

Water Mill Citizens Advisory Committee
PO Box 880
Water Mill, N.Y., 11976
watermillcac@gmail.com

Minutes for November 13th, 2023
Minutes for October 9th were approved

Members: Gloria Rabinowitz, Alan Harper, Karen Sutton, Steve Abramson, Jamie Egerton-Warburton, Rachel Verno, Rik Kristiansson, Paul Griffith
(via zoom)

Guests: Supervisor Jay Schneiderman, Councilman Tommy John Schiavoni, Director of Housing and Community Development Kara Bak, Grania Brolin, Tip Brolin, Olivier Vidal, Linda & Tom Euell, Jim Weidner, Olivia Motch, Susan Koehn Habermann, Patti Halsey Wellen, Johanna Halsey, John C. Higdon, Southampton Fire District Secretary Kristin White, Joel Perlman

Guests via Zoom: Lisa West, Helen Verno, Judith Verno, Olga Raykhelson

LIPA:

-LIPA has scheduled public meetings to discuss a new underground transmission line project in Water Mill. The meetings are on December 6th at the library.

-This is an informational meeting and the CAC is not objecting to the plan. We would, however like to know the specifics of how this project will be funded.

-LIPA representatives contacted the CAC about attending one of our monthly meetings, but we decided, along with the North Sea CAC, to attend the 5pm meeting on December 6th.

-The CAC still has questions regarding the accounting practices for the under grounding project that is financed by the VBA. Specifically, the costs charged back to the residents for unpaid bills has never been fully explained or audited.

FIRE DISTRICT ELECTIONS:

- December 12th from 5-9pm
- John C. Higdon who is running for Fire District Commissioner introduced himself.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

- There was a work session on November 9th and there will be a public hearing on December 21st to discuss the Community Housing Fund Project Plan. The plan is on the Town website.
- Kara Bak, the Director of Housing and Community Development gave an overview of the CHF and discussed some of the programs that the newly created fund could now provide in regards to first time home buyers, purchasing existing zombie homes and purchasing property for affordable housing opportunities.
- Discussed the need for affordable housing both for purchase and to rent.
- Discussed a property at 99 Montauk Highway that the Town is considering purchasing for an affordable housing rental project. The property is 4 acres and the Town is considering 35 units ranging in size.
- The property is in the HB zone and there are no residential properties adjacent to the proposed development. There are residences across the highway including the family that owns the property.
- Discussed density and traffic. As a comparison, the Townhouse project on Nowedonah is 38 units on 6 acres. Those units are larger and the property includes a pool and clubhouse.
- Discussed cost of the rental units and what is considered affordable by HUD guidelines. Comments included that the rent for a 1BR should be lower than what is being proposed by the Town.
- Questions about access to public transportation, how the property would be managed and maintained, what the process would be for obtaining a rental unit, could conditions be placed in terms of renters having to work in Southampton, safeguards for change of salary or job locations and how to actually finance and build out the units so they could remain affordable.
- Also discussed design, could there be a process or competition for architects to submit ideas? The project would be subject to an RFP and would be open to anyone. Suggested looking at the design for similar projects so the community could get a sense of what this type of project could look like. Sandy Hollow is approximately the same acreage and would be a good project to look at as a comparison.

-The CAC and guests in attendance felt there was an obvious need in Water Mill for affordable housing and this location seemed appropriate for this amount of density.

-Next steps would be a public hearing to purchase the land with CHF. Then another public hearing would be required for a zone change.

FIRE HOUSE:

-Updated the latest development regarding the North Sea Road property being in play. Building out that property requires a partnership between the SH Village and the SH Fire District. The Fire District Commissioners feel that the new Village administration is more open to discussing this partnership than in the past. However, this is a negotiation that is not finalized. Commissioner Price said he was optimistic that discussions will continue and will hopefully be completed in January, but this is not a guarantee.

-This means the Upper Seven Ponds Road project will be put on the back burner BUT it is still in play. Ben Chaleff is still working on plans and presented a number of revised plans at the Fire District monthly meeting. The plans call for a one story building set further back from the road but may then require a larger footprint and would not be sited in the natural depression of the property.

-The Station Road property was rejected. The Commissioners feel that the property is too small, too expensive and is too hard to get to. Residents continue to point out that with well over 9 million dollars in reserves, plus money that would be generated from the sale of Upper Seven Ponds, more money should be used to find an alternative property.

-At least one of the Commissioners acknowledge that Upper Seven Ponds is not an ideal location, but they are going to continue to work on those plans.

-Commissioner Price asked if the community would be willing to carve out 2 acres on the highway from the Mill Creek Park project for a firehouse.

-Rachel asked the Supervisor and Councilman Schiavoni what the process would be for returning the tax line back to the Town Board's purview as it had been before 2003. There was no clear answer. This is a concern for the CAC since the Town Board is considering giving the Town Trustees their own tax line and we should know what steps are involved if there is ever a decision to return the Trustee tax line back to Town Board control.

-The CAC did learn that if we still had a Fire Protection District under the control of the Town Board instead of Fire District Commissioners, a

firehouse proposal would not have been initiated unless the Fire Department that was contracted for fire protection had requested it. There would then have been a public hearing and a vote for a bond to finance such a project. The Town Board would not be collecting taxes to create a reserve fund, they would only be taxing residents for the actual cost of the fire protection contract with the Village.

-Discussed what the Fire District was doing with so much in reserves. The Commissioners have gone on record that they are not planning to start their own Fire Department. Therefore it is unusual to collect so much in reserves from tax payers and it also allows for the Commissioners to finance projects without having to go out to bond where the public would have a chance to vote.

-Discussed the difficulties with a permissive referendum especially during Covid which is when the Upper Seven Ponds property was purchased.

TERM LIMITS:

-There will be a public hearing on extending the length of time for term limits.

-Currently, Town Board members can serve 2 four year terms for a total of eight years (they do not have to be consecutive). The Supervisor can serve 4 two year terms for a total of eight years (they do not have to be consecutive). The proposal would be to extend the eight years to twelve years.

-The Supervisor explained his position in supporting the longer terms.

-Easthampton and other surrounding towns have twelve year limits.

-The CAC did not reach a consensus, but many of the guests either supported the extension or called for term limits to be eliminated.

AMBULANCE DISTRICT:

-There is a vote on December 6th from 2-8pm at the Red Creek Park Activity Center to increase the monthly service award from \$20 to \$30. The resolution is on the Town Board website.

Minutes taken by Rachel Verno