

Water Mill Citizens Advisory Committee
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Minutes for July 10th, 2023

Members: Steve Abramson, Karen Sutton, Paul Griffin, Rik Kristiansson, Rachel Verno, Gloria Rabinowitz, Marelene Haresign, Alan Harper, Rachel Verno

Guests: Councilman Tommy John Schiavoni, Robert Hertzka, Johanna Halsey, Patricia Halsey Wellen, Nicholas Michael Vinoly, Caroline Littlefield, Ed Kush, Barbara Pan, Kathy Traystman, David Roos, John C. Higdon, John Higdon, Liz Walbrol, Christy Hertel, Carol Finocchio, Silvia Bolatti, Nancy Skluth, Joel Perlman, Trudy Pererira, Leonel Pereira, Regan Kiembock, Eileen Stern, Robert Weinert, Emmanuela Albert, Caroline Dunbar, Bud Dunbar, Margery Freedman, Susanne Emmerich, Olga Raykhelson, Alyse Ruth, Anthony Girardi, Jason Witt, Ellen To, Jacoba Urist, Judith Verno, Cedric Meeschaert. Leonard Wadler, Tim Maran, Jesse Wellen, Olivia Motch

FIREHOUSE PROPOSAL 319 UPPER SEVEN PONDS ROAD

- The Southampton Fire District Commissioners have purchased a property for 1.65 million dollars located at 319 Upper Seven Ponds Road.
- No one on the CAC or in the community was informed.
- The CAC learned about the project from a Planning Board work session agenda notice.
- The CAC submitted a letter to the Planning Board and to the Town Board.
- The CAC attended the work session and submitted a letter to the SH Press.
- The FD Commissioners have fully executed plans for a firehouse designed by Ben Chaleff. Inter Science, Aryais Design, Nelson Pope Voorhis and Wayne Bruyn have all been hired by the FD Commissioners and representatives were all at the work session. Discussion noted that this purchase and all of these fees were and are being paid for by taxpayer dollars.
- The FD Commissioners were told by the Planning Board to meet with the public. Rachel invited Commissioners Wines and Price after the work session to the CAC meeting. They declined because of Sunshine Laws (it was pointed out that 2 Commissioners could attend) and instead they invited the CAC along with the Community Club, the WM Museum Board and the Parks District members to their monthly meeting for a presentation on 7/14/23.
- The CAC reached out to some of the adjacent property owners and in turn those residents reached out to their neighbors. Currently there are 80+ property owners in the immediate area who have expressed opposition to this project.
- Councilman Schiavoni who is the Town Board liaison to the SH Fire District discussed the history of the Fire Protection District and how it became the SH Fire District. He explained how coverage for the Water Mill area works.
- There was discussion about the differences between the Southampton Village Fire Department and the Fire District Commissioners. Discussed the history of how the Fire District was created and how there are now five elected Commissioners who have their own tax line. The Town Board approves the budget but has a no ability to control how taxpayer dollars are spent. A 2% annual increase is permitted.
- The firehouse proposal was not presented to the TB or to Councilman Schiavoni prior to the Planning Board work session.
- The Fire District does not own any equipment and they do not own any substations.
- There is currently 9.5 million dollars in the Fire District reserve funds collected from tax payer dollars.

- Discussed when and where elections are held and who the Commissioners are. Anyone is eligible to run for Fire Commissioner.
- Discussed the potential for returning the Fire District to the purview of the Town Board.
- Discussion as to why a firehouse would be proposed in a residential neighborhood as opposed to a highway location like all of the other firehouses and substations in the area.

The following questions were raised for the upcoming Fire District meeting:

- Why wasn't the CAC and/or the community informed about this project prior to purchasing property and spending tax dollars on an architect, engineer, surveyor, landscape architect and land use attorney?
- Was a traffic study conducted prior to the purchase?
- What did the study say about the weight limits on the bridge at Head of Pond Road? Fire trucks can not use that bridge. There is a 9 ton weight limit.
- What will be proposed for Old Mill Road, the only direct access to the highway? There is no center lane and no shoulders. Will the parking on Old Mill Road be removed? Will the road need to be widened?
- How will the bus depot and school buses be addressed?
- How will the Railroad Crossing be addressed? How many trains, what is the schedule, does the FD have the ability to stop trains?
- With the back up on Old Mill Road, how will large trucks navigate going into oncoming traffic? Will a volunteer have to be stationed on the highway to stop traffic?
- How will large firetrucks navigate getting into and out of a firehouse located on a narrow residential road?
- Will a stop light or flashing lights be needed? Every firehouse and substation in the area has some form of lights to warn people that firetrucks will be pulling out of the station.
- If this is a substation, why is there a second floor with a meeting room, day room, office and kitchenette?
- Why are there 40 parking spots for a substation? This is clearly being designed as a firehouse.
- Will there be plans for future expansion with EMS services?
- Wetlands concerns
- Chemicals contaminating round water. How will vehicles and gear be cleaned?
- What other locations have been looked at? Why were they rejected?
- What is the status of the North Sea Road firehouse proposal which is shovel ready? Why wouldn't that project be constructed since that location is more centrally located?
- Where are the studies that show the need for a firehouse in Water Mill? There were several studies done for the North Sea Road location. Where are those studies?
- Where is the data to back the claim that many volunteers now live in Water Mill? Where is the data to show where volunteers work (when a call may come in)?
- Where is the data that shows response time is hampered because there is no firehouse in Water Mill? Where is the data that show response time would be better?
- How much money to date has been spent on this project and what are the projected costs to build it?
- Same question was asked about the North Sea Road location.
- The Fire District does not own any equipment so how would that work? Does the Fire Department have extra vehicles that they can give to the Fire District? Would the Fire District have to purchase equipment?
- How does the financing to build a firehouse work? Would there be a referendum?

Minutes taken by Rachel Verno