

TOWN OF FRANCESTOWN
OFFICE OF SELECTMEN
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FRANCESTOWN, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03043-0005

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2015

Selectmen Present: Chair Abigail Arnold, Brad Howell, and Scott Carbee

Also present: Scot Heath, Larry Ames, Jim Gann, Sue Cripps, Betty Behrsing, Lisa Bourbeau, Ruth Behrsing, Sue Jonas, David Jonas, Herb Bromberg, Tom Anderson, Marcia Graham, Ted Graham, Pamela Avery, Kim Dalley, Pat Place & Henry Kunhardt

CALL TO ORDER: Abigail called the meeting to order at 6:30

Public Hearing

Abigail stated this is a Public Hearing for the purpose of discussing if the Town should accept the partial donation of 7.9 acres of land from the Taylor family across from the existing cemetery. There are restrictions and conditions associated with this donation. The first is that the use be restricted to a future cemetery, in the meantime open space is fine; the second is that the Town must contribute \$8,100 by waiving the current use penalty on the property which was triggered as part of the settling of Tim Taylor's Estate. This hearing is being held under RSA 41:14-a. The second Public Hearing will be held on Monday on June 22, 2015. On the following Monday, June 29, 2015 the Selectmen will make a decision. A petition has been filed to place the matter on the warrant for Town Meeting. If the Selectmen decide to enter into an agreement to accept the donation it would have to be approved by vote at Town Meeting, either at an annual Town Meeting or a special Town Meeting. The Selectmen have also received recommendations from the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Both groups have recommended the Town accept the donation. Since the land is owned by multiple family members, the individuals will donate cash to the Town and the Town will use that money to purchase the land from the Estate.

Pursuant to the handout given to each attendee at the hearing, Abigail went over the information contained on the information sheet and map and then took questions from the public.

David Jonas asked for a projection of what cemetery needs will be going forward. Abigail gave the number of cemetery lots still available and said that it will be some time before a new cemetery is required. She explained that since half of the money used to purchase cemetery lots goes into capital improvements for the future purchase of a new cemetery, that money could be freed up for more maintenance and possibly some tax relief.

Scott Carbee commented that some lots go unused and eventually may come back to the Town and that some of the Cemetery Trustees do not want to have to deal with the land. He expressed

concern that if the lot eventually was used as a cemetery there would be a cemetery on both sides of the road and felt that it would detract from the appearance on the approach to the Town. In response to his concern about the Cemetery Trustees Abigail noted that the Cemetery Trustees would have no involvement with the land until the time it actually becomes a cemetery in the future.

Scot Heath talked about the thought process the Conservation Commission went through in deciding to recommend accepting the donation. He said it did meet the criteria for open space. It has 900' road frontage, it's a highly visible and scenic lot, there are lots of old trees, a wetland in the back and it has many scenic attributes. He went on to say that even if it doesn't become a cemetery it helps to protect the integrity of the existing cemetery across the road. He thinks that if it doesn't go to the Town for open space or a cemetery it could end up being house lots. James Gann said that he thanks the Taylors for the offer but he thinks the Town has set aside enough land and he would like the Town to stop accumulating land and turning it into conservation land. Scot Heath responded that the Conservation Commission did not have any intent for this land and they asked if the use restrictions could be removed. Abigail said that Mike asked about removing restrictions with the Taylor's attorney and they were willing to specify open space so there was no question about the time frame for building a cemetery but would not remove the restrictions. James Gann said that he thought it was foolishness and didn't think it should be considered. David Jonas commented that now that this is a contentious issue he thinks there should be some documentation outlining intent from the family's attorney for the public to consider. Henry Kunhardt said that Mr. Taylor wanted to give the land to the Town and the family is merely honoring his wishes. He thinks the offer should be seriously considered. He asked about how much time the Town had to accept the offer and if the family have to pay the current use tax prior to the Town accepting the land. Abigail said that tax bills just went out and they will receive a bill. Marcia Graham indicated that she agreed with Henry and would like to see the Town accept the land. Scott Carbee discussed green burial process and procedure. Henry asked if the Town accepts the donation and it stays as open space for awhile and not a wooded cemetery who manages it. Abigail responded the Board of Selectmen would manage it until it becomes a cemetery. Ted Graham asked what if the Taylor's elected not to pay the taxes. Abigail explained the options when the Town takes land. Pat asked if the Town would benefit from the gift, they is there a problem? Abigail indicated that there are some that are opposed and a petition has been signed. Scot Heath voiced his support. Mr. Gann says he would rather see it remain taxable property or see it sold as residential property that would be taxable and benefit the Town. Abigail said current use land does not cost the Town money, commercial land can contribute money to the Town and residential property costs the Town money. Abigail explained different scenarios of how the land could be used if sold and how each scenario may financially affect the Town. Brad said it's up to the Town to decide whether or not to accept the donation. Betty Behrsing asked why the Taylor family doesn't just keep the land in current use as it is.

Larry Ames announced that on Thursday June 25th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Town Hall Southern NH Regional Planning Commission and the Planning Board will host a workshop as part of the update to the land use section of the Master Plan. He invited all present to attend.

Abigail and Brad agreed that the second Public Hearing on this issue will be held on Monday, June 22, 2015 as planned. Scott was opposed.

ADJOURNMENT: Abigail adjourned the meeting at 7:30

Respectfully Submitted by Martha Callahan