

August 9, 2017

The Stonington Board of Selectmen held a regular meeting on this date at the Stonington Police Department at 7:00 p.m. Present were First Selectman Rob Simmons, Selectman Mike Spellman and Selectwoman Kate Rotella. Also present were members of the public and press.

(1) Call to Order

Mr. Simmons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

(2) Pledge of Allegiance

(3) Comments from the Public

Mr. Chris Duncklee stated that he grew up in town and was the former Tree Warden before moving to New Hampshire where he currently resides. He discussed a historical artifact that he wished to donate to the Town. The item is a piece of equipment used during WWII to remove torpedoes and mines inadvertently caught in the nets of the Stonington Fishing Fleet. Mr. Duncklee stated that he hopes the Town can create a memorial to include a plaque that explains the history of this important artifact.

Mr. Jim Spellman stated that Mr. Duncklee is a maritime artist and a son of Stonington. Mr. Spellman added that even on the best weather day, fishermen live a precarious profession and thinks this would be a fabulous memorial.

Discussion – Donation of Historical Artifact

A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to open the agenda to move the discussion of the historical artifact donation.

Mr. Spellman stated that Mr. Duncklee is a renowned maritime artist and source of historical knowledge of the Towns fishing fleet. Mr. Spellman added that this is a living piece of history and sure the town can find somewhere to house the memorial to save for future generations.

A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to accept the gift from Mr. Duncklee.

During discussion, Mr. Simmons stated that the Town is prepared to accept the donation and will collaborate with the Board of Education, local fishermen and other entities to find a suitable location to showcase the artifact. Mr. Simmons added that should the Town not be able to secure a proper place for the item they will contact Mr. Duncklee as he would take the item back.

With no further discussion, the motion carried.

(4) Approval of the Minutes

- A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to approve the June 5, 2017 Board of Selectmen and Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee special meeting minutes.
- A motion was made by Mrs. Rotella, seconded by Mr. Spellman and voted unanimously to approve the July 10, 2017 Board of Selectmen and Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee special meeting minutes.
- A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to approve the July 26, 2017 Board of Selectmen regular meeting minutes.

(5) Correspondence

Mr. Simmons took in correspondence from a group of residents from Pawcatuck concerned about the use of poisons to control the rat infestation.

The Board recessed at 7:11 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 7:13 p.m.

(6) Appointment/Reappointment/Resignation

Planning and Zoning Commission

A motion was made by Mrs. Rotella, seconded by Mr. Spellman and voted unanimously to appoint Mr. Ben Philbrick to the Planning and Zoning Commission as an alternate member.

Zoning Board of Appeals

A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to reappoint Mr. Bill Lyman to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Climate Change Task Force

A motion was made by Mrs. Rotella, seconded by Mr. Spellman and voted unanimously to accept the resignation of Mr. Ed Hart from the Climate Change Task Force.

(7) Old Business

Discussion – Blessing of the Fleet

A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to table this discussion until a future meeting.

Discussion – Rat Infestation Update

Mr. Ryan McCammon, Supervisor of Environmental Health for Ledge Light Health District, gave an update on the rat infestation. Mr. McCammon stated that there are currently twenty properties within the areas of Pawcatuck Village, Broad Street and Birdland that have been identified as having rats. He added that they are working with the homeowners to eliminate food, harborage and water from the properties. Several homeowners are working with licensed pest control operators and some are doing it themselves. Mr. McCammon stated that they have stressed to the owners the importance of following the labels when using pesticides but would prefer that they contact a licensed professional instead.

Mr. Simmons stated that a few citizens in Pawcatuck Village are concerned about the use of poison and asked Mr. McCammon to comment on the subject. Mr. McCammon stated that a commonly used rodenticide called bromadiolone is a registered pesticide in the State of CT. Mr. McCammon stated that they removed the information regarding this pesticide from the guidance sheet given to the residents but stress that Ledge Light was never recommending use of the product just stating that some licensed pest control operators use the product. Mr. McCammon added that Ledge Light has added BioTech as a referral to homeowners and stated that they do not use that type of poison.

Mr. Simmons stated that Selectman Spellman has led the initiative with Ledge Light to move forward with their canvassing efforts and thanked him for his help. Mr. Spellman stated that he applauds Ledge Light for their quick response with canvassing the neighborhoods. Mr. Spellman added that this is not the year to put out a bird feeder. Mrs. Rotella asked if Ledge Light was continuing to follow up with the residents and their neighbors. Mr. McCammon stated that was correct.

(8) New Business

Discussion – Keeping of Hens

Mr. Simmons stated that in November of 2013 the Town of Stonington adopted a zoning regulation regarding the Keeping of Hens. Mr. Simmons read a portion of the zoning regulations which states:

"This regulation is intended to provide for the keeping of female chickens, referred to as hens, as an accessory to a residential use, in a manner which preserves the quality of life of the surrounding neighborhood." Mr. Simmons adds that the minimum lot size is 20,000 square feet with a maximum flock size of ten. Mr. Simmons states that the professionals that have been assisting the town with the rat issue have stated on several occasions that the feeding of chickens, hens, birds and wildlife can contribute to the rat infestation. Several families, keeping hens in the affected area are on lots less than 20,000 square feet which is a violation. Some members of the public as well as Mr. John Prue and Dr. Gail Shea spoke against the zoning regulation in 2013 and recommended the Town not allow a lot size of 20,000 square feet and it should be larger.

Mr. McCammon stated the rat issue can stem from having hens due to a combination of feeding, maintaining the water, storage of food and waste. Mr. McCammon added that a few properties with hens are on an undersized lot and have been cited by or are working with Zoning on the issue. Some of those property owners have begun rat control processes to secure food, waste, bedding, etc. which is attractive to rats.

Mrs. Rotella asked if the waste was maintained appropriately. Mr. McCammon stated that he had not been to each of those properties personally but the two he did inspect had a sanitary issue that needed improvement. Mrs. Rotella stated that with a presence of pests already she wanted to highlight the zoning regulation states "in a manner which preserves the quality of life for surrounding neighborhood." Mrs. Rotella added that it sounds like the quality of life is not being preserved.

Dr. Gail Shea of 197 River Road stated she believes it was a poor decision to allow the zoning regulation to pass considering the size of many lots in Pawcatuck as it is not the environment to raise chickens. She added that beside the health issues she doesn't believe people know that the chickens will eventually stop producing eggs. Dr. Shea stated the zoning regulation is ill founded and should be revisited.

A motion was made by Mrs. Rotella, seconded by Mr. Spellman and voted unanimously to request the Planning and Zoning Commission revisit the Keeping of Hens Zoning regulation.

Resolution – Pawcatuck Village Neighborhood Coalition

Mr. Simmons stated that since the last meeting he has had further thought on the formation of said coalition as he believes at this stage of the game, the Town along with Ledge Light and Kevin Burns from the Pawcatuck Fire Department have done a good job dealing with this issue. Mr. Spellman and Mrs. Rotella agreed.

A motion was made by Mr. Spellman, seconded by Mrs. Rotella and voted unanimously to table the resolution.

Request – Waiver of Building Fee

A motion was made by Mrs. Rotella, seconded by Mr. Spellman and voted unanimously to waive the building permit fee of \$37,154.00 associated with the renovation project at the Ocean Community YMCA with any state fees to be paid by the YMCA.

(9) Comments from the Public

None

(10) Comments from the Selectmen

Mr. Spellman stated that he is very happy the board accepted the historical artifact from Mr. Duncklee. Mr. Spellman added that it will be great to pass on to future generations.


Mrs. Rotella stated that it was an honor to watch Mr. Spellman when he was sworn in as Chief of Police for the City of Groton. Mrs. Rotella added that Mr. Spellman is very deserving and she knows he will do a wonderful job.

Mr. Simmons stated that the swearing in ceremony was a wonderful event and is glad Mr. Spellman is pursuing his distinguished career. Mr. Simmons added that he is looking forward to continuing to serve with Selectman Spellman for the next few months.

Mr. Simmons stated that the past few weeks the Town has had several events including the Blessing of the Fleet, River Glow, Village Fair and the upcoming Mystic Art Festival. Mr. Simmons added that these events are an example of the kind of public spirit we are fortunate to have all which could not happen without the community and volunteers. Mr. Simmons stated that it gives him great pride and pleasure to serve this community of individuals.

(11) Adjourn

There being no further business to come before this Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.


Stacey Haskell
Recording Secretary