



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
Fairfield Hills Authority
MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Authority held a Meeting on August 28, 2017 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, Roger Cyr, Terry Sagedy, Phil Clark, Jim Bernardi

Absent: Renata Adler

Public Participation: Brook Clark

Also Present: Pat Llodra, David Grogins, Christal Preszler, Kim Chiappetta (clerk),

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 pm

Public Participation: none

Minutes:

Mr. Carley asked for a motion to accept the minutes of July 12, 2017 and July 24, 2017. Phil Clark entertained. Jim Bernardi seconded and all were in favor.

First Selectman's Report:

First Selectman, Pat Llodra thanked the FHA for inviting her to their meeting. She began by explaining that the Fairfield Hills campus was initially intended to be semi-private and would be maintained by the town; however in 2008 a decision was made to make the campus a public location. The original Common Area Maintenance (CAM) charges were based upon the NYA eventually paying 12.5% as they would occupy that percentage of the campus. Since 2007 three additional organizations have joined the campus. When the ambulance garage was built it was necessary to determine the appropriate CAM charges. The calculation was based upon the square footage of tenant's building multiplied by a cost per square foot. Pat recommend that the idea of CAM charges be re-thought as the Fairfield Hills campus did not become a semi-private land as originally intended. She continued to explain that all maintenance functions are part of town budgets. The recommendation is to assign FHA members to review the concept. Ross asked how the cost per square foot was determined. Pat explained that the amount charged to the NYA was divided by the square footage of the NYA facility to arrive at a cost per square foot. Pat added this was never intended to be long term solution for issue. Ross asked if the NYA has received tax breaks, and Pat explained that they have received some tax breaks, but are not fully tax exempt.

Dave Grogins addressed members and explained that when the property was obtained from the state in 2004 there were many ideas on development of the property and repurposing of buildings. The first outside interest was to repurpose Newtown Hall for a medical building, and during analysis it was found that the cost was \$250/square foot to repurpose the existing building whereas a newer building elsewhere would only cost around \$70/square foot at the time.

He continued explaining that the original plan was for the town to lease the land and tenants would be responsible for building costs. At that time a committee developed a concept that the initial rent would be calculated on the basis of the land and there would be a present value which would be one lump sum.

The Newtown Youth Academy (NYA) was the first tenant to join the campus. At the time the NYA was being developed the town worked with Mr. D'Amico to ensure the project would be a success. Mr. Grogins further explained that things such as the status of the campus (public vs semi-private) and use of the field have happened very differently than originally envisioned, and that the CAM charges do not seem to be directly related to any services.

Pat then explained that in the last FHA meeting she attended it was acknowledged that the NYA was significantly in arrears in paying their CAM charges. She added that this was not a request to excuse the NYA from their debt, but a recommendation to apply critical thinking on how to address this issue and the potential impact on the other tenants. Pat pointed out that the campus contains 3 very different organizations: the NYA which is private, the Parent Connection building which was re-developed using grant and CIP funds so it is owned by the Town, and the Ambulance garage which is a private building but performs a public service.

The group then briefly discussed a lawsuit between NYA and the Town of Newtown regarding NYA's tax exemption status and how the town assisted the NYA in meeting the standards required to hold a 70% tax exemption. Finally, Pat pointed out the talent on the FHA to perform the necessary review and provide a proposal to the Board of Selectmen.

Dave summarized by stating that any new proposal may be an interim step and that ultimately the campus may take on a different character.

Chairman's Report:

a) Vote on Brook Clark

Ross reintroduced Brook Clark to Authority members and asked if anyone had questions for her. Brook introduced herself to Jim Bernardi who was not able to attend the last FHA meeting when Brook spoke. She again provided her background and informed members that she has two small children who she often brings to the campus.

Pat explained that if a position is open for longer than 45 days the appointment process is then the responsibility of the board or commission. Ross asked if anyone had any questions regarding the appointment process, and there were no questions. Jim asked Brook to reiterate how long she's been a resident, and she informed him that she's been in town for around 30 years. With no further questions, Ross asked for a member to bring forward a motion to appoint Brooks Clark as an FHA member. Phil Clark put a motion on the floor to vote on Brook Clark's membership to the FHA. Jim seconded and all in favor. Pat informed Brook that the next step is to be sworn in by Town Clerk, and then she will receive an appointment letter from Sue Marcinek.

b) Request for Historic Documentation of buildings - Richmond Jones

Ross informed everyone that he received a request to take photos and record historic documentation of the Fairfield Hills campus, and that Richmond Jones is to speak of his intent. Ross highlighted his concerns with insurance costs in regards to Richmond walking through the buildings. Mr. Jones began by informing everyone that he had come forward to the FHA in

January of 2016, and his request was not positively received. Since that time he has had extensive conversations with Dan Cruson and George Benson of his wish to act as a consultant to the Historical Society. He expressed his beliefs that there is a wonderful archeological world to be found, and that his interest is also personal as both of his grandparents ended their lives in the geriatric ward of the hospital. Richmond invited members that if they are curious about his work to visit his website Richmond Jones.com to see if he is qualified. He has been a professional photographer for 50 years and has spent much of that timing working for the NY Times and many other publications. The Town historian Dan Cruson had been invited to attend tonight's meeting, but was unable due to a prior engagement. In his original proposal, he noted that he is willing to undertake any protocols and security and is willing to provide his own insurance which would provide a waiver of liability. Ross asked how much time would be spent in buildings. Richmond felt everything could be documented within 6-weeks, and he would need another 12-weeks to develop and print photos for historical society. Ross explained that someone would have to escort him through buildings so he needs to know how much time is required to determine feasibility. Richmond clarified that it would take 6-week going through buildings from time to time. He added that he has no idea what is left inside the buildings and considers this a voyage of discovery. He expressed the importance of this documentation to the town's history as many people in town worked at Fairfield Hills as well as resided here. Richmond wants to publish a book if possible and would undertake the project with Dan Cruson. Jim Grogan explained that the town would need to follow-up with the town's insurance advisor. Jim expressed that the idea was good, but the buildings are very dangerous in their current state. Richmond noted that he already discussed this with his insurance agent, and was willing to abide by any security or safety measures. He also informed the group that he had done enormous amounts of work at Ground Zero, so he has had experience in unstable and dangerous locations. Ross said he will take all information provided into consideration and will speak with town attorney and insurance.

Staff Update:

- a) Kim reminded Authority members of the upcoming REACH car show on Sunday, September 10th, followed by the Newtown Arts Festival Friday, September 15th through Sunday, September 17th. She added that the Arts Festival will be kicking off with a concert by Sawyer Fredericks on Friday evening.
- b) Christal began by providing an update on the streetscape. Most of the sidewalks are poured and next 4 way intersection by Stratford Hall. The project is currently moving along a little slower than first indicated. Ross asked for clarification that had thought parts of project were put off until next year, and Christal clarified that it will completed this year, and that people are beginning to enjoy using the sidewalks. Ross asked Christal to confirm if all in budget, and she confirmed yes.

Christal informed everyone that the Canaan basement removal project has been completed, and that the property has been handed over to community center group. The final invoices have all been processed with the possible exception of final frack tank invoices.

Christal closed by informing everyone that she is always pursuing additional funds for the campus.

Executive Session:

The members went into Executive Session at 7:51 p.m. to discuss leasing issues concerning the Newtown Youth Academy (NYA) lease at Fairfield Hills, and invited into the Executive Session the Town Attorney, David L. Grogins, First Selectman, E. Patricia Llodra, and pending Authority member Brook Clark. The Executive Session ended at 8:45 p.m.

Business: none

Adjournment: The meeting was informally adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kimberly Chiappetta, Clerk.*