



TOWN OF NEWTOWN

Fairfield Hills Authority

MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on October 22, 2018 in Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown CT 06470

These minutes are subject to the approval of the FHA at their next meeting.

Present: Ross Carley, Mike Holmes, Brook Clark, Terry Sagedy, Melissa Beylouni, Renata Adler (7:04 p.m.), Christal Preszler

Absent: Phil Clark

Public Attendance: Patrick McCleary, Andrew Philbin

Also Present: Kim Chiappetta (clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

Public Participation:

Chairman, Ross Carley, began by thanking all Authority members in attendance and requested a roll-call. Kim Chiappetta announced all members and recognized that all were in attendance.

Andrew Philbin - 176 Brushy Hill Rd, Newtown

Andrew re-introduced himself as the applicant for the open seat on the Fairfield Hills Authority who had attended the September meeting. Andrew reiterated his interests in the campus and the work of the Authority. In addition, he answered questions for members who were absent from the September meeting.

Helen Brickfield – 11 Canterbury Ln, Sandy Hook

Helen introduced herself as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Newtown, and explained that she was in attendance to provide feedback on the Newtown Day event held Saturday, October 6th on the Fairfield Hills campus. Newtown Day had about 4,000 people attended the event. In marketing there was 116,000 page views of the Facebook event, 8,400 singular views, and 5,700 respondents. The statistics of who was interested in coming to events at Fairfield Hills were as follow:

Majority of respondents were women between the ages of 35 – 44

Second largest group was women between the ages of 25 – 24

Third largest group was women between the ages of 45 – 54.

Helen maned the gate for almost the entire event and observed that there were many families who appeared to be in their 30's with strollers. She also observed families with older children who were coming off of sports fields. Ross asked how many food trucks were at the event. Helen answered that there was a combination of 18 food trucks and food vendors. The event holders feel a successful measurement of food trucks is people spending a maximum of 15 minutes getting their food and being able to enjoy it.

The feedback from attendees & vendors was that people liked the kind of event where they can gather as a community, and the ability to attend other events that same day. A new business, BD Provisions gave out 600 samples. A Newtown homebased candle company reported that her sales in one day were double of what was sold during the 3-day Arts Festival. Castle Hill Chocolates, who did not participate in the event, reported that her business was exceptional that day. Helen explained that in the Business Advisory Committee meeting, First Selectman, Dan Rosenthal informed Helen that the FHA was looking for feedback regarding events. Helen offered the services of the Chamber email campaign that goes out weekly, which has about 2,000 names and 37% open rate. Ross congratulated Helen on the success of the Newtown Day event.

Patrick McCleary – 10 Main St.

Patrick introduced himself and informed Authority members that he was in attendance to discuss his interest in the vacancy on the Fairfield Hills Authority.

Minutes:

Mr. Carley asked for a motion to accept the minutes of September 24, 2018. Mike Holmes entertained. Terry Sagedy seconded and all were in favor.

Chairman's Report

Building Security:

Ross began by informing members of a meeting scheduled tomorrow (10/23) with Police and Public Works to discuss concerns regarding security of the building on the campus. It is known that the FHA does not have funds available for this purpose and that the group relies on Public Works for assistance in ensuring buildings are closed to curiosity seekers. Ross will provide an update on this meeting in the November FHA meeting.

Brewery Update:

Ross asked Christal for a status update on the brewery. She explained that the lease has been signed, but there are still steps in the entire process that must be completed.

Renata Adler reminded members of Richmond Jones and his interest in photographing the interior of the buildings on the campus. Ross recounted that Mr. Jones has visited the First Selectman and Town Historian as well as the FHA with this request. It was determined by the Town that besides liability concerns a Town employee would have to accompany Mr. Jones and the Town did not want to expose an employee to any risk. Renata explained that she had bumped into Richmond Jones and that she finds the buildings really interesting and was just concerned that the FHA was too dismissive. She now understands the reason for not allowing Mr. Jones inside of the buildings.

Brook found that it appears people are entering the buildings by the soccer field, and asked if signs could be posted indicating that there are contaminants in the building. Christal explained that in CIP she has requested funds for remediation and demolition every year for the next 10 years. Currently, the annual budget is \$4,000. She is having discussions in an effort to try to obtain additional funding via other venues.

Applicant Patrick McCleary:

With no further update, Ross gave the floor to Patrick McCleary.

Patrick expressed that as any resident he looks at what could be and what was on the campus. His background is in commercial real estate investment and development. He understands there is no money which correlates to no political will or vision. He believes the immediate goal is to update the Master Plan, and this appears to be a pretty straight forward exercise. He explained that there are resources in the form of real estate. In terms of developer's package, it can't be capitalized; you can't get a loan using it. Patrick expressed that he feels there are ways things can be done. He is frustrated by the notation that everything has to be torn down. Asbestos can be dealt with. When he saw the ad from the First Selectman, understanding that there is no glory and allot of grunt work, he felt he should try. He then asked the group if they had any questions. Renata expressed that commercial concerns her, and that she tends to resist even though she understands that some of the property is allocated for commercial development. Patrick agreed that the Master Plan clearly states the primary use will be civic, and that it is necessary to have a vision or plan. Ross explained that the Master Plan is currently under review and invited all in attendance to join tomorrow evening's meeting at Town Hall South. Ross continued to explain that the misconception with people in town is that is we can do anything we want with the property which is incorrect. The property cannot be sold, only leased as per the transfer agreement with the State. This makes it difficult to market property that a developer will never own. He continued to explain that in these cases banks typically require a long term lease before they will approve a loan and that it is more expensive to remove one of the existing buildings on the campus than it is to construct a new building on purchased land. These factors add to the difficulty in marketing the property. All building require remediation, and dormitory buildings cannot have the steel walls removed which means there is no opportunity to change the interior of the building to meet commercial needs.

Mike Holmes asked Patrick what his thoughts were on residential not being included in the Master Plan. Patrick felt this is a big mistake. He noted that there is an aging population and a need for senior communities with varying stages of care. Developers are investing in these types of senior communities in the northeast and Midwest. Seniors are returning from their retirement homes to locations where their children live. He images at the time this was written people may have thought of residential as large homes.

Renata asked what Patrick would want to see on campus if he could do as he likes. Patrick replied that he would start with a good set of design standards, which goes down to a landscaping plan and maintenance programs. If there is a strong overlay of design standards, then it will be done in a way that is consistent. Investors will want to protect their investment. If a developer invests in a quality project and the next developer does not, it diminishes the value. He added that the Sandy Hook Design District was well thought out.

With no further question, Ross thanks Patrick for his interest. He then invited Andrew Philbin to re-address the group as a few members were absent from the September meeting.

Andrew Philbin (176 Brushy Hill Rd) approached the Authority and re-introduced himself. He is a practicing attorney where he primarily practices in trusts and estates for a law firm in Woodbury. He has been practicing law for 4 years.

When he was dating his wife they would walk the trails, so he's always had an interest in the property. Andrew expressed that the Authority has done a good job so far with the cards they've been dealt and that there is a good balance between open space and building. He understands that the Authority wants the site developed as they feel is appropriate, yet on the other hand they

do not have the demand and are in a fiscal quandary. He promised to listen to every idea that comes through, and do his best to ensure it conforms to the Master Plan.

Renata asked if there are projects that he feels would discourage the park like walks. Andrew said the simplest solution would be to not build anywhere where there is not an existing structure. He recognized that there is a significant amount of open space, and consideration of traffic must be made with each proposal to ensure you are not hitting a critical point where development is impacting trails. The short answer is he would take one proposal at a time. Ross explained to Andrew the process in which proposals are brought forward to the FHA.

Ross thanked Andrew, and told both Andrew and Patrick that they would receive notification of the appointment.

Brewery:

Ross asked if there were any other brewery updates. Christal said the Town is still going through the process, and Stratford Hall work is progressing. The Building department has the drawings. The group discussed the minor exterior changes to building such as a loading dock toward the right side of the building on Washington Circle, so the appearance does not change.

Christal added that Economic and Community Development is always in conversations with potential business tenants, and that Ross always makes himself available to take them on a tour of the property and answer questions.

Boy Scout Kiosk:

Ross informed members that the kiosk has been moved to the right of its former location and that there are two cable wires sticking out of the ground. Thomas Tavar explained to Ross that these were disconnected cables according to Parks & Rec. Ross asked Tom to please contact Public Works. The project is now looking for a mason for the brickwork. Ross asked if anyone knew of a mason who would donate their time to please let him know. They are also looking for a bench, so if anyone wants to donate a bench in a family members name to please contact Mr. Tavar.

Member Updates

Events & Activities:

Kim began by informing members that the event season has wrapped up with the Fall Festival Carnival this past weekend. The only events remaining for the year are the American Red Cross Blood drives. The next is being held Thursday, October 25th 1 – 6 p.m. Ross expressed that he was happy with the successful event year, but wished this would result in funds for the Fairfield Hills budget. He heard that the Parks & Rec Newtown Day was a big success. The group then discussed events in other towns and the possibilities for the campus.

Campus updates:

Christal informed members that every proposal is treated appropriately, but she finds many do not have the funding.

Staff Update

Ross requested a motion to take the Authority into executive session to discuss the two applicants for the open FHA seat. Terry Sagedy entertained. Renata seconded and all were in favor.

Christal Preszler and Kim Chiappetta were invite to stay. The group went into executive session at 7:57 p.m.

Ross requested a motion to return from executive session. Renata entertained. Mike seconded and all were in favor.

The group came out of executive session 8:06

Ross put forward a vote for the new Authority member. The Authority unanimously elected Andrew Philbin to the Fairfield Hills Authority.

Kim will communicate to First Selectman's office that Andrew Philbin has been selected.

Adjournment: With no further business, Terry made a motion to adjourn, Brook seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*