

Town of North Stonington, CT
HEWITT FARM COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 1, 2014 at 3:00 p.m
New Town Hall Conference Room

The meeting of the Hewitt Farm Committee was called to order by Co-chair Nita Kincaid at 3:00 p.m. in the New Town Hall Conference Room with members Ellie Banker, Jack Brown, Dick (Coop) Cooper, Cindy Faucher, Ed Harasimowitz and Nita Kincaid present. Brian Banker was also present.

1) Approve 11/17/2014 Meeting Minutes

Cindy motioned and Ed seconded to approve the 11/17/2014 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

2) Site Visit to The Cabin

Nita briefly reviewed the committee's 2:30 workshop visit to the cabin, which was held prior to this regular meeting. She reminded the group that Linda Prior, the tenant who recently moved, had lived in the cottage since the mid-1990s. When the town purchased the property from Mystic Seaport, Ms. Prior was allowed to stay on.

Nita described some improvements the Town has made to the structure since Hewitt Farm was acquired in 2008 and noted that the selectmen are concerned about the building being left empty, possibly attracting vandals.

Nita had recently participated in a site inspection with First Selectman Mullane and town Building Inspector Lou DiCesare. Her understanding from this meeting is that the cabin could continue to be rented if left, more or less, "as-is". It would not be subject to current building code requirements, because it pre-existed the town having a building code. However, if there were any significant building modifications or a change of use, the building would then need to meet current building code requirements.

Nita stated that the committee could decide to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen on what to do with the cabin or could tell the selectmen that the committee does not have agreement on the cabin's future use.

Members individually expressed the following opinions on what should be done with the cabin:

- The cabin's location, the presence of on-site water, septic system and electricity, as well as its general appearance, would make it an ideal "welcome center."
- The building could also be used as an office or for community activities, although such need is not indicated at this time. Either of these uses would require extensive renovation.
- The basic framework and foundation of the structure is not of sufficient quality to warrant great expense, and the building's present condition indicates that great expense would be required.
- It is questionable whether the Town should engage in renting this structure if it is only "cleaned up." Rental as a residence would best be undertaken if the structure is renovated and upgraded to applicable building codes.
- The historic value of the building is acknowledged in that it is part of the original Fred and Flora Hewitt property, and meaningful to the Hewitt family. The building may be of less historical importance to the community at large.
- Although a building inspector has examined the building, any appraisal of what it would cost to renovate the building to its several proposed uses has not been undertaken. Nor has an appraisal of what it would cost to demolish it been done.
- The rental option should be evaluated to determine if the cost of renovation would be recovered from the rents.
- There is no strong opinion within the committee as a group on what should be done with the building.
- The committee agreed that there is currently no money available to do anything with the building. It should be secured through this winter and the issue re-addressed in the spring after dam reconstruction is complete.

3) Status of Dam Reconstruction Project

Nita gave the members a quick recap of progress to date on the Dam Reconstruction Project. She reported that the metal bridge has been fabricated at the factory and is ready for delivery to the site. Pouring of concrete for the abutments has begun.

4) Alternate Member to the Hewitt Farm Committee

Nita wrote a memorandum on behalf of the committee, recommending that Brian Banker be appointed to Alternate Member of the Hewitt Farm Committee. The memo will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen.

5) PTO Holiday Extravaganza

Nita learned from members Cindy and Ellie, who were going to participate, that the date of the PTO Holiday Extravaganza conflicts with their schedules. She will notify the PTO that the committee regretfully will not participate this year, but hopes to do so next year.

6) Route 2 Entrance Visibility Obstruction

Jack reported that several large trees bordering Route 2 at the Route 2 Entrance are obstructing visibility for vehicles exiting Hewitt Road. Jack asked if the Selectmen or Highway Department should be apprised of the safety hazard.

7) Priorities for December 15, 2014 Agenda

- To be determined by the co-chairs

Respectfully submitted, Richard B. Cooper