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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Fairfield Hills Authority

Draft Minutes April 27, 2015

Council Chambers, at the Newtown Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470

These minutes are subject to approval of the Fairfield Hills Authority.

In Attendance: Tom Connors (Chairman), Renata Adler, Michael Holmes, Curt Verdi

Absent: James Bernardi, Ross Carley, Terry Sagedy, and Andy Willie

Also in Attendance: Michael McCarthy, Tree Warden; Christal Preszler, Grants Coordinator, Planning Department, Fairfield Hills.

Mr. Connors called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m.

1. Public Participation - None.
2. Tree Warden Discussion (Mike McCarthy)

Mike McCarthy reported on the plan for utilizing the \$10,000.00 the Authority had approved at its last meeting for tree work. There are some large trees that need to come down and Mr. McCarthy is hopeful that the Public Works employees can do the removals, thus saving funds. Pruning of trees needs to be done by professionals and once he evaluates and marks the trees that need to be pruned, we will either need to get 3 prices or put it out to bid, depending upon the cost range.

Planting also needs to be done to replace some of the removed trees and to improve the aesthetics of the property, especially the entrance area. Mr. McCarthy believes we should plant 2 to 3" oaks and maples indigenous to this area. This property was originally a nice arboretum, but lack of care over 30 years has resulted in over-growth. As brief discussion was had about what would be required to re-create an arboretum.

Mike Holmes asked about specifics about how the work would be handled. Mr. McCarthy indicated that his assessment would start this weekend and focus on high traffic areas first including the Municipal Center, Victory Garden, soccer fields and along roads, and progress outward.

The Chair wants to define what we're trying to accomplish: priority is safety, followed by replacing what is removed, and improving the aesthetics of the property. Mr. McCarthy indicated that the safety issues requiring removal and pruning could be done for under the \$10,000.00 currently available. He could potentially accomplish removals and pruning for \$5,000.00 and then have \$5,000.00 left for plantings.

If you plan to attend this meeting and require assisted hearing devices, please contact the Office of the First Selectman at 270-4201 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

The Chair wants to wait on planting and make sure that it is approached in a comprehensive way taking into consideration the other improvements and plans occurring on the property. Mr. McCarthy suggests that we employ a landscape architect to provide guidance and also suggested that we could coordinate with the Memorial Committee and start a tree donation program. A brief discussion ensued about the feasibility of such a program.

Mr. McCarthy will report back on progress next meeting.

3. Review / Action on minutes of March 23, 2015 regular meeting - delayed due to lack of quorum.
4. Chairman's Report (Connors)
 - a. US Health Vest update : At last meeting we accepted Letter of Intent from Health Vest, which includes a proposal to share the funding of the demolition of Norwalk Hall and build a new behavioral health facility. Health Vest has identified a need for beds in this area. Renata Adler questioned how this facility will benefit FFH and Newtown. Christal Preszler explained that the proposal is an investment in our property - Health Vest will take down Norwalk Hall and erect new building. The Chair explained that we can let buildings sit and decay or we can do something: this is the first potentially viable proposal where the proponent has the funding to actually implement its plan . Health Vest has offered demolition, building a brand new facility, offering us a land lease for approximately \$64,000.00, C.A.M. charges and tax revenue. A discussion was had about whether this approved use is consistent with the community's goals for the property, the First Selectman's request that representatives of Health Vest attend the next Board of Selectman meeting, Dr. Kresch's willingness hold public forums on the proposal and additional requirements for approval, including a Certificate of Need from the State and approval by the Board of Selectmen.
Per Chair, FHA's role is to negotiate the lease - a subcommittee to negotiate lease and obtain an expert in commercial leasing may need to be formed. Ms. Adler disagrees with subcommittee - feels the committee is small enough to handle process.
5. FH / Grants Coordinator's Report (Preszler)
 - a. Parent Connection update - Duplex 63 bids due tomorrow.
 - b. Streetscape update - plans and drawings on improving entrance way aesthetics and lighting being worked on. Waiting for news on grant.
 - c. Grants update –
 1. DECD – Brown fields Assessment Grant - Canaan, Shelton and Greenhouse sampled, and Kent started today. Report on costs of demolition and remediation should be available later this week. Also, Norwalk Hall was assessed by a private firm on behalf of Health Vest and estimated the cost of abatement and demolition at \$1.4million. FHA could save some of the grant funding earmarked for assessing Norwalk Hall by utilizing this assessment and reallocating the savings to assess the single family homes.

Tom Connors mentioned that Ross Carley had asked about investing some money to pump water out of Plymouth Hall. Tomorrow's Budget Referendum will give us CIP amount and then we can determine demolition/remediation plan per costs determined by Fuss & O'Neill.
Terry Sagedy will be walking Memorial Committee around campus in May.
7. Member Items: Per Chair, short term priorities: Vetting and steering of Health Vest proposal; Investing in campus in terms of beautification i.e. trees, streetscape; Demolition of buildings.
8. Chair moved for adjournment, seconded by Curt Verdi, all approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.