

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR SESSION MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 7:30 PM
MS/HS Auditorium
245 Plain Street, Millis, MA 02054**

CALL TO ORDER: Sel. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm. The following persons were present: Chair Christopher Smith, Vice-Chair James Neville, Clerk James McCaffrey, Operations Support Manager Karen Bouret, Town Administrator Charles Aspinwall, and Town counsel representative Shirin Everett.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Sel. Smith introduced the members of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Charles Aspinwall, Operations Support Manager Karen Bouret, and Town counsel Shirin Everett. Sel. Smith outlined the ground rules for the hearing, (see attached presentation) and said he will act as moderator and will facilitate the meeting much like a town meeting.

Sel. Smith said the purpose of the hearing is to determine whether or not to exercise the Town's right of first refusal, waive the right of first refusal, or do nothing and wait until the 120 day deadline expires for the Glen Ellen Chapter 61B land on March 22nd. Sel. Smith said the Board is looking to hear from Millis residents as well as non-Millis residents in order to weigh all options when determining the course of action.

Sel. Smith reviewed why the hearing was called, saying a developer has signed a bona-fide purchase and sale offer which gives the Town the Right of First Refusal on the portion of Glen Ellen where the property has been designated Chapter 61B tax status. Sel. Smith said the Town is required to match the purchase and sale agreement price of \$13,000,000.00 if they decide to purchase the land including a \$550,000.00 deposit. Sel. Smith explained that the process would include a town meeting vote and a majority vote at an election. Sel. Smith went on to review the Town's future capital needs and showed possible scenarios of how the purchase would affect the residents and Town financially.

Sel. Neville made a motion to open the hearing to discuss the Right of First Refusal for the Glen Ellen property at 7:50pm. The motion was seconded by Sel. McCaffrey and passed unanimously.

The Board each voiced their thoughts on the Right of First Refusal. Sel. Neville said putting money towards repairing Town roads and other capital interests outweigh the benefit of purchasing the land in his opinion. Sel. McCaffrey noted that the Town has a long history of purchasing and keeping open space areas. He said this is another opportunity to do that, but the net gain doesn't seem to outweigh the direct and indirect costs that would be associated with ownership. Sel. Smith said although he would like to see the Town purchase the property, he can't rationalize spending the large sum of money to purchase it.

Sel. Smith opened the meeting to Millis residents who wanted to voice their opinions. Many people spoke about their concerns and ideas. Concerns were mainly related to the proposed housing development on the land by Toll Brothers. Residents expressed concerns such as noise, increased traffic, environmental impacts, and property values of abutters decreasing if the Town does not purchase the land. One resident suggested looking at non-profit entities or state agencies to possibly assist in purchasing the property. Several people voiced disappointment over losing the golf course and

the open land, but many agreed that the \$13,000,000.00 purchase price seems inflated. Sel. Smith reminded those who spoke about permitting for the proposed new development that the focus of the hearing was only to determine whether to exercise the right of first refusal and deferred those types of questions to the Planning Board. Sel. Smith then opened the meeting to non-Millis residents. A few Holliston residents spoke with similar concerns and urged Millis to consider purchasing the property to preserve the open space.

Sel. Neville made a motion to close the hearing at 9:05pm, seconded by Sel. McCaffrey. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board each gave their thoughts on exercising the Right of First Refusal. Sel. Smith said he understands and shares some the concerns expressed tonight, but doesn't think the Town should spend \$13,000,000.00 on the property. Sel. Smith said he would like to wait out the 120 days, do nothing tonight, and see if a last minute funding source or some other alternative should occur.

Sel. Neville said although he is a Millis native and wants the Town to continue embracing open space, he does not think it would be fiscally responsible to spend the money to purchase the property. Sel. Neville said he does not think the Town should exercise its Right of First Refusal.

Sel. McCaffrey also said he does not think the Town should exercise the Right of First Refusal. Sel. McCaffrey said the Board should make a decision and sees no gain in letting the 120 days expire with no action.

Sel. Smith opened the floor back to the residents in attendance for one final weigh in on the matter. A few residents urged the Board to wait out the 120 days in hopes of finding funding including the possibility of a non-profit group stepping in. Sel. McCaffrey said he thinks trying to get something for the Town from the seller and or potential buyer makes more sense at this point. Sel. Smith said he doesn't see the harm in waiting out the 120 days.

Sel. Neville made a motion that the Board waives the Town's Right of First Refusal for the Glen Ellen property. Sel. McCaffrey seconded the motion. Sel. Smith voted against the motion.

The motion passed by a vote of 2 to 1.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Sel. Neville, seconded by Sel. McCaffrey to adjourn the meeting at 9:30pm. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted: Karen M. Bouret