

SE Town Board Work Session Recap 4/10/08

Hi All,

Please, please make it stop... Because just when I think things in Southeast couldn't possibly get any worse there's another Town Board meeting and, like 'Ground Hog Day', it dawns on me that *this* cesspool is bottomless. Three and a half hours and eight pages of notes later I left with ulcers, a migraine and the sincere wish that the Temple Beth Dunford water cooler had been filled with vodka.

Thursday night was another complete train wreck.

On the plus side we're back to belting out 'God Bless America'. I figure that this is proof positive that God is truly all-forgiving. Because in light of the current situation in SE this really seems to take advantage of God's good name- you know, in vain, and all that. I know that if I were the supreme being I'd be hurling bolts of lightning and roiling up a Bog Brook tsunami just to make this madness stop. God sure is patient.

Lowlights:

The meeting started out in a rather civilized fashion. The five guys all managed to suck it up and vote in unison for the four (count 'em), four consecutive resolutions in favor of the Peach Lake sewers. But the meeting promptly went right down the sh*tter when Supervisor Rights threw in an unannounced voting item. Check out the 'Litigation Withdrawal' for more on this bizarre and I think, ill-advised move.

We then dove into the Springhouse water mess. Easily the most serious and important item on the agenda.

I see we've officially entered 'Do as I say, not as I do' territory (and within the first 100 days no less) as the always inscrutable Mr. Rights has hired Peter Domin to help manage the Blackberry swimming pool. It may be that Mr. Domin is the most qualified person on earth for the job- but after all the Supervisor's b*tching about the old guard and patronage jobs you'd think he'd be a little circumspect before hiring one of his biggest fans.

The coveted 'Coy and Condescending' award was won handily by Rights and Yee when we hit item number 16. I really wish we didn't have to play this game. It's become so dreary, predictable and time consuming. Anyhow, it seems a new dugout built on the Zimmer Road ball fields collapsed before it'd ever been used. This is serious business so I could have lived without Rights' smirking rhetorical questions to elicit the fact that the dugouts cost us \$31,000 and were built by Robert Conlin. By the way, I believe the 31K excludes materials- and concrete footings weren't even poured. Of course, it's easy to be condescending when you're perched above the huddled masses in a \$1300 buttery leather executive lounge.

In any case, a good friend of mine and I did a dugout drive-by Friday AM. Scheesh, I've seen better Cub Scout projects. I don't think even the Joad family would have considered these safe or adequate shelters. Here I'd have to agree with Rights that we deserve a prompt and courteous refund.

Apologies in advance- this recap is long, long, long but it's harder for me to edit than spew. And spewing has the added benefit of actually lowering my blood pressure. As always the uncalled for remarks are my fed-up and jaundiced take on the cheesy beach-read that SE has become. They reflect no organization to which I belong. On with the show...

Southeast Town Board Special Meeting:

Special Meeting: Peach Lake Sewer District

1. Resolution Regarding SEQRA Determination- Passed 5-0
2. Resolution Making Certain Findings of Fact- Passed 5-0
3. Resolution Establishing the Peach Lake Sewer District- Passed 5-0
4. Resolution Authorizing Application to State Comptroller- Passed 5-0

A) Motion to withdraw the People Vs. Parkash Lawsuit

This item was not on the agenda. Rights asserted that all zoning violations had been remedied thus it was best to drop the lawsuit now since the case was scheduled to be heard on April 16th and the next regular Board meeting would be on April 17th. Councilman Honeck said he was blindsided by the motion. Councilman Johnson wondered how we knew the violations had been rectified and asked that the Zoning Enforcement Officer who was present be allowed to speak. Rights refused to recognize him. Rights said that there was a motion on the floor. Johnson mentioned that Parkash was a 'political friend'. The vote was 3-2 in favor of dropping the suit. Passed 3-2 with Rights, Yee and Gross voted in favor.

2. Springhouse Water District:

Taken out of order. Special District's manager Michael Levine gave an overview. There were a number of Springhouse residents there. All spoke of their frustration and disappointment in their water system which costs at least \$1600 a year and is possibly carcinogenic. All wanted immediate action taken. One resident was furious because it took the town four months to notify residents of the problem. Many were annoyed by poor communication- even on the meeting Thursday night. There were suggestions of private wells, merging all water districts, adding silver to the filtration process, micro-filtration, grants, hooking up to the school or Mt. Ebo water, lawsuits against the town and reduction of assessments.

The Board promised that there would be a separate meeting scheduled to figure out a solution. There will be a change of engineers.

1. No Thru Traffic- Doansberg Road

Taken out of order. New verbiage for the sign to be placed at the top of Old Doansberg Road was discussed and will be adopted by the town.

3. Architect Presentation:

- a) Storage Addition
- b) Old Town Hall
- c) Lakeview Manor

- d) Putnam Precision

The presentation was fairly brief.

a) Storage Addition:

The addition will be 807 square feet. This including an all new electrical update and air-conditioning for the remainder of the building will cost \$225,000.

b) Lakeview Manor:

There will be expanded parking and a 40' X25' room for seniors. No plans of the septic system are available. The building is 92' from the water's edge. According to Councilman Gross there is money available for the project so that taxes will not increase.

b) Old Town Hall:

There was some discussion regarding restoration vs. renovation. Supervisor Rights stated that he didn't want any more 'crap' in SE so that a great restoration was imperative. There will be a meeting of all stake holders to see how best to handle the project. Kathleen Abels, Chair of the Historic Sites Commission tried to pin down Rights on a date but no decision was reached. Councilman Gross thanked Ms. Abels for all her hard work and apologized for a 'nasty' e-mail that had been sent.

d) Putnam Precision: Route 6 East

Peder Scott gave a presentation. The project has been in front of the Planning Board and the ARB. Supervisor Rights seemed unimpressed and asked that a colonial facade as well as a peaked roof be explored. I asked if the landscaping in the drawing was accurate as far as size. Answer: Usually plants 2-2.5" caliper tree. Limited by what the DOT will allow as the building is only 14 feet from the road. I asked is the DOT letter was in the file. No, but Scott would make sure I got it. Will be using some native trees.

4. Women's Softball:

Since additional fields will be used the Board was asked if the women's league could play before dark to save on the \$30 an hour lighting fee now charged. Scheduling will be looked at.

5. Use of Furniture from Old Town Hall:

Greg Wunner, speaking for Friends of Tilly Foster, asked for permission to borrow used office furniture stored in the modular building at 67 Main. An inventory will be taken as will an official vote next Thursday.

10. Blackberry Pool:

Peter Domin said that there have been three bids on repair work. They range from \$29,500 to \$84,000 well over the anticipated \$10,000. He likes the \$29,500 bid. Supervisor Rights was queried on whether or not Mr. Domin is now being paid. Answer: Yes.

8. Pegasus: Route 121

Pegasus Therapeutic Riding now wants to install a covered riding ring. There will be 20,000 feet of impervious surface added to the site. And there had previously been a zoning variance granted.

7. Tulip Road Petition (off Dingle Ridge Road):

Residents have submitted a petition asking for a noise barrier.

11. Sheriff's Contract:

Councilman Yee wants to know what we're getting for \$60,000 per annum. He would like details of the patrol itself. Bob Cullen asked if any other agencies (like the State Police) had been consulted. Answer: No.

I asked if the county was actually paying the matching \$60,000 as I had heard they hadn't for several years. Councilman Honeck said the county might not pay this year and didn't really answer whether or not that had in the past. I asked if there was going to be a truly dedicated car and Councilman Yee said he was specifically looking into this.

15. Policy- Use of Town Property-Private Sector Applications:

Supervisor Rights inferred that Town Property was being used to financially benefit the private sector. When asked to give an example he declined. He would like to set a strict policy with penalties for any violations. At this point Pete Pastore spoke on the dysfunction of the Town Board and asked them to stop all the bickering and get the work of the town done.

16. Zimmer Road Ball Field:

Highway Superintendent Mike Fila reported that a dugout constructed last year had collapsed. It had never been used. Apparently there were no concrete footings poured and the wrong lumber size had been used. It was decided that the remaining three should come down immediately as they pose a hazard. Rights questioned who had built them. Robert Conlin had constructed them for \$31,500 not including materials. Litigation against Mr. Conlin was suggested by the Supervisor.

17. Village of Brewster Easement:

Placed on the April 17th agenda.

18. Naming of Private Roads:

Woodstone Farms Lane has been asked for a private road off Dingle Ridge. Placed on the April 17th agenda.

21. Town Park Fencing Repairs:

Bid under \$10,000 will be awarded to Adams Fencing. Placed on the April 17th agenda.

20: Town Board's Assistant's Salary:

Supervisor Rights and Nanci feel she's deserving of a stipend from the Town Board as she does so much work for them. She makes \$40,000 and the former Supervisor's Assistant made around \$43,000. It was pointed out that the former assistant had worked for the town for eight years. There was back and forth about \$18,000 that had been restored to the Supervisor's line to pay an assistant but that the former assistant had done far more for the Town Board.

Nanci stated that she no longer wanted to do 'volunteer work' for the Board.

Councilman Gross took issue with Nanci's handling of the mail as there have been things he hasn't received. He said that the matter was under investigation.

Christine Piccini (a Village Trustee) asked if there had been a job description. Since Nanci serves at the pleasure of the Supervisor it is incumbent on Mr. Rights to have Nanci pass along all information to the council so that they will be informed for the meeting. Anything less shortchanges the taxpayer. And that it not up to Mr. Rights to pick and choose what is sent along. Rights and Nanci don't believe that setting up information packets for the Board is up to her.

COMMENTS:

Motion to withdraw the People Vs. Parkash:

Scheesh, what's up with this? And, more importantly, how come Councilman Gross seemed to have a heads-up while Johnson and Honeck seemed blindsided.

This property is on the Tilly Foster peninsula. It was a auto repair concern that I thought had lost this particular use since it sat vacant for well over 6 months when it was on the market. Rights really pushed for a quick vote probably to make this item as inconspicuous as possible. HA! I mean, this is a group that manages to fight over Woman's Softball so what are the odds that this would go unnoticed.

In a completely coincidental sidebar I see that Mr. Parkash is a financial supporter of our always dreamy Assemblyman, Supervisor Rights and Councilman Yee.

Springhouse Water:

Enough already. These residents need potable water. This isn't an 'option'. We're talking about the health and well-being of our neighbors.

To make a million dollar solution economically viable assessments should be lowered to help off-set the bond cost. Because these homes are truly worth less than comparably priced houses that have potable water. And anyone who thinks otherwise should picture themselves taking a shower every day knowing that a possible carcinogen is being released through the hot water. For God's sake, let's get this done in less than the allotted 18 months. For years Springhouse water has been an ongoing disgrace of foot-dragging, poor judgment and excuses.

Architect's Presentation:

In possibly the worst performance since Pia Zadora played Anne Frank, Franz and Fanze (sp-sorry) presented their 'vision' of the storage addition, Lakeview Manor and Old Town Hall. This uninspired power point presentation was mercifully short but that's it's all it had going for it. We were treated to 'before' pictures, some unexciting text and meandering commentary.

These seem like two really nice guys- they just don't have their act together. Perhaps they're listless from all the bad karma pouring out of their re-do of new Town Hall.

It's also inconceivable to me that electrical updates, and AC weren't installed throughout the building when it was renovated. Now the cost for the aforementioned plus 807 square feet of storage will cost \$225,000. Ridiculous.

Historic Sites Chair, Kathleen Abels, was pretty great and the proverbial dog with a bone trying to pin down Rights on a meeting date. But then I understand that she has quite the ax to grind as Rights sent out a less than flattering e-mail regarding her previous work on the Old Town Hall. Ouch.

Putnam Precision:

Sure there's a lot more important stuff to make fun of but how can I resist the always boyish charm of Peder Scott. In his defense I don't think you could drink this building pretty. The size of the building made Rights suggestions to 'colonialize' it almost laughable. But then there's Peder. The ultimate 'yes man' said he'll be happy to go back to the drawing board and see what he could do. Sure, he will. After all, Putnam Precision will be picking up the tab.

The landscaping depicted in the plans is my particular pet peeve as it showed how the place will look way in the future and frankly a 2.5" caliper trees are most often used on residential property and will be out of

scale next to a building this size. Mr. Scott promised me the letter that DOT sent. It apparently limits the size of trees since the building is only 14 feet from Route 6. Yeah, Peder, I'll be waiting by my mailbox...

Blackberry Pool:

Funny thing about power. Criticizing the old guard for patronage positions and then doing the same. I'm telling you it's gotta be the water...

Sheriff's Patrol:

Finally... finally I find someone who actually cares about this eternal pet of mine and then it turns out to be Councilman Yee. This is like finding out that the mushy Valentine sent to you in eighth grade was from the guy with green teeth, blackheads the size of dimes and a personality devoid of, well, all personality. Ick. Still, I have to say Yee was asking all the right questions.

Private Use of Town Owned Properties:

It was a dark and stormy night... This was the mystery of the evening as Supervisor Rights alluded to private use of town properties for profits to the private sector. The inscrutable Mr. R wouldn't give any examples of said use but insisted policy be crystal clear and include penalties.

I think I have an idea of where this might be headed but if I've learned nothing else I do know better than to accuse anyone of anything even resembling some obscure 'crime'.

Town Board's Assistant's Salary AKA 'The Plight of Nanci'

This one was either entertaining or a real head-scratcher depending on your tolerance for dysfunction. Honestly, it's like Rights and Co. spend from Friday to Wednesday trying to conjure up discord. Although Johnson and Co. aren't exactly pikers in this department either.

Early on the circular 'logic' kicked in and I quickly tumbled into the rabbit hole. I think it's really pretty simple: Former Assistant made \$43,000 after working in Town Hall for eight years. New assistant started making \$40,000 from day one. So, if I hear the word 'stipend' one more time I'll blown my brains out. How about this... we pay her 38 grand and throw in an imaginary stipend of \$2000 bringing it to \$40,000? There. Everybody happy?

Like bad dinner theater Nanci 'approached the bench' so that she could appeal to the audience and the Board. She did neither. At one point Nanci actually insisted she had no idea she had to pass along every piece of mail to Councilman Gross- adding with misguided aplomb "Even an invitation to a 'Girl Scout Sock Hop". Look, even my husband passes along every piece of junk mail. HmMMM, come to think of it he really seems to relish this part of his day... So how on earth Nanci doesn't understand that she doesn't get to 'edit' other people's mail is beyond me.

As a mitigating factor when I've dealt with Nanci at Town Hall she's always been very nice and efficient so I'm hoping that Thursday night's performance was a Right's directed aberration.

Finally, from the 'Revenge is Best Served Cold' department Christine Piccini, a Trustee in the Village, gave a tour de force performance ripping Supervisor Rights a well deserved new one. Ms. Piccini made the brilliant yet simple point that when information isn't passed along to all members of the Town Board then the business of the town can not get done in a timely fashion. When Rights wasn't busy smirking while nervously rearranging papers he almost looked like a chastised schoolboy. Bottom Line: Stipend or no stipend, Supervisor Rights simply needs to instruct his assistant to forward any and all information. Pronto.

That's it from my desk. Please feel free to e-mail me with any comments or questions you might have- and enjoy the rest of the weekend.

Lynne Eckardt