

September 30, 2013

The Stonington Board of Selectmen held a special meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Board of Police Commissioners, Planning & Zoning Commission and Economic Development Commission. Also present were members of the public and press.

(1) Call to Order

Mr. Haberek called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

(2) Introduction – First Selectman

First Selectman Ed Haberek, Jr. explained why he asked the commissions to attend the meeting. Mr. Haberek stated that the police commission is technically the management of the police department so it's important for them to hear and know what is going on along with the Chief and the Captain. He stated a lot of the zoning and planning issues go to that commission and Economic Development is the same thing. The Board of Selectmen is actively involved in policies. Mr. Haberek further stated that's why he wanted to open it up to the commissions. Mr. Haberek stated that downtown Pawcatuck is really important to the Town of Stonington. Mr. Haberek stated that a lot of work has gone in to downtown Pawcatuck and he doesn't want to see anything lost.

(3) Update on Public Safety Strategies in Downtown – Chief Darren Stewart/Capt. Jerry Desmond

- Chief Stewart spoke briefly with regard to some of the strategies they have in Pawcatuck. Chief Stewart stated that he and Captain Desmond have been on the force for over thirty years and have seen changes in downtown Pawcatuck. They have good days and bad days down here but for the most part its good days. Chief Stewart further stated that in the summertime they have Community Service Officers on the street on a very regular basis and they supplemented that with reserve officers and regular officers to be on the street at peak times. He stated that that they have been talking with the Westerly Police Department to do a combined camera system for downtown to have strategic cameras around so if something ever does happen, they would be able to see what goes on in this area. They did a rearrangement of their beats where police officers go out and patrol. The Chief stated that they hadn't changed that in close to 40 years. So we took a look at our statistics, we took a look at what we had going on and where the most calls for services come from in the town. He stated they rearranged their beats to have more of a presence in downtown Pawcatuck. Chief Stewart stated that it is call volume driven and based upon statistics. Each spring they have been meeting with businesses in this area to see what the concerns are and have tried to be responsive to anybody's concerns. The Chief also stated that the Captain did a study a number of years ago on loitering and disorderly conduct.
- Captain Desmond stated that they are concerned with the number of crimes, they are concerned about criminal activity and they are concerned about loitering and disorderly conduct. The Captain stated that they have been working on this issue for about 20 years. He further stated that they had a \$150,000 grant from the federal government that they studied loitering and disorderly conduct. He also stated that they found a number of ways they could improve things. The Captain stated that they have certain pockets downtown

that had people loitering behind bushes drinking and causing problems that they got rid of. The Captain also stated that they did a study with residents and people on the street that were here that were usually hanging out and some of the business people. The bottom line was that in the end when you have a lot of people loitering there is a perception more than a reality of unsafeness that takes place. The Captain stated that they have been dealing with criminal activity and they've made some arrests over the years and continue to do so. They have coordinated with some of the business people and most recently with the car dealership. He stated that people at night they go to the club and they go to leave and they try to do some infrastructure changes so that the flow of people doesn't put them in a position to do damage or to loiter and hang out. He stated they have four people working generally there is Pawcatuck, Stonington, Mystic and Old Mystic. The Captain further stated that they have taken the Old Mystic person and they put a second person in Pawcatuck starting this summer. The reason being is because all of the activity here and if someone has to go to the station to make an arrest or do paperwork, it gives you a second person whose around. Captain Desmond stated that they are working on a camera system now. They are doing a lot of things with technology initiatives. He stated they have the money to do that and they are currently in discussion with that. If there is a problem they will be able to pick up the license plate. They partner with some of the businesses down here. The Captain stated there have been several times when there have been problems in downtown and they have tapped businesses that have cameras and they have been vital in solving and making arrests.

- Chief Stewart stated that in downtown a lot of people don't realize that with the State of Rhode Island right there, their drinking establishments close 1 hour earlier everyday than the ones in Connecticut. He stated you'll see if you are ever out at 1:00 a.m., you'll see a big influx of people coming over the line.
- Ron O'Keefe, Dunnammo, Ashley Gillace, Sean O'Brien and Judd Rosen spoke with regard to police questions and concerns.

(4) Planning & Zoning Issues Approach for Downtown – Planner Keith Brynes

- Mr. Haberek introduced Town Planner, Keith Brynes.
- Mr. Brynes stated that one of the things that was done a few years ago is the town engaged a consultant in coming up with the Pawcatuck parking study. This firm analyzed all the parking in the downtown Pawcatuck area both public and private parking and came to the conclusion that Pawcatuck does have a decent amount of public parking especially with the public lot across the street. Mr. Brynes stated that the Planning & Zoning Commission created this Pawcatuck parking overlay district that says in the zoning regulations if you are an existing commercial building, you don't have to provide on-site parking for business uses unlike everywhere else in town. He stated one of the main reasons for this is because parking often is something that gets in the way of redeveloping village areas like this. If someone wants to put a use in a long, vacant building zoning regulations say you need 50 parking spaces. Mr. Brynes further stated that because the property was developed in 1910, it just doesn't have these on-site parking spaces. The logical conclusion is that you end up knocking down half the buildings in the village to provide for parking. He stated it was established in 2007 or so just when the recession hit and there hasn't been too much that took advantage of it. One of the other things that we have going on is the Plan of Conservation and Development

that is revised every ten years. The Plan is basically a blue print of how the town wants to develop and/or conserve open space across town.

- Mr. Haberek stated that about a year and a half ago we had a number of small business owners that talked about the signs and banners. They put together a task force to study the signs and to look at it. Keith was on the task force, Wendy Bury, Tricia Cunningham from the Mystic Chamber, Bill Haase and a couple of business owners were on there. They basically looked at some of the sign ordinances and changed some of the items.

That went before the PZC and was approved so there have been changes to that.

- Michael Spellman, Sal Ritacco, Ron O'Keefe, Lou DiCesare, John Kiss, Fran O'Neill, Elizabeth Cipriano, Melanie Goggin and Stephen Freitas spoke with regard to Planning & Zoning and Building concerns.

(5) Social Resources Provided by Human Resources – Human Services Manager Leanne Theodore

- Leanne Theodore stated that Human Services has four divisions – Youth & Family Services, Recreation, Senior Services and Social Services. She stated that they work hand in hand with the Police Department specifically like the building across the street that had a fire and a subsequent fire alarm issue where in the middle of the night they had to help relocate 8 to 10 people that were in the building at the time. Ms. Theodore stated that they work hand in hand with the Red Cross to make sure they have sufficient shelter and that their basic needs are met. They provide outreach work hand in hand with the WARM Shelter. Ms. Theodore also stated that they do have a homeless population in town and they do their best to bring people not to put a band aid on their situation but to bring them to a place of self-sufficiency. She stated that's what their goal is. Whether it's getting people health insurance that they need or whether it's helping them find affordable housing which is a big issue in our community. Ms. Theodore stated that helping to hook them up with the food pantry at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center. They do whatever they can to get them back on their feet. She stated that another thing they offer at Human Services for income eligible residents are bus passes to utilize the SEAT Bus. Ms. Theodore further stated that they do a lot of program promotion downtown for community events we post flyers.

(6) Tree Initiative and CL&P Proposal – Director of Public Works

- Mr. Haberek stated he wanted to thank Public Works for doing a terrific in housekeeping in the downtown area. Mr. Haberek also stated that they had a very terse discussion with CL&P today about some of the lights and some of the areas here that need fixing.
- Joe Bragaw, Director of Public Works stated at the Selectmen's meeting with CL&P he did preface North Main Street because that was a few years ago and when people read it in the paper it did put it in perspective that we identified a bunch of trees that were an issue and in that case a lot of people got worked up. He stated that how they handled that process is they got the public involved and told them what they were doing and had them participate in what they were doing for solutions. He stated he brought that up because he thinks it was a pretty productive process and they removed some trees on North Main Street but at least people knew what they were doing and why they were doing it. Mr. Bragaw stated that we have CL&P coming in town and they have been doing a lot of trimming in town. He stated that the problem is that they take a specification of what they have to trim and they just plop it into downtown. Mr. Bragaw further stated that the

people on Moss Street and some of the people on Courtland Street got letters and we had a meeting. Mr. Bragaw stated that they are working with CL&P. CL&P has a job to do and some of the trees are in the wires. He stated that he doesn't think anyone in this town is unreasonable that something has to be done. Mr. Bragaw also stated that he walked down the street and took a picture of every tree on the street. Mr. Bragaw stated that he didn't know what CL&P's plan is exactly but they're going to make them show us what their plan is. He stated that we're going to look at what are CL&P is going to need to meet their specs. Mr. Bragaw further stated that we're going to push them towards just trimming them and not lopping them off. He wants people to be assured at least if the residents know they are going to try and start working with a plan and they'll work with CL&P and then bring it back to the people to let them know what they are trying to do. Mr. Bragaw stated that if they try to meet with every single resident it is going to take forever and something has to be done and that there we do have to do some trimming. Mr. Bragaw stated that hopefully we'll have another North Main Street success story. Mr. Bragaw stated that the trees in downtowns are beautiful but they also pose problems for businesses when you can't see the facades and you get all mold on buildings. He stated that they selectively pruned the trees so they don't look like bushes or they don't look like trees anymore.

- Mr. DiCesare stated they are going to do a crown reduction. He stated that you never want to sculpt the tree more than a 1/3 of the living vegetation. He also stated that they already brought these trees up to get the lower limbs so you can see the front of the buildings. Mr. DiCesare stated that now they are going to do a crown reduction and they are targeting 2 feet of crown. He also stated that then they're going to skip a year and hopefully this will give the trees a chance to rejuvenate. Then they'll come back every year after that to manage that crown.
- Mr. Bragaw stated that the reason Yankee Gas is doing a lot of this work is because the town is doing work on the roads. Mr. Bragaw stated that Yankee Gas is doing work on Liberty Street and Rt. 2. He stated that they have been working with the utility companies for the past 2 to 3 years. Mr. Bragaw also stated that the highway department is going to be coming back into the Pawcatuck area in the next year and they still have Morgan, Lincoln, William, Courtland, Palmer and Field to redo all of these roads. He stated that you see Yankee Gas in there now on the main route and it is a DOT permit and they have to patch it. Mr. Bragaw also stated that other roads like Morgan Street, you might see a patch on there. Yankee Gas puts in the patch to replace their mains before the highway paved but what public works is trying to do is instead of Yankee Gas doing a permanent patch they are trying to take Yankee Gas's money that it would have put it in a permanent patch and put aside for the Town of Stonington then do the whole road and Yankee Gas will pay for 50% of it.
- John Kiss, Ashley Gallace, Carlene Dunnarummo, Fran O'Neill asked questions with regard to underground utilities, paving, sidewalks and lights in downtown Pawcatuck.
- Selectman Glee McAnanly stated that collaboration is the key. She stated she thinks getting everyone together like this is good with business owners and folks that live in the community. Mrs. McAnanly stated that next time they should also do some public/private conversations so that they could get the Chambers involved.

(7) Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Bell

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Recording Secretary