



TOWN OF NEWTOWN
FAIRFIELD HILLS AUTHORITY

MINUTES

The Fairfield Hills Authority held its regular meeting on Monday, January 25 2016 at the Edmond Town Hall, Lower Meeting Room, 45 Main Street, Newtown, CT 06470.

These minutes are subject to approval.

Present: Tom Connors, Andrew Willie, Renata Adler, Phil Clark, Jim Bernardi, and Terry Sagedy

Absent: Curt Verdi and Ross Carley

Also Present: Christal Preszler, Grants Coordinator; George Benson, Director of Planning; Geralyn Horeauf, Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee and members of the public.

Mr. Connors called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm

Public Participation: Ann Astarita, 32 Lyrical Lane, Sandy Hook; expressed opposition to using High Meadows as a spot for the Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial. She was joined by Holly Kocet, 2 Karen Blvd, Newtown; Dottie Evans, 1 Reservoir Rd, Newtown; Mary Wilson, 12 Whippoorwill Hill Road, Newtown; Karlyn Sturmer, 22 Old Green, Newtown; who all expressed disapproval of the proposed location. Their reasoning revolved around the rare grassland that allows many species to flourish, and did not want the Open Space Parcel to be tainted. (See attachment A). Mr. Benson and Mr. Connors both discussed that their true role is to be an advisory committee of sorts for the SHPMC. Mr. Connors stated that a vote will not be made from the group as a whole, but the individual opinions needed to be voiced and heard.

Municipal Building Strategic Plan Committee: Ms. Hoerauf started a discussion with the Authority regarding future plans of many buildings in the Fairfield Hills Campus, and wanted to know if the Authority would consider collaborating on feasibility studies. Mr. Clark responded that most had been done two years ago, and he was quite enticed with refurbishing Plymouth Hall. Mr. Sagedy also stated that the Cultural Arts Commission seems to fall back on Plymouth Hall as a permanent location for a shared space. Further discussion of Plymouth Hall and possibly a duplex will be discussed in the future. Mr. Connors then discussed the need to move the Police Station and had a short discussion with Ms. Hoerauf about their future plans. Nothing has been set in stone yet.

Staff Report: Ms. Preszler provided an update on the Engineer's House, which will house the two new positions for Social Workers this coming spring. Demolition on Canaan house is ready

to start and is projected to be completed by June. Due to the bid price, the Town is able to also remove the tunnels around the building. Once complete, the space will be grassed over. Ms. Preszler gave an overview of the grants that have been applied for in the last few months, as well as briefly discussed the beginning plans of a garden in memory of Tammy Hazen. Many thought a soft-scape in the courtyard of the Municipal Building would be a great way to honor her. Mr. Benson also brought up the possibility of a “canister” style cell tower being placed on top of NYA, so the group is aware before plans are submitted.

Approval of Minutes from November 23, 2015: Mr. Willie made a motion to accept the minutes, Mr. Connors so moved, it passed unanimously.

Adjournment: Mr. Willie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Bernardi seconded, all in favor. The meeting on January 25, 2016 adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Georgia Contois, Clerk.

January 26, 2016

HAND DELIVERY 1-25-16

Re: Sandy Hook Permanent Memorial Commission (“SHPMC”) Plan to Develop Portion of High Meadow

Dear Chairman Connors and Commissioners:

A plan is currently in place to develop the High Meadow Open Space for the permanent memorial. This location is inappropriate for a number of reasons:

- 1) The High Meadow property legally is protected Open Space.
 - a. Newtown Land Records Map (No. 8194, filed 3/11/14) indicates the area is “Dedicated Open Space”.
 - b. The Declaration Document Concerning the High and East Meadows dated 7-28-15 states: “The Town of Newtown agrees to perpetually preserve, protect, limit, conserve and maintain the land hereinafter described [High Meadow] in its natural condition.” The Document also states: “It is the purpose of this Declaration to ensure that the Meadows remain in their present, natural and open condition, and to prevent any activity or use of the area that is inconsistent with that condition or that will significantly impair or interfere with the ecological, conservation or open space values of the area, notwithstanding normal passive recreational purposes.” Creation of a driveway, parking lot, lights, cameras, and yet-to-be-defined structure is inconsistent with the Declaration.
- 2) Keeping the “High Meadow” intact and undeveloped preserves a rare open grassland habitat so threatened throughout Connecticut and much of New England. Meadow and grassland birds (who often require habitats of 20+ uninterrupted acres) can breed and fledge their young here; migratory birds use it as a safe stopover; insects and pollinators inhabit the high grasses, help to pollinate crops and wildflowers throughout the area, and provide food for nesting birds and grassland animals. Meadows are a threatened and diminishing landscape in CT (see Audubon State of the Birds 2014, Newtown Meadow Management Plan 2013) and here in Newtown we have one which is a testament to the forward-thinking residents of Newtown. Development, including a driveway, parking area, cars, removal of trees, lighting, mowing, grading, building, etc. will compromise the express purpose of this protected area.
- 3) Connecticut General Statute 7-131n indicates that comparable land (not other open space) of equivalent size and value (financial and ecological) must be provided when open space is converted to development. Newtown taxpayers will expect that if this project proceeds, the Town will comply with this difficult and expensive statutory requirement.

- 4) Precedent by Newtown Conservation Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission, Fairfield Hills Authority and others. The High Meadow OS is arguably the highest rated, most used, most visible, and most valuable open space owned by the Town of Newtown. The High Meadow has faced several development threats in the past including a location for schools, military facility and other inappropriate uses. After public support, hundreds of hours of work, meetings, surveys, and discussions including Fairfield Hills Ad Hoc Committees (see e.g., Fairfield Hills Master Plan, pp. 8, 29; Figure 7), Planning and Zoning Commissions (note overlapped Aquifer Protection District location), the Conservation Commission and others, the High Meadow was declared "Dedicated Open Space" (see Map 8194 on Land Records, Declaration dated 7/28/15 of CC minutes) and should be preserved.
- a) The current proposal's development estimate of 0.85 acres is inaccurate. This estimate does not include acreage consumed by the driveway, expanded parking area, mowed path, lights, bench area, etc. Should this project proceed, Newtown taxpayers will expect the full acreage developed to be replaced (ecological and financial) as directed by the statute.

Thank you for your careful review of this project. No one disputes that the SHPMC has a valid and important mandate. However once developed, open space is lost forever.

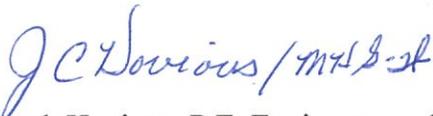
Respectfully,



Ann Astarita, M.S.
Former Chairman, Newtown Conservation Commission 2014; Commissioner 2012-2014
Former Wetlands Enforcement Officer & Conservation Official, Town of Newtown, 2007-2011



Marjorie Cramer, M.D.
Commissioner, Newtown Conservation Commission, 2005-2014
Fairfield Hills Master Plan Amendment Work Group, 2012



Joseph Hovious, P.E. Environmental Engineer (Retired)
Former Chairman Newtown Open Space Task Force 2002-2006
Former Chairman, Commissioner, Newtown Conservation Commission 2006-2014



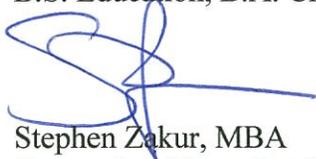
Holly Kocet
Master Gardener
Former President, Garden Club of Newtown



Karlyn Sturmer, MSW
Master Gardener
Commissioner, Newtown Conservation Commission 2013-present



Mary Gaudet-Wilson
Former member of Conservation Commission, 7 years, Chairman 3 years
B.S. Education, B.A. Chemistry, MBA



Stephen Zakur, MBA
Former President, Candlewood Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited



Dottie Evans
Member, Garden Club of Newtown, Horticulture Club
Former Newtown Bee environmental reporter, Nature writer



Joy Kopesky
Long-time Newtown Resident, Volunteer, and Gardener



Carol Smiley
Newtown Resident, Volunteer, and Gardener



Diana Johnson
Former Co President, Town & Country Garden Club; Former member,
Newtown Conservation Commission; Former President, Newtown Chamber
of Commerce

Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee

Fairfield Hills Authority Meeting

January 25, 2016

Background

In the spring of 2014, planning began on a comprehensive analysis of the space available in and the current physical condition of municipal buildings in Newtown. At that time, a number of concurrent events in Newtown offered the opportunity to relocate Town functions and pointed to the need for an update to previously published space use and facilities conditions studies.

The Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in August 2014 and included members of the Board of Finance, Legislative Council, Board of Education, Board of Burgesses and other volunteers with backgrounds in government service and municipal planning, including the development of the Fairfield Hills Campus.

The Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee adopted the following Mission Statement to define their work: *Develop strategic recommendations for the re-use, renovation and/or possible disposition of all Town-owned buildings and properties based on a comprehensive analysis of both physical conditions and space need functions for each such building or property. The resulting written plan would be used to inform such decisions as to the future use of buildings and properties over the next decade.*

The Committee's initial charge was to develop a comprehensive plan for spaces in municipal buildings that would be vacated when the GE-funded Community Center project and the new Hook and Ladder headquarters were completed and also to find available space for municipal functions that are currently inadequately served. The Committee examined both the physical conditions of Town-owned buildings and also the space needs of various Town departments and commissions. From this initial charge, the Committee will develop a comprehensive Master Plan for the future use of municipal buildings.

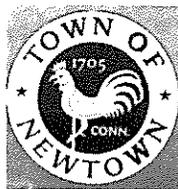
A draft report on the current conditions of the Multipurpose Building, the Hook and Ladder Headquarters and Town Hall South identified capital improvements required in each building along with a cost estimate and timeline for improvements. After careful consideration and discussion, the committee made recommendations to the BoS in late 2015 for inclusion in the CIP for the next 5 years. The final Facilities Conditions Assessment Report and Space Needs Report for 2015 will be issued in final format in early 2016.



Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Advisory Committee

Current Space Needs

Newtown Senior Center	Currently occupies approximately 4500 square feet of the 9650sf Multipurpose Building at 14 Riverside Road, Sandy Hook Based on a 2014 Space Needs study by Quisenberry Arcari Architects, a senior center to adequately serve the current and future population of Newtown would need between 12,500sf and 16,000 sf of administrative and program spaces Parking at the Multipurpose Building (shared with the Children's Adventure Center) is inadequate for many events
Social Services Department	Currently occupies approximately 2000 square feet in the lower level of Town Hall South at 3 Main Street, of which 700 sf is office space and 1300sf is dedicated to storage Based on the 2015 Space Needs study by DRA Architects, Social Services needs 3200sf of administrative and program spaces Space needs include provision for private screenings and interviews and expanded storage for donated food and household items Parking at Town Hall South (shared with the Police Department and other Town functions) is often inadequate
Cultural Arts Commission	Currently without permanent office space and is leasing 1600sf of storage space, primarily for arts equipment donated after 12/14 Based on the 2015 Space Needs study by DRA Architects, the Commission needs 5000sf for administrative offices, minimal program spaces and storage The CAC has self-identified the need for approximately 19,500sf in a Cultural Arts Center that would house their administrative offices, multi-use arts spaces, community performance space and storage
Parks & Rec Department	Currently located in the lower level of Town Hall South at 3 Main Street Based on a 2014 Space Needs study by Quisenberry Arcari Architects, Parks & Rec needs 4400sf of administrative space; this does not include program spaces, classrooms, etc. This department would ideally be co-located on the Fairfield Hills Campus when the Community Center project is completed Parking at Town Hall South (shared with the Police Department and other Town functions) is often inadequate
Newtown Police Department	Currently located in Town Hall South at 3 Main Street Based on the 2015 Space Needs study by DRA Architects, the Police Department needs 24,200sf – 26,500sf Space needs are based on a 20 year projection of growth in the Town force



Emergency Communications Center	Currently co-located in Town Hall South at 3 Main Street with the Police Dept. Based on the 2015 Space Needs study by DRA Architects, a new Emergency Communications Center needs approximately 5400sf Space needs are based on a presumed regionalization of emergency communications centers if mandated by the State
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**Recommendations Regarding Building Use/Reuse
Based on 2015 Facilities Conditions Assessment Report**

Multipurpose Building 14 Riverside Rd, SH	The MBSP Committee recommended that this building remain a Town facility whether the Senior Center moves or not Town to continue maintenance and planned capital improvement projects Should the Senior Center vacate then approximately 4500sf would be available for other Town departments/commissions
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Town Hall South 3 Main Street	The MBSP Committee recommended that no future investment be made into renovations based on Police Department use, as the building configuration and space available are no longer adequate for Police Department functions Further study is needed to determine whether the building could be repurposed as a Town facility, sold or demolished
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Hook & Ladder Headquarters 45 Main Street	The MBSP Committee recommended that no future investment be made into renovations as the amount of work required and the cost associated with the renovations would be prohibitive to future Town use The building has significant structural deficiencies and requires extensive renovation to bring it up to current codes
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**Potential Future Town Facility Projects
Based on 2015 Space Needs Assessment Report**

Plymouth Hall Fairfield Hills Campus	Potential future use as a Community Cultural Arts Center Remediation and demolition estimates available Renovation feasibility and costs estimates from 1999 require update
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Woodbury Hall Fairfield Hills Campus	
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Duplexes, Other Fairfield Hills Campus	
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**Proposed Collaboration between FHA
And the Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee**

Evaluating the feasibility of renovating campus buildings for future Town use as municipal facilities, specifically Plymouth Hall, Woodbury Hall and additional Duplexes

Utilizing the Facilities Conditions Assessment process from previous MBSP Committee evaluations:

- The Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Committee would oversee the work of a consultant to document the current conditions of the building(s) and evaluate the feasibility of renovating for current use. The consultant's work would include a detailed cost estimate to guide future decision-making
- The MBSP Committee used a qualifications-based process to select DRA as the FCA/SNA consultant. DRA's work has been responsive, comprehensive and detailed in providing the MBSP Committee with the information needed to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen
- The Fairfield Hills Authority would provide the funds to retain the consultant on a building-by-building basis; the consultant would continue to work for the Town on an extension of their present contract
- DRA has provided a fee proposal to the Town for a conditions assessment and renovation scope/cost estimate in the amount of \$17,500
- The MBSP Committee would evaluate the documentation provided by the consultant and, in collaboration with the Fairfield Hills Authority, develop recommendations, budgets and timelines for any proposed renovation and reuse of a Fairfield Hills Campus building for municipal purposes



Municipal Buildings Strategic Plan Advisory Committee