

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4201
FAX (203) 270-4205
www.newtown-ct.gov



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**TOWN OF NEWTOWN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2014
NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER, NEWTOWN, CT**

PRESENT: George Ferguson, Joe Girgasky, Bob Merola, Ryan Knapp, Neil Chaudhary, Mary Ann Jacob, Dan Amaral, Anthony Filiato, Paul Lundquist, Phil Carroll, Dan Honan (7:36)

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Pat Llodra, Finance Director Bob Tait, Board of Ed Chair Keith Alexander, Town Clerk Debbie Halsted, Fire Marshall Bill Halsted, Fire Commissioners Rob Manna, Kevin Cragin, and Tim Whalen, Captain Joe Rios, Director of Planning George Benson, 4 press, 7 public.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Jacob called the meeting to order at 7:32pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

DISTRICT 2 COUNCILMAN: MR. LUNDQUIST MOTIONED TO FELLOW DEMOCRATS TO PLACE EVA BERMUDEZ IN THE VACATED DISTRICT 2 SEAT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE TERM. SECOND BY MR. AMARAL. APPROVED. Ms. Bermudez was sworn in by Town Clerk Debbie Halstead.

VOTER COMMENT: Carla Kron, 4 Clapboard Ridge Rd. supports of the purchase of 36 Yogananda St.

36 YOGANANDA: MR. CHAUDHARY MOTIONED TO PURCHASE THE REAL ESTATE, 36 YOGANANDA STREET PER CHARTER 7-90. SECOND BY MR. KNAPP

Ms. Llodra states she was contacted about 6 months ago by Dr. Randall Bell, a representative from the bank and expert in distressed property, regarding 36 Yogananda. The town is in possession of the deed. The council action allows the town to file the deed. There is no cost to the transaction. There are 2 steps to the process; first is taking ownership, second is the disposition of the property. If disposition involves an appropriation, the request will come from the Board of Selectmen to the Board of Finance to the Council. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED. *Attachment*

MINUTES: MR. CHAUDHARY MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 19, 2014 MEETING. MOTION SECOND BY MR. MEROLA. APPROVED. Ms. Bermudez abstained.

COMMUNICATIONS: Ms. Jacob stated the council received several letters regarding the 36 Yogananda property. *Attachment*

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT: Ms. Llodra shared info on property to show the process used for distressed property in foreclosure. The same process will be used for 7 Glen Rd. and 2 properties in the pipeline. The object of taking over property is to get it back on the tax rolls. *Attachment*

Mediassociates in Sandy Hook is being recognized by CERC. The company has become prominent in their industry and their employment has grown. They are a model of a successful startup.

Attachment

Mr. Ferguson asked if there has been any environmental assessment on 7 Glen Rd. Ms. Llodra said we do not own the property but we have knowledge of how the property was used. The state has done some testing. Further testing would be needed. Mrs. Llodra noted contaminated property needs to be cleaned or it will never be returned to the tax rolls.

Mr. Lundquist asked if there is anything regarding 28 Glen Rd. that was unanticipated and detrimental to the outcome. Mrs. Llodra said they were aware of the problems and there are always costs involved with brownfields. They are careful of the brownfields in tax arrearage to take over. The town looks for property that can be returned to commercial viability without too much expense.

CIP: NEIL MOTIONED TO RE-OPEN DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE 2015/2016-2019/2020 CIP. SECOND BY MR. CARROLL.

Fire Departments: Rob Manna, Board of Fire Commissioners Chairman, gave an overview of the fire departments. The commission oversees the purchase and maintenance of town owned fire apparatus and equipment and general operating procedures of fire service and the fire marshal's office. Sandy Hook has 2 firehouses due to the size of the district. The town owns a tanker and pumper for each station except Hook & Ladder which has the ladder truck and supply pumper. Mr. Manna explained the need for expansion at the Sandy Hook sub-station because the station is too small for the new fire trucks. Tankers have a 25 year life span. There are 3 tankers in need of replacement. There is a discount for purchasing multiple tankers.

Mrs. Llodra noted the fire departments own their firehouse with the exception of Hook & Ladder, who will own their new building. She noted with the geographical area of our town, the firehouses need to be placed where they can reach every part of their district within a certain amount of time. The town supports the firehouses by funding equipment and structure projects such as paving driveways. The firehouses are mostly self-sustaining.

Mr. Filiato said it seems we have a lot of equipment. He asked what the standards are that determine the equipment and are we up to those standards. Mr. Halstead said they are guided by International Fire Protection Association for equipment and the Insurance Services Offices which rate each town for insurance. Firehouses must be within a 5 mile radius of areas in its district and be able to reach a fire within 10 minutes of receiving a call.

Mr. Knapp asked who maintains fire equipment. Mrs. Llodra stated all equipment is maintained by the Highway Dept. but the firehouses are billed for the equipment they own.

Mr. Carroll stated he understood other fire departments obtained mortgages for their additions, why is Sandy Hook not doing the same for the Substation expansion. Mr. Manna noted Sandy Hook has 2 buildings to maintain. Mr. Halstead stated it is an extra \$115,000 in basic bills for the substation. They respond to 500 fire calls a year. They have 60+ members who receive yearly training. A rescue truck needs to be replaced at about \$500,000. More equipment is due for replacement in the next few years. In the last 12 years, SHFH has spent \$553,300 on renovations, apparatus purchases, maintenance, etc.

Mr. Manna states the Board of Fire Commissioners has a capital plan for items too small for the town CIP.

Mr. Honan noted a paid fire department would cost much more money.

Mrs. Llodra stated the difference in the budget between fire services and the Police Dept. is about 5 million dollars. We are well served by our fire companies. The Board of Selectmen is behind the equipment request and the substation expansion.

Mrs. Llodra reports the Hook & Ladder building plan goes before Borough Zoning on the 10th, then to the Police Commission for a traffic study. The permit process is in place. Then the Board of Finance and Council will review the role and purpose of the \$500,000 for 3 years. Mr. Manna stated the land purchase is contingent about Land Use approval.

Mrs. Llodra stated the plan is to start the new fire house in the spring and will take 9-12 months to complete. Mr. Manna stated they modified their design to fit with the Historic District. They will be constructing a shell and will up-fit as much as they can afford with some of the interior for future development.

Board of Education: Mr. Alexander explained the auditorium has been in the CIP for a number of years. Recently Kestle Boos reviewed and gave a detailed update including ADA compliance which increased the price. The project was moved off the CIP for this year and added to next year. He anticipates the project will be 6 months later than originally planned. They are taking into consideration the use of the facility and when the project will have the least impact.

Mr. Chaudhary asked why the ADA compliance was not in the original plan. Mr. Alexander said when the project was planned, there was a grandfather clause, but as the project increased, it needed to become compliant. The state will reimburse the district for ADA compliance work. Mr. Alexander noted should Hawley School remain open, the items removed from the CIP will be re-evaluated and added back. Ms. Jacob noted the feedback she is hearing regarding the HS auditorium, concerns the concerts, etc., that take place at the high school. Mr. Halsted stated the capacity of the auditorium is 1,100. Mr. Alexander stated the renovation will have 992 seats.

MR. CHAUDHARY MOVED TO POSTPONE DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON THE CIP UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING. MOTION SECOND BY MR. FERGUSON. APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS:

Firearms Ordinance Update: Captain Rios spoke to the Firearms Ordinance. He believes the ordinance is working well and has done some research for 2014 up through today. Regarding residents calling before shooting, there were 55 calls. Police have observed the shooting for safety. There were 2 incidents where people were not compliant. No citations have been issued or arrests made. Ms. Jacob stated the current ordinance prevents shooting on land less than 2 acres or near schools. Mr. Knapp asked what resources are used to monitor shooting. Captain Rios stated an officer will monitor if residents are shooting in a safe manner and are compliant with the 500 foot rule. Mr. Carroll asked if the level of complaints has been reduced. Captain Rios said it has. They do receive calls regarding gunshots that are not gunshot related.

MR. CHAUDHARY MOTIONED THE COUNCIL CONSIDER RESERVING PROPERTY FOR TOWN USE AT 7 GLEN ROAD PER CHARTER 7-90. SECOND BY MR. FERGUSON. Mrs. Llodra reports it was the former garage. It went out of business many years ago. The owners have been trying to sell. They owe taxes. The town has foreclosed and taken possession. We need to return the property to the marketplace. Mrs. Llodra said we will try to get grants to clean up the property or if there is an interested buyer, they could do the clean-up. It can never be a gas station/auto body again; zoning does not allow it. MOTION FAILED.

Blight Ordinance Update: Mr. Benson reports the ordinance is working well. There have been 10 instances where they have used the ordinance. For several, only a phone call was needed. 102 Underhill and 48 Main St. will likely go to court. Ms. Jacob asked how they determine when to use the blight ordinance. Mr. Benson said normally it is for abandoned buildings no one is living in or taking care of. Mr. Benson said we usually don't collect the fines unless we go to court. The goal is to get the property cleaned up. Fines are not revenue. Attachment.

Legislative Council Meeting calendar 2015: MR. CHAUDHARY MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE 2015 MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED WITH THE CORRECTION OF DECEMBER 16TH. SECOND BY MR. FERGUSON. APPROVED.

Publishing of town and BOE Salaries: Mr. Tait shared 2 examples of reporting for discussion. He states the payroll system is not good for generating reports. There was discussion on report options. A report listing total earnings will look different from contracted salaries. There are some earnings that are not paid by the taxpayer. Mr. Lundquist suggested adding the number of people in a position. Mr. Carroll noted the contractual salaries do not include benefits, total compensation. Mr. Tait should include a footnote. Mr. Chaudhary and Mr. Knapp would like overtime included in the report. Mrs. Llodra suggested publishing the contractual salaries for positions and include an addendum that states some position have the opportunity for additional income and a table that indicates what money has been budgeted for overtime in each department. Also, preface the report with a paragraph stating this is salaries and wages and does not reflect full benefit packages nor does it necessarily reflect full earnings.

VOTER COMMENT: None

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:52pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carey Schierloh, Clerk

Attachment A: 36 Yogananda and Letters
Attachment B: 28 Glen Rd.
Attachment C: Mediassociates
Attachment D: 7 Glen Rd.
Attachment E: Blight Ordinance Report
Attachment F: 2015 Council Meeting Schedule
Dear Legislative Council Members.

My name is Dave Ackert. My family and I live around the corner from the Lanza property, on Cider Mill Rd. I'm writing today to voice my strong support of the idea for the Town to purchase the Lanza property, raze the structure, plant some trees, and let it return to mother nature.

Many in our neighborhood also strongly support this idea. Not only is the property a constant reminder of the evil that resided there – those of us who walk, run, drive, ride, or otherwise must pass it multiple times a day, are having a hard time moving on. Please do not let the town leave open the possibility of some unsavory individuals or groups taking possession of that property. As remote a possibility as it might be, can you imagine how harmful it would be if some so-called "truthers", or worse, seized the opportunity to further their hateful, hurtful agendas by setting up shop there?

Forget about the drag on our property values or desirability of living in our neighborhood for a moment, as well as the "tourists" who still drive by and pause to take photos on a regular basis.....if for no other reason than those mentioned above, I implore you to support the idea of the town doing whatever it takes to purchase or otherwise take possession of that property, and disposing of it responsibly, and properly, and as soon as possible.

Please let me know if you have any questions at all. Otherwise, thank you for all of your hard work, and especially for your time and consideration on this matter. Anything you can do to help facilitate and accelerate the healing of this neighborhood is greatly appreciated by all who live here.

Sincerely,
Dave Ackert

Dear Legislative Council Members, My name is Christine Sudbey. "My family and I live around the corner from the Lanza property, on Cider Mill Rd. I'm writing today to voice my strong support of the idea for the Town to purchase the Lanza property, raze the structure, plant some trees, and let it return to mother nature." (Dave Ackert)

I am writing to you to show my full agreement with Dave Ackert's proposal and supporting ideas. It is my opinion that it is imperative that these words fall on empathic ears and follow through with the above proposal. Newtown tourists and potential residents should be attracted to Newtown for its many strengths, school system, restaurants, and Newtown's gorgeous New England flavor, to name a few. Let's work to that direction.

Sincerely, Christine Sudbey

Dear Members of the LC,
I wanted to forward this note I sent to Pat in September. We fully support the town purchasing the Lanza home so that it can be demolished. I avoided driving past that home for the first year after 12/14 and I notice that I still avoid Yogananda Street as much as possible.
Thank you for your consideration.
Po Murray
38 Charter Ridge Drive
Sandy Hook
Dear Pat,

My family is in full support of the Lanza home being torn down and nothing being rebuilt there. The Lanza home is a daily reminder of the horrific tragedy and removing it from our beautiful neighborhood would help with the healing process. Most of my friends and neighbors I have spoken to agree with this approach. Please do all you can to help us.

Thank you so much.

The Murray Family

Dear Legislative Council Members,

Thank you for all your hard work and steadfast leadership over the years.

I live with my family @ 11 Canterbury Lane.

We support our neighbor Dave Ackert's proposal for the Lanza Home.

Please support "the idea for the Town to purchase the Lanza property, raze the structure, plant some trees, and let it return to mother nature." (Dave Ackert)

The Lanza home is a visual daily reminder of the murder committed in the home and the massacre at Sandy Hook School.

We are in hard economic times as our housing values are diminished with no tax relief in sight.

The real estate market is soft but softest in our neighborhood due to our location near the Lanza's and the home's price points.

Let's resolve this matter quickly so we may continue to grieve, heal spiritually and halt the housing downturn.

I have heard of other proposals to sell to a builder to raze and rebuild. That's a long window and a new home will make it even harder to sell the older homes in our neighborhood.

Many of my neighbors have to move because of life circumstances, new marriages, divorce, loss of job, transfer et al. They cannot wait out the turn around and each sale devalues the neighborhood.

Let's help to restore this neighborhood to feel safe and wonderful again so that we may attract young families to Newtown.

It is starting to happen as evidenced by a busy Halloween this year!

It is a wonderful town and neighborhood with a superb school system.

Let's be proactive and progressive in our approach to help us move on.

Best,

~ Helen ~

Helen Brickfield

11 Canterbury Lane

Sandy Hook, CT 06482

Dear Legislative Council Members,

My name is Amy DeLoughy and my family and I currently reside at 41 Yogananda Street, which is located diagonally across the street from the Lanza home. I'm writing today to voice my strong support of the idea for the Town to purchase the Lanza property, raze the structure, and allow for a new home to be built on this property. Unlike others in our neighborhood who can access their homes without passing by this property, we have to live every day faced with the constant reminder of the tragedy that struck our family and our town. We have had many sleepless nights over the past two years due to activities, lights and noises that the children see and hear. My two sons and my niece were all present in the school on December 14th and not only have to deal with the repercussions of what they heard and saw and the friends that are forever gone, but also the constant reminders from the home that is visible to them every day. We have relocated our bus stop because it was too "scary" for the kids to wait for the bus at the top of our driveway and there was a point in time (after many sleepless nights) that thoughts of relocating to another part of town entered our minds, however my husband and I felt that would be allowing him to take yet another thing from us.

I know that there are many in the neighborhood that would prefer the house be razed and the property left unoccupied, however we feel that would still represent the enormous loss that we have suffered. If a new home, built on a different footprint were to be built it would allow a new family to join our wonderful neighborhood and it would provide us with some sense of healing and taking back a very small part of what was taken from us. Leaving the property to nature would mean there is still a sense of darkness in our neighborhood. Love and light that a new family would bring would help to heal some of the very deep wounds we are still tending to. I have asked my children what they would like to see done with the property and they are all in agreement that we need a new beautiful home there and a new family to join our neighborhood. They want to look out our front windows and see a new beginning, much like what is being done to their former school. They also feel that a new home would deter the unwanted visitors that we still have frequently visiting our street.

I know this is another difficult decision that has to be made and I know there are many opinions that are being shared. I ask that you please listen to those of us who surround that house and have to face that property every day merely because of the location of our own homes. Please also consider the wishes of our children as they already have so much to deal with from this tragedy. Our home should be our children's number 1 safe spot, the place where treasured memories are made, not a place that is surrounded by a reminder of a day that forever changed their lives.

I appreciate your time and consideration with this matter.

Kind regards,
Amy DeLoughy

Dear Legislative Council Members,

My name is Jennifer Stoltz, and I live in the Bennett's Farm neighborhood on Charter Ridge. I'm writing on behalf of our family to voice our strong support of the town purchasing the Lanza property.

Our 8 year old son was in the classroom next door on 12/14. He lost several friends that day, including one of his closest friends. He is still deeply affected, as we all are, by this heinous crime and what he went through that morning. We live it every day.

Going on family walks and driving to friend's houses where we have to pass the Lanza house brings it all back. It's essential for our family's healing process to not see a physical structure, bringing that horrible day back to the forefront of our memories.

In addition, there are people who are fascinated and will continue to be obsessed by the house. They come to take pictures, and I feel that puts us at risk. I'm also deeply concerned that anyone who would want to actually purchase a house with such a horrible history would not be in their right mind.

Thank you for your strong consideration, I don't feel altogether comfortable speaking at the meeting but really wanted you to know our thoughts and feelings.

Best regards,

Jennifer and Michael Stoltz

One thing I would like to add. We strongly support the idea to raze the property, fill it in with meadow and not rebuild on that land.

Thank you.

Dear Legislative Council Members:

We live on Canterbury Lane, which is just a few blocks from the Lanza property. We are writing today to voice our support for First Selectman Pat Llodra's plan for the Town of Newtown to accept the Lanza property especially as there will be no cost to the town financially. We know the decision of what to do with the home and property is still to come, but would really like to see it torn down and have trees planted in the spot.

The house is a constant reminder of the terrible events that happened in our town and we still have people who drive into the neighborhood just to see it. On December 14th, our car was mobbed by reporters as we turned onto Yogananda, asking if we knew the Lanza family. Our children were in the car and still get unsettled every time we turn onto that street – which for us is a daily occurrence. Any opportunity we have to turn a negative into a positive we should take advantage of and this appears to be one of those scenarios. No outsider could have a positive motivation for purchasing that property and we have a vested interest in looking out for one another and softening our pain.

Anything you can do to help facilitate and accelerate the healing of our community would be greatly appreciated.

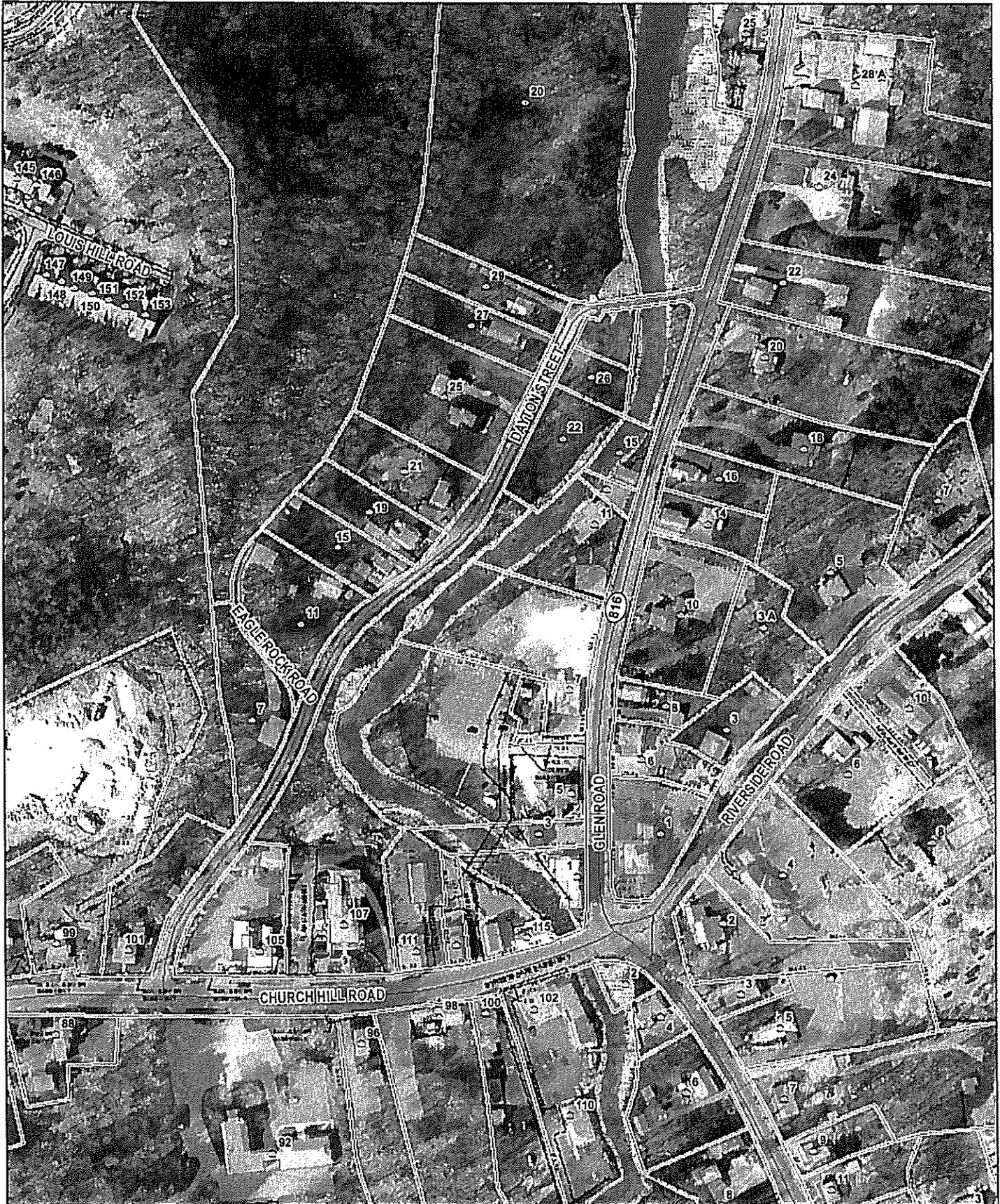
Sincerely,
Susan and Eric Chanko

Dear Legislative Council Members,

My name is Christine Haitz. My family and I live around the corner from the Lanza property, on Charter Ridge Dr. I'm writing today to voice my strong support of the idea for the Town to purchase the Lanza property, raze the structure, plant some trees, and let it return to mother nature. I am writing to you to show my full agreement with Dave Ackert's proposal and supporting ideas.

Removing the home and letting it become a wooded lot will help in the healing of the neighborhood and community. Thank you for all your hard work and timely consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,
Christine Haitz



TOWN OF NEWTOWN, CT
 GIS
 1 inch = 194 feet
 150 75 0 150
 Feet

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