

**Town of Preston
Norwich Hospital Advisory Committee
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 25, 2009
Preston Town Hall
7:00 pm**

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Mike Sinko called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm

Joseph Biber
Michael Sinko
Roy Beauregard
Kent Borner
Allyn Brown III
Bob Congdon
Sandy Ewing
Merrill Gerber
Gerald Grabarek – resigned
Dan Kulesza

2. Acceptance of Previous Meeting Minutes – February 11, 2009 Regular Meeting.

A motion was made by Merrill Gerber and seconded by Dan Kulesza to approve the minutes of the Norwich Hospital Advisory Committee (NHAC) January 28, 2009 Regular Meeting as presented. All in favor. So voted.

3. Communications

- a. Mike Sinko thanked Kent Borner for forming a Pack and dispersing flyers to Town voters containing information regarding the purchase of the Norwich Hospital property.
- b. Joe Biber thanked the voters
- c. Letter of resignation as a NHAC member from Jerry Grabarek
- d. Robert Frommer called Selectman Congdon informing him that he and David Bingham were filing an injunction against Friday's closing of the Norwich Hospital property.
- e. Bill Penn called First Selectman Congdon; he will attend next Wednesday's NHAC meeting.
- f. First Selectman Congdon met with John and Valerie of Weston Solutions, Inc., about master planning; They are present at this evening's meeting.

4. Discussion pursuant to development of the Norwich State Hospital

Mike Sinko said the Committee is now embarking on the second half of this journey and now has several options. One is a development authority.

Sandy Ewing asked if Bruce Chudwick would talk to the Committee about the steps needed for a development authority.

Bob Congdon said he spoke to the Attorneys about coming to next week's meeting. They spoke about hiring a director for the development authority; someone who knows the financial markets and the ins and outs of development. We need to have a clear idea of a plan moving forward for clean up.

Attorney Murphy cautioned not to look for a developer right away, but to get organized first.

Mike Sinko said he and Joe Biber discussed that this afternoon and thought that now that the Town is in

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the position of owning land there will have to be some structure.

Dan Kulesza asked if a paid director would need to be spelled out in the ordinance when establishing a development commission, and how many members would be required.

Bob Congdon answered yes.

Bob Congdon said the Environmental form III type paperwork that has to be; it was done during the Utopia pre-closing check list; that needs to be updated and GZA is going to work with Shipman & Goodwin to prepare those documents and they will also meet with us to come up with a plan on how to move forward.

Bob Congdon said Jerry Grabarek made a point that with his resignation the Committee is now down two members. We are at a new beginning now and have a tremendous amount of work to do.

Allyn Brown asked if the NHAC would be disbanded for a development committee.

Bob Congdon said the NHAC should remain to represent the policy and direction of the Town and the development commission would be more of the day to day. It would be appropriate to announce on the Town's web page that there will be a development committee and that there are vacancies on the NHAC.

Sandy Ewing stated that she would like to see defined the responsibilities of the development authority and the responsibilities of the NHAC.

Mike Sinko said this committee is advisory in nature to the Board of Selectman and the development commission is going to be an entity.

Sandy Ewing asked what will be the responsibilities of the development authority.

Dan Kulesza said the property and that's it.

Sandy Ewing said they will have authority to act and this Committee will make advisory recommendations to the Board of Selectman.

Mike Sinko asked Bob Congdon if he'd speak to the layers about this.

Bob Congdon said it would be discussed at the next meeting with Attorney Chudwick. It is important that the development commission is in sync with the voters of the Town of Preston and is not an entity that has so much power that they are acting without direction.

Bob Congdon said the Conversation Commission wants to do an ERT and the State responded that we couldn't go on the property as long as they owned it. Once there is a closing, I think that ERT will move forward and there will be information from that, that will be helpful as we move forward.

Merrill Gerber asked where the funding for that comes from.

Kent Borner answered from the State, there is no cost to the Town. The coordinator's contact various people from different fields, whether it is Nick Bellantoni for the archaeology, or someone else for groundwater. They all do their respective analysis and then put it together in a report.

Merrill Gerber asked how long it would take.

Mike Sinko said he read an article about it in the Thames River Times that said four months.

Kent Borner said the Conservation Commission is not asking for a lot, because so much has already been done.

Kent Borner said the Conservation Commission requested inventories on the plant life, animal species, the topography.

Bob Congdon said Stan Baldino of Win-Win called Jerry Grabarek several times but he did not speak to him, and Pierre Gagne called him today and wanted to stop in one day next week.

5. Public Comment

Mike Clancy, Preston resident asked if the State could delay the closing and not transfer the property to the Town.

Mike Sinko answered the State can do whatever it wants. We really stepped up to the plate on our end.

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Mike Clancy stated so did the people of this Town and we spent money to do this.

Mike Sinko said them not going to a closing will not look good.

Bob Congdon said he has heard nothing that they're not, but they changed their mind at Seaside. They had terms and agreed to sell it to a developer and then increased the price. The developer came back and said he would meet that price but the State told him they changed their mind.

Mike Sinko said I think we are in a different position, but I guess there is precedent.

Mike Clancy asked what process will be in place to make sure Mr. Penn is the most qualified person to be director of the development authority.

Bob Congdon said Mr. Penn is not being considered for director.

Mike Sinko said an application process will be needed.

Valerie Ferro of Weston Solutions asked if the NHAC decided it wanted a development corporation versus a development authority under Chapter 132 of the Connecticut State Regs.

Mike Sinko answered a development authority under Chapter 132 of the Connecticut State Regs.

Valerie Ferro asked why do you think you need a director because people she has worked with have done several of those entities and it's usually an agency, some are through the ruling body (Selectman), which will determine whether or not you will form that entity for a particular parcel or it will embody any kind of development in the town. As a group you could become that authority. Usually the position of executive director is formed when your talking about corporations.

Mike Sinko said the Committee will be talking to the attorneys next week.

Valerie Ferro said how you want to master plan it; try and parcel it off by development or some entities, like Bristol development authority have taken on things long term. The attorneys are good to flush out how you do it but you might also want to decide how you want to function outside of the legal side.

What do you want to do and what is your role; that is the kind of discussion you want to have.

Elanor Miller, Preston resident said she heard from a reliable source that Joe Gentile has been back in Town and has spoken privately with one of the Committee members; would he possibly be a candidate for a developer once the property is owned by Preston.

Mike Sinko said Joe Gentile has not spoken to him.

Kent Borner said one of the clauses in the RFP was they could not participate if they owed the Town money or were delinquent in any form, and clearly he is.

Elanor Miller asked so that's not something to be concerned about.

Kent Borner stated that it would not be real popular in Town.

Bob Congdon said he told Joe Gentile he believed that if he showed up in Town with the money owed, the Town would send him packing.

Allyn Brown said but we would take the money he owed.

Tim Spanos, Preston resident stated that Joe Gentile has threatened legal action against the Town; what is the lawyers stance as far as protecting us once we do the closing from him giving us a frivolous lawsuit?

Bob Congdon stated that the Town's lawyers had sent an agreement prior to the Referendum that if the vote had failed on Tuesday; they would not come after the Town for money owed to them by Joe Gentile and we would not prohibit them from going after Gentile for the money. If the Referendum passed, they agreed to provide legal services and not bill us for them until we develop the property and they would be paid through the developer who develops the property.

Tim Spanos said his concern was we will have to defend ourselves even though we have solid ground.

Mike Sinko said Joe Gentile had significant defaults in our agreement.

Mike Clancy said he is disturbed by the resignation letter of Jerry Grabarek because it is important that the Selectmen attend these meetings considering they are the ones that are actually going to take the final vote. If Mr. Grabarek is not going to come to these meetings he should think about if he still

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wants to be a Selectman. I think it's an obligation on his part to come to these meetings.

Mike Sinko said he thought everyone in the Committee is taken by surprise with Jerry's letter.

Bob Congdon said he has worked with Jerry for fourteen years as a Selectman and has no reservations with him maintaining his seat on the Board of Selectmen. He is a passionate guy who cares about this Town and it would be a loss if we lost Jerry on the Board of Selectmen in my opinion.

Merrill Gerber said Mike Clancy does make a good point, it would behoove Jerry to attend the NHAC meetings in order to keep abreast of what's happening, because you can't do that reading the newspapers.

Norm Gauthier, Preston resident said it will be a loss to the Committee not having Jerry. If you don't have opposing opinions you end up with a bunch of bobble head dolls all agreeing with each other. It's good to have someone there telling you that you're wrong whether you are right or wrong and once in awhile they might be right.

Bob Congdon said he believes everyone on the Committee feels the same way, that we would rather Jerry did not resign.

Kent Borner said he is disappointed that Jerry will not even attend meetings. The NHAC works for the Board of Selectmen and it is important that he be here. The board of Selectmen will be voting on the issues, the NHAC is just recommending, so it is critical to absorb what goes on in these meetings.

Merrill Gerber said you don't get the real pulse of the meeting unless you are here.

Joe Biber said this Committee has had a number of diverse views which makes it a good committee.

We have had some good consultants, but everyone has different approaches and views because we come from different backgrounds and different perspectives. Jerry has a very strong and very good perspective and I think we should see if he would reconsider.

Norm Gauthier said if Jerry Grabarek is an ex-officio member, his resignation is worthless.

Bob Congdon said the first Selectman is an ex-officio member of every board and commission but he is not sure Jerry is.

6. Adjournment

A motion was made by Merrill Gerber and seconded by Allyn Brown to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 pm. All in favor. So Voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta Charpentier
recorder