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TOWN CLERK

January 20, 2016

The STEP Ad Hoc Committee held a special meeting on this date at the Stonington High School at 6:00 p.m. Present was First Selectman Rob Simmons, Don Maranell, Gloria Gorby, Dorotea Abele, Darren Stewart, Angela Gora, Mike Crowley, Sandy Grimes, Robin Hennessey, Don Kluberdanz, Howard Park, Lynn Young, Dave Rathbun, Paul Grassel, Robert Maurice, Jeff Callahan. Also present were members of the public and the press.

(1) Call to Order

Mr. Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

(2) Pledge of Allegiance

(3) Comments from the Public

None

(4) Introduction of Members

Mr. Simmons read the following statement:

First, I want to thank everyone here tonight for volunteering to serve on this Ad Hoc Committee. Our time and energy is limited. The fact that so many are here tonight and prepared to serve is a hopeful sign. Secondly, I have read the town files about the Sewer Treatment Expansion Parcel and the current records that we have go back to about December 2000. Older files are probably in storage. The point is that this problem has been around for a long time and I would like to see it settled. Third, correspondence in the files over these past 15 years reflects what I would characterize as powerful personal feelings expressed by individuals. It is my hope is that we can move beyond that we can move beyond that and address the problem in a manner that reflects the serious nature of the problem and this is a serious problem. As we get into some of the details over the next few we weeks we will find we need to address this and we need to do it quickly. I love the Town of Stonington. I have lived here on and off my whole life and I am proud to live here. I would like to think we can solve this problem outside of the courts among ourselves working in a constructive fashion. Fourth, I believe the current Board of Selectmen has been responsible in setting up the Ad Hoc Committee. On December 23rd we passed a resolution creating the committee in response to a commitment that I made at a meeting on December 8th and on January 13th in accordance with the plan we populated the committee with the current membership and alternates and approved a mission statement with options. Finally, we have a lot to do in a relatively short period of time. As First Selectman and representing the Board of Selectmen we set a deadline of 1 April. We do not want this Ad Hoc committee to drag on and on. We want to get organized and focused and we want to get to work and we want to get it done in a timely fashion. That's going to require our time and our effort. Time will tell whether we succeed or fail. But I ask all members of this committee to work together for the best result we can get under the circumstances. I said earlier to some of the members that tonight is organizational in nature. We need to elect officers, set meeting dates, discuss hearings, travel and other issues relative to our task. The members briefly introduced themselves.

Mr. Simmons stated that the problem with a committee this large is you have to regulate time so that one individual or two individuals don't tie up all of the time. He stated that we get to

the rules he doesn't think we have to adopt a timing rule tonight but when we get into the issue of having hearings we may have to limit the time or we will just never get through the night. Mr. Simmons stated that it would be his recommendation that we use the same rules of order that we use for the Board of Selectmen which is Roberts Rules of Order. Mr. Simmons asked if anyone objected to those rules. He stated that it would his recommendation that a quorum be a simple majority of the members. Mr. Simmons stated if you have 7 members present that's a quorum for doing business because at this point we have 13 members including him. He stated that if there is a quorum then voting should be a simple majority to pass a motion or a resolution. Mr. Simmons stated that he has always tried to do his business by consensus. He stated that he believes that they should have a Chairman and a Vice Chairman. Mr. Simmons stated that he has volunteered to Chair this Ad Hoc if they want him to. He stated that he has volunteered some resources of his office to cover any transportation if people want to travel out to visit neighboring areas like Groton or Essex or East Haddam that have dog parks. Mr. Simmons recommended that Don Maranell be the Vice Chairman but he's open to any thoughts that the members might have about the leadership and the rules.

(5) Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

A motion was made by Mr. Grimes and seconded by Mr. Rathbun to appoint Mr. Simmons as Chair and Mr. Maranell as Vice Chair. Discussion: Ms. Gora stated that the board should have someone who is neutral and someone maybe for and pro otherwise it's stacked again them once again. Mr. Simmons stated that nothing would be stacked against anybody. Mr. Simmons stated that his job as Chairman is to set the agenda, do the paperwork, do the minutes of the meeting, fund any travel or transportation and present ideas that you can accept or not accept. Mr. Maranell stated that there are no sides with Roberts Rules. Mr. Simmons stated that he won't vote unless there is a tie. Mr. Kluberdanz stated that time is of the essence and Rob and Don can take advantage of every minute we have. The vote was unanimous to appoint Mr. Simmons as Chairman and Mr. Maranell as Vice Chairman.

(6) Approval of Meeting Schedule

Mr. Simmons stated the meetings are scheduled for every other Wednesday to March 30th at 6:00 p.m. at the Stonington High Schools Commons. Mr. Simmons asked if there is a problem with the location or the time. Mr. Crowley stated that there should be a microphone set up. Mr. Simmons stated that there would be a microphone at the next meeting and especially if we have hearings. He stated that on the issue of hearings he was looking at February 17, 2016 and March 2, 2016. Mr. Simmons stated that one or the other of those dates to hold hearings where members of the public and interested parties can be called in to express themselves. Mr. Maranell stated he was thinking of having two. He stated one at the beginning to get input from the public on their thoughts. Mr. Maranell stated that he was thinking but it might be too soon but he was thinking February 3rd and then one of the 16th or on the 30th at the end before we make a final recommendation. Mr. Simmons stated that his idea for February 3rd is that he would have been able to distribute to the members of the STEP Committee additional information. He stated that he would invite the town planner and borough planner, the town attorney and the borough attorney and a representative from CIRMA which is the town and he thinks the borough's agency that covers our liability insurance. Mr. Simmons stated that he would invite them in to provide a professional presentation on the status of the property, who owns it, how is it zoned under what conditions

exist, what is the risk or liability to the town and/or the borough by operating a park of the nature that we are talking about. Ms. Young stated that she also wants to have time to go down there. She stated that everyone who is going to show up and speak at these things is going to have a vested interest in it so she needs to see for herself what the problem is. After further discussion from the Committee a motion was made by Mr. Maranell and seconded by Mr. Grimes to approve the STEP meeting schedule with the understanding that we will attempt to have hearings on February 17, 2016 and March 16, 2016. Discussion: Ms. Abele stated that she has been to similar hearings before in the past 4 or 5 years and she wanted to mention that they are a big minority. Mr. Simmons stated that minorities have rights in America. Ms. Abele stated that she has been to these before and it is not fun for her or Ms. Gora. Ms. Abele stated that there are just a few of them and most people are not interested unless they live there and are impacted by it or they use the area. Mr. Simmons stated that he has chaired hearings at a state and a federal level over the years and some of them can be very hostile and very contentious but it is important that they abide their serious obligations as members of this committee to make sure people act in a civil and responsible way. After further discussion from Mr. Rathbun, Mr. Grimes, Ms. Young, Mr. Maranell and Mr. Crowley the vote was unanimous. Mr. Simmons stated that in accordance with Mr. Rathbun's condition, if we hold a hearing one or both of those dates, we will have rules in advance to make sure the hearing is conducted.

(7) Discussion of Mission and Options

Mr. Simmons read the following:

1. No change to the current layout and use;
2. Close and lock the gates so that no members of the public may access the property;
3. Lock the gates open so that the public may access it, but any dogs brought to the property would not be able to be let off leash without the risk of running;
4. Establish the property as an off-leash dog park and obtain all necessary administrative approvals to do so;
5. Close and lock the gates so that no members of the public may access it, but identify an alternate location for an off-leash dog park within the Town.

Mr. Simmons stated that these were put forth by the Board of Selectmen just as a series of alternatives. He stated that there may be others. Mr. Simmons stated that when they talk about the mission and the options he wants people to see this as an open discussion as we go forward. Mr. Simmons stated that as he went through the file he learned that in the past consideration was given to a regulated off-leash dog park in the clover leaf on the north side of the Viaduct across from the COMO. He stated that was one location that was considered. Mr. Simmons stated that there were two other locations that were considered. He stated that he thinks one was at the Velvet Mill and he thinks one was over at Spellman Park. Mr. Simmons stated that as they look at the big picture, don't rule other locations for consideration.

(8) Assignment of Tasks

Mr. Simmons stated that he put in the booklet a list of towns that have regulated off-leash dog parks and he would encourage members of the committee to visit them in Groton, Essex or in East Haddam and the town will pay for their gas. He stated to go look and see how other people do it. Mr. Simmons stated sometimes you can learn by visually inspecting and learning how somebody else does it. He stated that when they go out take photos and bring

back information. Mr. Maranell stated that he is on the Borough planning and zoning and he has already recused himself from sitting in judgment with anything this panel may come up with. Mr. Simmons stated that when the Board of Selectmen acted they made him a member of the committee and he understood Jeff Callahan did not want to be a member of the committee but since then he has indicated that he would be happy to join us. Mr. Simmons stated that he could have the Board of Selectmen amend the membership at the next regular meeting. Mr. Maranell asked if it would change the quorum to 8. Mr. Simmons stated that we can make him ex-officio and it would keep the number at 13. Ms. Young what the process of the alternates be for voting. Mr. Simmons stated that on Planning & Zoning you do it very specifically. Mr. Simmons asked to describe how they do it on Planning & Zoning. Mr. Rathbun stated that you pick one and you take them in order and you don't take the same one every time. Ms. Young stated that issue here is there is probably only going to be one thing to vote on. Ms. Young asked how do we choose which alternate. Mr. Simmons stated that they will choose by the order of the member/alternate list but obviously it will be on the basis of who shows up. The alternates Paul Grassel and Robert Maurice briefly introduced themselves.

(9) Comments from the Public

None

(10) Adjourn

There being no further business to come before this Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.