

**Advisory Committee
Meeting
January 8, 2011, 8 a.m.
Kingsbury Room, Police Station**

Jack Haley called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m. Those present included Steve Simons, Caren Parker, Virginia Ferko, Catherine Johnson, Maura Murphy, Laura Hockett, Philip Licari, Richard Page, Polly Smith, Derek Redgate (arriving at 8:35 am), and Barbara McMahon. Absent: Rick Hill, Jason Whittet, and David Murphy.

Citizen Speak. No one present spoke at Citizen Speak.

Warrant Article Write-ups. There was a review of the possible warrant articles for the Annual Town Meetings and preliminary assignments for write-ups were made, with the list to be finalized after more information is received from the Board of Selectmen. There was a brief discussion on approaches to the write ups and a mention of a Town Meeting Survey from 2006.

St. James Project. Guests Planning Board Chair Don McCauley, Planning Director Meghan Jop, Assistant Planning Director Michael Zehner, Recreation Commission Chair Andy Wrobel and Selectman Ellen Gibbs updated Advisory on recommended proposals for the St. James Project, which has been a collaborative effort with Recreation, Planning, the Selectmen and other interested departments and boards. These plans were developed in anticipation of the sale of the property by the Archdiocese of Boston. Before the presentation was underway, Advisory Members wished Mr. Zehner happiness on his upcoming wedding. After an analysis of alternative site uses, the group recommends developing the site to meet recreation needs with a project to include artificial turf playing fields, an ice rink and fitness center, a pool, and 200 parking spaces. The 8-acre site on Rt. 9 has floodplain and wetlands issues, as well as a steep slope on the back of the property, which contributed to an estimated \$3.5M valuation for the property. Mr. McCauley described the potential for CPA funds to purchase the land, and Mr. Wrobel described various public/private partnership funding scenarios for developing the recreation facilities, based on a revenue stream of fees largely derived from youth sports, including hockey, soccer, lacrosse and Pop Warner Football. Youth ice hockey organizations have indicated, according to Mr. Wrobel, a willingness to pay a premium fee for “local” ice space. In response to a question from Advisory, Mr. Wrobel said that to manage the ice rink and fitness center, the Committee looks to a private management model that other towns have successfully demonstrated. He said that plans call for a “fund-raised pool”, not a “town-funded pool”, and estimated the cost of the pool facility at \$9M. In response to questions from Advisory, Mr. McCauley said that CPA funds could be applied to the purchase up to 85% of the land, as well as to the installation of artificial turf fields. Additional responses to Advisory questions included: the land acquisition using CPA funds would require a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting (TM); any offer would be contingent upon TM approval; demolition costs could potentially be covered by CPA funds; they are confident of funding for the ice rink with the ice rink- revenue streams, but financing the pool facility is problematic; any commercial use would require re-zoning. Advisory requested a net cash flow analysis comparing this public purpose use of the site with commercial and/or residential developments, and also details of the parking study.

Break. The Advisory Committee proceedings broke at 9:45 a.m. and resumed at 9:50 a.m.

Planning Board Budget Presentation. Guests Planning Board Chair Don McCauley, Vice Chair Stephanie Wasser, and Board Member Rose Mary Donahue, Planning Director Meghan Jop, and Assistant Planning Director Michael Zehner presented the Planning Board’s Operating Budget request of \$253, 393, which shows an increase of 0.93%. A request for \$24,000 for consultant services was part of the operating budget, and it was noted that separating consultant funds from the capital budget has stabilized the Planning budget over the past 4 years. In a discussion of fees, Planning said that they anticipate new revenues from the recently adopted retaining wall regulations and have undertaken a fee update study.

Planning also detailed a number of items that may come before Town Meeting; none of them have yet been voted on by the Board. Among them was a change to the Flood Plain zoning bylaw, required as FEMA transitions to a new digitized system that identifies flood hazard areas on a county-wide basis. Under the new system, Wellesley will be identified under a series of Norfolk County “map panels” rather than under a “town map”. Planning is awaiting the effective date of the of the new FEMA maps before they can finalize a motion for Town Meeting. This action must be taken to ensure that property owners can purchase flood insurance and the Town is eligible for certain federal grants and federal disaster assistance. Planning also described a tree maintenance bylaw that is still undergoing revisions. In response to a question from Advisory, they said that most grievous tree cutting is “anecdotally” related to new construction rather than home additions, but they have no firm data on this. Planning also detailed a proposed warrant article brought to them by the Historic Commission that would create single building historic districts. Wellesley created Historic District zoning provisions in 1980, and now has only one historic district: the Cottage Street Historic District. Two property owners requested that their homes be preserved, and a study committee recommended a zoning map amendment to establish two new districts: 377 Weston Road for the Methodist Meeting House and 38 Lowell Road for the Tufts House. In answer to questions from Advisory, Planning said that a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting is stipulated for approval of the single building historic district, and they do not anticipate that this new designation would create significant administrative costs. Another potential warrant article under consideration arose from a citizen request to designate Brookside Road as a scenic road. Brookside Road is an unaccepted street that abuts Town Land and Wellesley Country Club land.

A final discussion was in regards to a warrant article that would rezone a portion of the Cochituate Aqueduct from a Single Residence A District to a Business District to essentially allow for a farmer’s market along a strip of the aqueduct on the Whole Foods site. An alternative plan, presented by Planning, would modify regulations under the Single Residence A District to create a special permit provision to allow for “outdoor sales of farm produce or natural products . . . within a parking area.” This would allow for a farmer’s market on the site and on 4 additional sites in Town that are in Single Residence A districts; applicants would also need a special permit from the ZBA. Advisory questioned the traffic impacts of the proposal and questioned whether it would result in a loss of parking space on the Whole Foods site. Planning said that no parking spaces would be lost.

Liaison Reports and Announcements. A possible opening of the new high school in February 2012 was discussed in terms of costs, logistics, funding, and budget impacts. It was the sense of the members to have the Schools delay the submission of the budget until Friday, January 21st for presentation on January 26th. It was the sense of the members to approve the Advisory FY12 Budget Request, as reviewed by Mr. Haley.

Adjournment. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ms. Smith and seconded by Mr. Licari. The Committee then voted 11-0 to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 11:46 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Davis
Administrative Assistant

Documents Distributed: Planning Presentation Agenda; Report of the Planning Board for the Period July1, 2009 to June 30, 2010; DPW Building Proposal : Bulls and Bears; Recreational Facilities and St. James the Great Site, 2011 Annual Town Meeting Draft.