

**Advisory Committee
Public Hearing and Meeting #29
Wednesday, March 17, 2010**

Peter Cory, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Those present included Judi Donnelly, Virginia Ferko, Rick Hill, Kathy Macdonald, Barbara McMahon, Maura Murphy, Rich Page, Caren Parker, Derek Redgate, Steve Simons, Steve Sykes, Marc Taylor, and Jason Whittet (8:50 pm). Absent: Jack Haley

Public Hearing on Spring 2010 Special Town Meeting.

Article 3 – Purchase of Property at 494 Washington Street.

The public hearing opened at 7 p.m. Mr. Cory welcomed those present and reviewed the purpose of the hearing, and Advisory's role, as well as its duties and responsibilities. Comments on the Warrant were limited to Article 3, Purchase of the Property at 494 Washington Street. The majority of those who spoke encouraged the Advisory Committee to vote favorable action on the purchase of this property. Issues presented by the speakers included:

- Purchase will allow for much needed off-street parking for proposed senior center.
- Great opportunity to have obtain open space for the Town.
- If approved, this is the first major capital expenditure for the senior citizens in over 100 years.
- Perfect location for interaction between Middle and High School students and seniors. Obtaining this lot will improve chances of senior center approval.
- Purchase of this property provides a unique opportunity for a long term investment in town property.
- Concerned with cost of property.
- Town should consider selling the American Legion property it recently acquired to the owner of the contiguous property. The money generated from this sale will provide for more than adequate funding for a stand-alone center at another site.
- Purchasing this property at a 58 percent premium for a potential parking lot for the senior center seems excessive and wasteful spending.
- The Town has a number of capital projects to complete; should not add more spending to this amount.
- Regarding parking for the senior center, does the center's proposed parking plan provide sufficient parking in accordance with the Town's bylaws.
- The purchase is not a high priority in comparison to other needed projects, such as needed infrastructure maintenance. This is not a climate in which to take on 'nice to have' projects.

Public hearing closed 7:30 p.m.

Wellesley Community Center (WCC). David Walsh, WCC Chair, and Steve Peretti, President of the WCC, made a brief presentation to Advisory concerning the potential continued use of the Community Center for the seniors' activity, reviewing the present activities schedule for seniors at the center, the dedicated space allotted for seniors during the week, and the potential for additional space being dedicated for senior activities. Mr. Peretti is also proposing an Advisory-moderated discussion amongst representatives of the WCC, Council on Aging, and Selectmen to further review the continued use of the Community Center as the senior center. Selectmen Chair Barbara Searle noted the Selectmen believe the space presented by the WCC for seniors is not always available for use, and they are of the opinion that larger and more dedicated space than proposed by the WCC is needed for seniors so other alternatives are being considered to meet long term needs.

After discussion, Advisory Committee members are of the opinion that Advisory does not have a role in intervening in this issue.

Liaison Reports.

Schools. Ms. McMahon reported that the SmartBoard presentation was held today. Those who attended the demonstration were of the opinion that this is a great tool for teachers, it enhances the educational experience, and is a major step forward in teacher productivity.

Warrant Articles – Mr. Cory reviewed the status of outstanding votes. Selectmen will provide updates on Articles 16, 26 and 27 at next week's meeting. The Middle School Building Committee will meet with Advisory on April 5th, prior to Town Meeting, to discuss Article 20.

Article 3 – Special Town Meeting – Purchase of 494 Washington Street. Ms. Ferko discussed the article which authorizes the Board of Selectmen to purchase the property at 494 Washington Street for \$1.27 million. The parcel is 12,489 square feet, is located adjacent to the Town-owned property at 496 Washington Street, the former American Legion site and now the proposed site of the Senior Center. It is in close proximity to a number of Town offices and public parkland. The Selectmen have signed a Purchase and Sale Agreement with the owner, subject to Town Meeting approval. The appraised value of the property is \$800,000; the assessed value is \$761,000.

Questions were raised concerning the terms of the P & S agreement, how the purchase price was determined, how critical is the purchase of this land to the Senior Center project, and whether there are alternative uses for this property if the Senior Center is not approved.

There was discussion concerning the use of this property for Senior Center parking, and that this would alleviate all parking concerns related to the building of the Senior Center. In addition, the group discussed whether the property is an appropriate purchase for the Town if it is not used for the Senior Center, and whether the price is appropriate.

Adjournment. Upon a motion made by Ms. Donnelly and seconded by Ms. Macdonald, the Committee unanimously voted to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Adeline G. Doherty
Administrative Assistant