

SE Town Board Regular Meeting Recap 2/15/07

Hi All,

Last Thursday night I attended the regular Southeast Town Board meeting. There were few agenda items and even fewer in the audience.

Councilman Johnson, who was sitting in for Supervisor Dunford, seemed like a nervous understudy or a kid playing 'dress-up'. My mind kept wandering and, I swear, I couldn't help it- and I know I'm going to hell, but I kept checking the councilman for evidence of 'Dad's' extra long rolled up pants, Brylcreem and an oversized clip-on tie. In an early agenda item Mr. J. actually asked for a roll call vote on the minutes. Huh? I mean, even the Town Clerk and Councilwoman Mitts seemed a bit taken aback by this unusual request. But then things settled down, Mr. Johnson ran a decent meeting and seemed perfectly delighted with his job performance.

Other highlights, for me anyway, were under 'New Business'. When I asked how we stood on the Landfill capping Mr. Johnson began waxing poetic about how the town was doing *everything* in its power to save money. Given this tidbit one might assume that the town now did have some cost estimates. Nope. No idea- but, I was assured, we're still trying valiantly to save money. So, how exactly does this work? Again my mind wandered to play out this convoluted scenario.

Of course, like a dog with a bone, I also pursued the ever-changing and riveting saga: 'The Mystery of Rental Registration Law #6' errrr, make that #5'. To her credit Councilwoman Mitts has e-mailed me with some information but due to the holiday today more info won't be available until Tuesday. See below.

As is already evident my recaps are impossibly biased and represent only my personal snarky view of a night in the life of Southeast government. The opinions expressed are not reflective of any organization to which I belong. Lucky them.

Regular Meeting: Public Hearings:

7:30PM Root Avenue Sign Plan:

Ms. McCarthy (a homeowner on Root Avenue) said that she felt the signage proposed would not mitigate the dangers (sight-lines) or increased traffic on Root Avenue. She asked that the road be limited to 'one way' as was discussed earlier in the process.

I spoke in favor of the 'one way' suggestion.

The Town Board asked the applicant's attorney (Michael Liguori) why the road couldn't be one-way. Mr. Liguori said that the Highway Superintendent felt that this would create a dangerous situation for emergency vehicles. The 'Root Avenue' subdivision owner said that he had no objection to the street becoming one way but that it had been deemed unsafe.

1) Review of Minutes: January 25, 2007

Acting Supervisor, Paul Johnson asked for a roll call vote. Two abstentions (Johnson and Bonanno as they were not at the meeting) so the action was deferred until the next regular meeting.

2) Correspondence:

The reading was waived. Accepted 4-0

3) Approval of Voucher List:

Vouchers in the amount of: \$2,026,811.91 were approved 4-0

4) Motion setting Meeting Dates:

March 8, 2007 Work Session
March 15, 2007 Work Session

March 22, 2007 Regular Meeting

All will be held at 7:30 at the Civic Center.

Councilwoman Mitts asked that a Special Meeting re. the extension of the Route 22 Moratorium be held on February 22.

Approved 4-0

5) Resolution- Increase in 2007 Senior Citizen Exemption

Local Law #1 2007. Passed 4-0

6) Resolution- Release of Performance Bond Stonecrest Senior Housing

\$126,140 to -0-. Passed 4-0

7) Resolution- Reduction of Performance Bond Triple J Subdivision

Councilwoman Mitts said that there was only \$30,000 remaining on site work but by law the town could only reduce the bond by half. The bond went from \$520,000 to \$260,100.

8) Resolution:- Town Road Acceptance- International Boulevard

Passed 4-0

9) Motion- Appointment of Member to the Board of Assessment Review- term through 9/30/11

Lois Zutell appointed. 4-0

New Business:

A bid in the amount of \$21,000 for a 'lawn project' was awarded to Colonial Town Landscaping. The Town Board then thanked Jim Lawler and the Highway Department for all their hard work in the storm. Executive Session (Councilman Johnson said it was litigation regarding 'Tilly Foster') was not held.

Landfill:

I asked for updates as far as the landfill closure.

Answer: The road has been constructed. The robot is going to go through the culvert. There are still questions outstanding with the DEC.

I asked if there were any cost estimates.

Answer: The town is trying really hard to keep the costs down. But no, there are no estimates.

Planning Board/Litigation:

I said that I was confused by the appeal on 'The Meadows' that the Planning Board had filed. Did the Town Board have to approve funding on this even if they did not agree.

Town Counsel, Willis Stephens, said that the town was obligated to fund this.

Rental Registration Law:

I asked if it was 'Rental Registration Law' number 5 or 6?

Councilwoman Mitts stated that there had been a clerical error and the law had been amended in '06 so that it was Local Law #5 in 2006.

I then said that I had FOILED to obtain the letters sent out in November '06 and January '07. Mrs. Mitts had stated at January 25th meeting that a letter had been sent out in November of '06 but the Zoning Enforcement office had no record of this letter. Mrs. Mitts reiterated ("for the tenth time") that a letter had been sent out and she would get it for me. A Board member mentioned that there had been three violations back then.

Since not much has been done in the way of inspections I asked why we needed two Zoning Code Officers. What had been a budget line of \$44,000 and change in '05 had more than doubled to \$92,000 in

the '07 budget. Councilman Johnson explained that there were almost 400 violations in front of the courts right now.

I read a brief e-mail from Helena Frost who was unable to attend the meeting. She asked if the entire town would be sent a letter re. rental registration and if so if she would be allowed more time to fill out the forms she had been sent. Answers: Yes, a letter would go out to all residents and, 'no' she would have no additional time to fill out the forms.

COMMENTS/OPINION:

7) Reduction of Performance Bond- Triple J

I thoroughly enjoyed the completely gratuitous effervescing over the partial release of this performance bond. The Board was almost swooning over the fact that they could **only** release half by law because really, we promise, there's **only** \$30,000 of site work left on this absolutely fabulous subdivision.

In case you've forgotten, this is the project of the demolished barn, weird first-time town conservation easements, bad sightlines, wetland buffer incursion, misplaced DEP information - well, it's the list that just keeps on giving. Here's a case where it would be great to know who really owns this development. Councilwoman Mitts recently advocated for full disclosure on town and village multi-family homeowners- rather than 'corporate' owners. Hey, wouldn't it be super to know have this info on all subdivision applicants as well?

Landfill:

Yeah, I know... it's drag out the hindquarters but honestly how do we save on the capping costs when we don't know what the cost will be. This played out in my head like a bad Ionesco play. I mean, how on earth can you cut costs if you don't know what they are. I can see it all now: Question to MTA, Engineers, Insurance Brokers, Contractors etc: "How much will it cost to clean up MTA property?" Answer: "Sorry, no idea". Response: "Well, that's way too much- we'll have to cut that way back."

Scheesh... talk about complete BS. So Friday I FOILed (electronically- it's so convenient and such fun) to see correspondence between the Town and the DEC. This may shed a little more light on the chronic delays and/or possible excuses.

Rental Registration Law:

My head really is gonna explode. Councilwoman Mitts was insistent that a letter had gone out in November '06- but then it seemed that this same letter may have gone to as few as three properties. And the Board's insistence that the 45 letters sent were to all accessory apartments seems a little off. When asked about multi-family houses the Board represented that this was a separate category (it is) and that there were few in Southeast. The funny thing is that I know several people with legal rentals that have never received any letter at all so God knows what category they fall into.

Mrs. Mitts got really exasperated with me and when I persisted with questions replied with an iconic eye-roll and that voice reserved for errant children "For the tenth time..." Of course if I could get a straight answer in the month I've been asking (and FOILing) I wouldn't bother to persist.

I think that there's a valid concern that Southeast could end up in costly litigation over this and I still believe that to tout a new law and then not act on it for over a year is complete BS. That said, I thank Mrs. Mitts for getting back to me promptly and look forward to reading the November '06 letter.

As for the possible 400 zoning violations cited by Councilman Johnson... Oooooo wheeeee that sure seems like a lot of local reg. breaking... but if true probably pays for a large chunk of our brand new Zoning Officer's salary. Always an angle in Southeast...

That's it from my desk on President's Day. As always if you have any questions or comments please feel free to e-mail me.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt