kennedy, Dave McKeehan, Val Nucci, Simon Potter, John Simcheski, Mike Spaner, Alfred Starr, Ed Zwingman & Ellen Boone.

3] During the discussion, residents also asked about the following:

- a) the present cost of utilities and routine maintenance;

Dick Smith said that the current costs are easily identified. They are electricity and fuel oil, approximately \$2,500 per year) and sanitary sewer service, at \$400 per year.

- b) major repairs (siding, roofing, painting, etc.) that may be required in the near future, and what they might cost;

Smith noted that determining major areas of maintenance or renovation would require a professional assessment. Since the Town will have to budget for such costs if a sale is not forthcoming, those costs will be researched in the near future.

- c) the process followed if the Town were to consider a sale.

The process, which was spelled out in the minutes of the Board of Selectmen meeting of July 26, 2011, would be as follows:

- 1] Informational meeting for resident's input;
- 2] Appraisal of the property;
- 3] Legal advertisement soliciting bids;
- 4] Board of Selectmen & Board of Finance review bids;
- 5] Board of Selectmen & Board of Finance present recommendation to a Town Meeting at which residents would vote on the recommendations;

Letters received have been attached to these minutes in their entirety; the gist of their comments is included below.

- 1] Peter Howard ("Sale within the new Village District would provide some control of exterior appearance, as well as short term cash and continuing tax receipts if sold");
- 2] Brad Smith ("Lots of history with Drum Corps & DRFD -don't sell");
- 3] Tom & Madeline Walsh ("Historic does not equate with sacrosanct—should sell");
- 4] Peter Woodcock, Fire Chief ("Essential for storage of 'Beulah' and DRFD archives, as well as E.O.C. - don't sell").
- 5] Elizabeth O'Donnell ("Approve (private) purchase").

This concluded the meeting, which adjourned at 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard H. Smith,
First Selectman

att: .pdf - 5 letters

RHS/jk

Richard Smith

Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 7:29 PM

To: selectman@deepriverct.us

Subject: Old Firehouse

Dear Dick, Art and David,

I encourage all three of you to nurture that "expression of interest in purchasing the property at 34 River Street." Sell the property into private hands and collect those resulting property taxes. Please do not give credence to those people in this town who believe every old building should be sacrosanct. These are the same people who believe their opinion should carry more weight than that of everyone else. These are the same people who cost this town two very expensive unnecessary referendums over the issues of historical preservation and design. These are the same people who are so full of their hot-air selves it's a wonder they aren't floating over Long Island Sound.

Please stand ready to pop their balloon. Sell that property.

Thank you for asking for my opinion.

Sincerely, Madeline C. Romano Walsh

7/28/2011

Richard Smith

Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 4:50 PM

To: selectman@deepriverct.us

Subject: Old Ambulance Barn

Dick,

I just recently learned that there is an interested party wanting to purchase the old ambulance barn/Fire Dept Museum/Deep River Drum Corps practice hall. I do not know all the particulars nor can I make the informal meeting tomorrow night but I wanted to express my thoughts.

This building has been so much a part of the town of Deep River since before the turn of last century. It has been the home of the Fire Department since its' inception and home to the Deep River Drum Corps since probably the mid 60's, maybe longer. I have only been a resident of Deep River since 1982 but to loose this building would be a detriment to the town, Fire Department and the Drum Corps. I am not an active member of the Drum Corps at present but have heard the stories of when Vic Malcarne had over 100 kids in the Junior Corps and how much he was loved by all. The building played a major role in so many of those kids lives including my own kids in the early 90's when I was president of the Corps. It's a place to hold weekly practice sessions, all the monthly Muster committee meetings as well as a place to store the boxes and boxes of gear necessary to put on the Muster that brings so many people to our great little town once a year.

I'm sure all the members of the Fire Department and both Sr. and Jr. Deep River Drum Corps will feel the same as I do.

I certainly hope this is not something that will come to fruition - I can only express my opposition to any outside speculator wanting to purchase the building for whatever reason.

Regards,
Brad Smith
62 Kirtland St.

7/28/2011

July 27, 2011

To: Richard Smith, First Selectman, Town of Deep River

From: Peter L. Woodcock, Fire Chief

Topic: Offer to purchase the building at the corner of River and High Streets, known as the Deep River Fire Department Museum.

At this time, I do not feel this is a very good idea for the following reasons:

This building houses the Deep River Emergency Operations Center which was just completed during the past year. The EOC had previously been in the basement of the Town Hall. A new generator and radio tower have been installed and all communication equipment moved to this location. This communication equipment is essential in the event of a major incident, be it storm, fire or other major disaster. Our EOC would provide direct communication with the State of Connecticut EOC located at the State Armory in Hartford. This communication link would enable Deep River to be supplied with whatever resource may be required. This a resource the Town of Deep River cannot do without under trying circumstances.

The Deep River Fire Department uses this building for the storage of our 1929 restored fire truck as this is the only location with enough room to store this piece of equipment. This building also stores all of the fire department's historical records, including our membership rolls, all fire calls and documentation going back to the formation of our fire department in 1896. It also houses our Charter from the State of Connecticut, photographs of past members, and our trophies. We do not have room for these records at our department headquarters.

This building is also used for meetings and is open to any Town Group that would be interested in using it. Currently the Cemetery Association, and the Fire Department Auxiliary use this building to hold their meetings. The Deep River Drum Corp uses the upstairs for their meetings and to store their records and equipment. Where would they go?

Now is not the time to sell this building. The real estate market is at a low point and the building is not worth what it was in the past. Just as with all real estate, the value has dropped considerably.

In conclusion I say, don't sell the building, please.

Ref: 34 River Street

I am Peter Howard, Chairman of Deep River's Design Advisory Board and a member of the Historical Society's Architectural Heritage Committee.

34 River Street is located within the newly designated Residential Village District; the purpose of which is to enhance architectural harmony and preservation.

34 River Street, built in 1899, fits stylistically into the neighborhood. It deserves good continuous maintenance and preservation. Considering the competing needs of municipal funds and the outlook for severe budget tightening, I would favor turning the property over to a private owner. The Town would benefit from a near term sale, long term property taxation and relief from maintenance costs.

I would expect that a new property owner in the Village District would maintain and preserve the building in a manner that the Town could not afford.

Hear Board of Selectman,

I approve of purchasing
the "old Ambulance" Barn.

Elizabeth O'Donnell
116 Union St.
Deep River