

Minutes of the Heritage Committee

Oct. 16, 2008 – Town Hall – 7 p.m.

Members present: Janet Banks, Jack Quinn, Ray Wilcox, Chet Kuras, Mark Winne, Arnie Magid, William Moncrief Absent: W. Hansen Also present: EDC Director Patrick McMahon

Vice Chairman Jack Quinn called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

Citizen Comments: None

Minutes: Ms. Banks moved to approve the minutes of the Sept. 18 meeting; Mr. Kuras seconded. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

- ☛ Open Space Subcommittee – Mr. Wilcox stated that the Town had reached agreement to purchase 10+ acres (Cannon property) for \$325,000. An Agri-Science grant will fund \$295,000; the Town will pay the remaining \$30,000. The Board of Finance voted to fund the \$30,000 from the Open Space Program (Farm Preservation Program) and recommend the purchase to Town Meeting. The subcommittee met and did support the purchase of the land, but not to fund the \$30,000 from the Open Space fund. Mr. Wilcox attended the Board of Finance meeting, and he suggested that the funding come from the Town Contingency account. The BOF did say that they would revisit this issue in June; and see if the \$30,000 could be replaced in the Open Space Fund with remaining funds in the Contingency Account. The Open Space Subcommittee objects to using Open Space funding and paying more than the fair market value.
- ☛ Commercial Subcommittee – Janet Banks who serves as the vice chairman of the Bridge Street School Study Committee, reported to the HC that the chairman of this Study Committee had sent letters to committee and commission chairs asking for input and comments from their respective committees and commissions. They are asking for suggestions for usage and any options preferred. She noted that by a 3 to 1 vote, the Selectmen agreed to keep the heat on in the School (55 degrees). The Study Committee have toured the building and concluded that it is a viable structure; it is structurally sound, and the building could be rehabilitated for municipal use. The Committee discussed various uses. One use would be to renovate for Town use, such as Town Offices. Town Offices in the school would allow the Town to move from rental offices, now costing approximately \$90,000 per year. There is adequate parking around the building. Parks/Recreation has indicated a greater need than it has in the Roy building, for offices, and program space, and an athletic field near a Parks/Rec. Office would be very advantageous. Municipal utilization of the building is urged. It was noted that there are some who would raze the building and sell the property to a commercial private buyer.

After much discussion, Mr. Moncrief moved the resolution: that the Heritage Committee considers the Bridge Street School to be a great asset, and the Committee appreciates the work of the Bridge Street School Study Committee, and suggests that alternate options, such as Town municipal offices, be considered. Mr. Kuras seconded. The resolution was approved by unanimous vote. Mr. Moncrief will write a letter to the Bridge Street School Study Committee reflecting the resolution approved by the Heritage Committee. It was noted that the school is in the Town Center Village District.

- ☛ A third Economic Development **Forum** will be held **Oct. 23**, 2008 in the Senior Center at 7 p.m. The results of a survey regarding development in Suffield will be discussed. Approximately 260 surveys were returned. The proposed expansion of the Town Center Village District will also be discussed.

☛ Proposed Town Center Village District Zone Expansions:

EDC Director Patrick McMahon distributed to the members, copies of a plot plan showing the center of Town. The proposed expansions include property beyond Muddy Brook to the McAlister School property line, include property on the corner of Mountain Road, up north High Street, and a lot beside the entrance to the shopping center. The Committee discussed these proposals, and made further suggestions to Mr. McMahon who will relay these to Mr. Hawkins. By a unanimous vote, the Heritage Committee supports the proposed Town Center Village District proposals as recommended by the Town Planner. A Public Hearing on the proposed expansions will be set for a date in November.

- ☛ Acquisition of Calvary Church – Mr. McMahon distributed to the HC, an outline documenting the approval process and noting the meeting dates of boards and commissions involved. The Town has been awarded \$750,000 Small Cities CDBG grant for the purchase of the Calvary Church to be used for a senior center. This building has approximately 12,000 sq. feet. The Town has a STEAP grant of \$500,000 and Industrial Park program income grant of \$185,000. Other grants will be sought. The total cost including purchase of the property and renovation is approximately \$1,800,000 of which there is \$1,435,000 in grant money dedicated for this project. This will go to Town Meeting; members are urged to attend commission meetings to support this Project.

Conservation Commission update: Mr. Wilcox noted that activity was slow now, and only had 1 subdivision for consideration. Farms signs have been ordered.

Zoning and Planning Commission update: Mr. Kuras reported that the Z & P are still reviewing and considering new regulations to wineries and permanent farm stands. It was noted that the Town Planner is seeking a Request for Qualifications for the revision of the Plan of Conservation and Development. This document has to be updated every ten years. Mr. Kuras will keep the Committee updated.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary to the Heritage Committee
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