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SE Town Board Special Meeting Recap- 11/9/06

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Hi All,

Sat Nov 11, 2006 3:44 pm

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On Thursday night as is my custom I attended a Town Board meeting. This was a Special Meeting as there was a Public Hearing on the '07 budget. And man, were there a lot of questions.

I thought the most mysterious item was the always interesting 'Garbage' line (8160.4-SR). Apparently we've budgeted \$1,700,300 even though the AWS bid came in at about \$1.48 mil. Huh? Even the Town Board and Town Accountant seemed perplexed and could only point to administrative costs. Except that would be about \$220,200 in administrative fees. Whoa-Special District's Manager, Michael Levine, must be a multi-millionaire. On the bright side Supervisor Dunford said they'd look into it.

The other highlight was Councilwoman Mitt's 'come to Jesus' moment on the 'Wonderful World of Retail'. Now that she'd downloaded all these nifty pictures of Target and Wal-Mart it was: Bring on the mammon. Just make sure the buildings look pretty, that we call thinly disguised strip malls 'Lifestyle Centers' and that all buildings have 'breaks' in their facades. Scheesh, maybe she's been hanging with the always charming Mr. Camarda- or the devastatingly natty Mr. Lepler lately as both have been touting 'Lifestyle Centers' for a while. Anyhow, she declared that she wanted 'great places to shop'. Oh brother, this can only mean there must be something new lurking in the development pipeline.

As always all that I write is only my jaundiced, ill-advised and ill-conceived take on the thrill of life in Southeast. That includes what's above and below- especially under the 'Comment/Opinion' section. And as always the thoughts expressed are my own and represent no groups to which I belong. As usual this is much too long. Sorry- but that's what the delete key is for.

Special Meeting:
Public Hearing: 2007 Budget:

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Town Historian: Cathy Croft asked about the Town Historian. Supervisor Dunford said that it was Benny Rosenberg and that even though he hadn't been reappointed he remained as such.

Public Notices: Ms. Croft asked where the 'Public Notice' expenditures could be found. Answer: Under various Board (Town, ZBA and Planning) contractual lines.

Garbage: Ms. Croft also asked why the 'Garbage line was \$1,700,300 when the contract for '07 was \$1.48 million. Answer: Administrative fees (Michael Levine and assistant) although the Board said that they would look into the large discrepancy. Ron Hund (Town Accountant) answered some of the questions as well.

Town Attorney: I asked why there was such a large discrepancy between what's budgeted for the Town Attorney. In '06 \$133,000 was projected and this was amended to \$140,000 with \$183,486 spent and '05 was budgeted at \$130,000 while \$196,970 was actually spent. The Board answered that they always hoped there'd be less litigation. But that they would look into increasing this line.

Town-wide Newsletter: I asked about a line for a Town-wide Newsletter since none had been sent this year (2 were sent in '05) It's on line 1670.4-A and a newsletter may still be sent this year.

Drainage: I asked why nothing was budgeted for '07 after \$57,634 was paid out in '06 and \$82,658 in '05. Answer: Expenses were reimbursed by the County.

Wetlands Inspection: I asked why the line (\$5200) remained in the budget as a part time inspector is supposed to be hired. Answer: It may not be legal to take this out as we need an enforcement officer. \$18,000 has been budgeted for the new part-time inspector.

Sheriff's Patrol: I asked if the board was going to make a decision on the contract renewal (\$60,000) before Sheriff Smith came before the Board. The Board said that they would be looking for data from the sheriff. I asked what kind of data. The Board replied that they needed to know if there had been problems with any of the properties patrolled. The Board was unsure whether or not Sheriff Smith would be at a public meeting or answer their questions in Executive Session.

MS-4: Ann Fanizzi asked if there was money budgeted to meet MS-4 requirements. Answer: No, but the Board has received a \$25,000 grant.

Peach Lake Sewer: Ms. Fanizzi asked if money had been budgeted for this. Answer: No, as a district had not yet been formed.

Paul Kelly said that since the Open Space Referendum had passed there would be \$3 million in interest paid and \$4 million dollars lost in property taxes a portion of the acquired properties should be used for recreational purposes such as ball fields.

The Public Hearing was closed.

1. DC-9 Painter's Union:

The Union has an apprenticeship bill (passed by Governor Pataki) that they would like the Town of Southeast to adopt. This would apply only to public projects and helps ensure that all

safety precautions are taken. The Board said that they would take a look at it.

2. Root Avenue- Sign Plan:

This is a 5 lot subdivision represented by Michael Liguori of Hogan and Rossi. The development has preliminary approval. The applicant is asking for a 'No Right Turn' sign where Root and Simpson meet. Also a 'No Local Traffic' sign. Councilman Honeck expressed concern as there are about '5 accidents a day' on Simpson Road. Approval has been given by Putnam County. Several Board members expressed concern over the 'sightline' and increased traffic although Highway Superintendent Lawler was OK with it.

3. Highway Department- Street Sweeper:

\$150,000 was bonded but only bid came in at \$130,000. The Board noted that the town emblem should be on the side.

4. Gold Lot Parking Permit:

Fees haven't been raised since '98. Will be increased by 10%

5. Palazetti Warehouse: ARB Referral:

Deferred

6. Establishment of Performance Bond- Sprint Spectrum:

Will be on 11/16/06 agenda

7. Establishment of Performance Bond- Waterview Estates:

The bond will be \$374,200. The retaining wall is figured at 2006 costs thus an escalation clause is needed.

8. Putnam County Humane Society 2007 Contract:

Funding will be approved 11/16/06

9. Draft Zoning Amendments:

Large Retail Establishment definition changed to a gross floor area of 50,000 square feet or greater.

Retail establishments will need a 3-D rendering. Although relief could be sought for small projects.

Discussed the use of the words 'may' and 'shall'.

Councilman Johnson wants Special Permit standards to be part of code (38)

Councilwoman Mitts passed around pictures of retail centers she had downloaded and liked. It was then discussed that a footprint of 80,000 square feet could actually be doubled with a second story. No large retail will be allowed on Route 22.

A Public Hearing on the proposed changes will be held in December.

Comments (AKA Opinion):

Public Hearing: Budget-

Ahhh, the budget... where to begin.

Town Historian:

This was really rich. Every January at the organizational meeting appointments to various Boards are doled out like penny candy. And every January even reappointments are mentioned by name. Well, all except Benny Rosenberg because for the last two years the position of Town Historian (7520.1-A - 7520.4-A) has been left open. As I hear it the 90+ year old Mr. Rosenberg displeased the Board several years ago when he wasn't gung-ho their reelection. Hmmmm, what to do, what to

do...

Garbage:

Oh goody, here comes my favorite topic: Garbage. Because nothing says garbage like line 8160.4-SR in our 2007 budget. I really don't remotely get the \$200,000+ discrepancy here (\$1,700,300 to a \$1.48 contract). So I took a peak at last year's budget. Yup, as I thought the contract last year ended up around \$1.53 mil but the Budget was for \$1,616,069 so there's another big discrepancy. All under contractual. It's a little difficult to believe that the Special District's Manager and an assistant rake in over \$200K.

Town Attorney:

Again with the discrepancies- see above because they're pretty ridiculous. And the lame excuse of 'we always hope they'll be less litigation' is pathetic at best. I mean, I always 'hope' to win Lotto but I don't budget accordingly. And note to the Town Board, if you capped the landfill and stopped litigating 'The Meadows' we could eliminate these pet projects from attorney's fees year in and year out.

I guess all of this is particularly galling as during the meeting Mr. Stephens was busy doing a little light housekeeping. Either cleaning out his wallet or taking up the art of origami- I couldn't tell which.

The Sheriff's Patrol:

Right now we're paying \$60 grand for a patrol that leaves its nightly rounds whenever the car is needed elsewhere, errrr, called out on an emergency- because unlike the first six months of patrolling there is no longer a 'dedicated' car. Fine- I get that in an emergency 'our' car must go where needed but sometimes the car is called away to really 'volatile' situations- like the 'Patterson Crossing Public Hearing' where, in reality, there was never a hint of 'trouble'.

Frankly I yearn for the days of the two dudes in a station wagon. Cheaper- plus we knew where they were and what we were paying for.

MS-4:

Of course it pains me to admit that this was an excellent question asked by Ms. Fanizzi but the answer was classic 'bait and switch'. Hmmm, a grant of \$25,000 received. Yeah, well that should really help offset the \$160 million that will be needed to mitigate drainage problems in Patterson, Carmel, Kent and Southeast.

DC Painter's Union:

This was a little bizarre but I understand that the Union's been having some difficulties securing commercial contracts in town.

Root Avenue:

This subdivision has been a debacle since the get-go. Kooky drainage, steep slopes, and originally Peder Scott as engineer. Oy Vey. But this is also a traffic disaster in the making so we shall see. In a complete sidebar and as the self-appointed 'Queen of Hyperbole' I loved Dick Honeck's attempt to dethrone me by mentioning that there were at least 'five accidents' a day on Simpson Road.

Even Councilman Johnson managed to appear indignant (no mean feat) when he corrected Michael Liquori's contention that the new traffic signs would 'help the town'.

Street Sweeper:

I found the 'emblem' comment enigmatic. I mean, don't all town vehicles have the SE emblem on the door?

Draft Zoning Amendments:

Well, this was the Battle of 'May' Vs. 'Shall' Vs. 'Should' with 'Shall' triumphing in the end (final score: Shall-20 Should-8. I think the spread was 5 and the over 19 so congrats to all you winners out there- and a special shout-out to 'Shall' on it's hard fought victory).

It also seemed like the complete castration of the Planning Board (my apologies to those on the PB- poor choice of verbiage since there're no gals on the Board- but I meant it figuratively- really). Councilman Bonanno said that the Town Board could not take all authority away from the Planning Board. And he's right unless the TB wants to dissolve the PB and do the work themselves.

Almost all this discussion was disjointed and unintelligible without looking at the proposed changes in writing- But the public is not allowed to have copies- so much for that.

I'm still curious as to where the former 25,000 square foot limit on retail space went after the Board couldn't reach consensus with a super majority. Now it seems like 160,000 sq. ft. is doable. Or as a seat mate said to me- 'Do you suppose it's the Town Board's goal to drive every small business out of business?'

That's it from my desk. As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you may have. Oh, and have a great weekend.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt

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Lynne Eckardt
[lynneeckardt](#)

Nov 11, 2006
3:56 pm



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