

SE Town Board Work Session Recap 5/8/08

Hi All,

As has become my custom on Thursday nights I attended a SE Town Board meeting. Remarkably, I can actually say that this one was boring. Still I managed to jot down nine pages of pure drivel for the sake of some accuracy. The real question here is: how many times can the fab five tackle shoddily built dugouts, a bogus Sheriff's contract, agenda 'protocol' (like anyone behind *that* dais knows what this word really means) and last and certainly *least* in my mind is Southeast's very own 'Indian Point', the Minor Road stop sign. You know, these guys are making it really hard for me to come up with any new material.

Ugh... and how many updates on Volunteer Field do we really need? I have no doubt that it will soon come down to DMR intoning: "I just want to report that the grass at Volunteer Field grew a half inch last week." Or perhaps issue a four-color 'Dandelion Report'. And again with the men's softball league... Honestly, this has become like that excruciating blue-hair who inflicts a wrist-thick 'brag book' of unattractive grandchildren on you every time you accidentally meet in Hannaford's.

I guess 'The Case of the Missing Vouchers' provided the most diversion. Did I say diversion? Gosh, I meant divisiveness. Lots of innuendo, intrigue and raised eyebrows were the order of the evening. Seems that someone pulled a Rosemary Woods and presto-chango no more evidence. Well, perhaps I exaggerate. The official line is that by the time the resolution to retrieve the DVD had passed the DVD had been taped over.

The 'Hell's Frozen Over' trophy went to Supervisor Rights for sticking to the agenda. Courtesy of 'Roberts' Rules of Order' a way has been found to make him actually do this. Believe me, if Mr. Roberts were living I'd have sent him a fruit basket first thing Friday morning.

Town Clerk Mazzei walked away with the Perry Mason Drama Award when she turned to the Board and questioned: "Did any of you take the vouchers?" And then, with a pregnant pause and dramatic flourish, went down the line: Paul? Roger? Dwight? Michael? All answered 'no' until she got to the always inscrutable Mr. Rights who didn't seem all that keen on answering the question at all. I think Honeck felt slighted as she never even got to him.

I'll try to keep the 16 item agenda short as you've read it all before. And most items will be on the Regular Meeting's calendar next week. Oh goody.

As always the antagonistic, disparaging and unfair comments are my own take on the fractious and tedious travesty SE government has become. Thankfully these opinions reflect no organization to which I belong.

Town Board Work Session:

1. Minor Road Stop Sign:

I missed this one but I was told that there may be another petition to install a stop sign.

2. Gunning Street Light:

I missed this as well but I believe it has to do with the street light at the corner of Drewville Road and Route 6.

3. Agenda Protocol

I missed this. I understand that this is why the agenda order was adhered to. Apparently there's protocol in Robert's Rules that can request that the agenda must be taken in order.

4. Green Building Code:

Planning Board Chair Tom LaPerch and our AKRF rep. gave a presentation on LEED's certification in order to codify green building codes within the Town. This would affect larger buildings (probably those over 10,000 square feet) and would only be required on new construction. It was mentioned that 100 Executive Park will have some green aspects. and that the Barrett Hill Senior Complex will be LEEDs certified (although to what extent was not clear).

The Stateline project was discussed. Mr. LaPerch was asked if any retail center in the Hudson Valley was LEEDs certified. Neither LaPerch or the AKRF rep thought so. The timeline on Stateline was discussed and it was asked if Stateline would have any green initiatives. Councilman Yee felt that if green initiatives were codified that because of the changing dynamic they should be reviewed every five years. Others felt that once a year would be more appropriate.

I asked that special care be taken on all senior projects as seniors are most often on a fixed income thus all energy saving measures should be taken. Also that it would be an excellent idea to build green initiatives into large retail spaces.

5. Security:

The missing vouchers were discussed with a representative from the security firm present to answer questions. The DVD requested by the Town Board to determine how the vouchers disappeared has since been taped over. There was a lot of back and forth including Supervisor Rights insisting that the storage of the vouchers in the lunch room wasn't secure. Ms. Mazzei said that it would have been impossible during daylight hours for someone to have taken the vouchers as they would have to get to the lunch room and then passed numerous offices with 7 boxes of vouchers. Councilman Honeck asked the rep why he hadn't reviewed the DVD after it was requested so that we would have some answers.

Honeck also asked the security rep if he worked for other municipalities. The answer: 'Yes'. It was decided that the new special districts manager, Levon Bogosian, would be in charge of security. Yee said that he trusted Levon but was concerned as Levon has worked for the town less than one month.

6. Recreation Department- Field Usage by Non-Resident:

There will be a charge of \$200 per field for non resident. Rights recommended \$1000 per league.

Rights update on Volunteer Field. Clay was to be ordered on Friday. The fence company will start next week.

7. Contractor's Law:

This is the law that was enacted to prohibit contractors from doing business with the town unless all their workers are documented.

Changes to the law were offered and were based on a Suffolk County law. Councilman Johnson said that the one page law that was written by Greg Ball was worthless. Again a lot of back and forth- no resolution reached.

8. Stateline Project:

The Board felt that this had been adequately covered under item number 4.

9. Recreation Advisory Board:

Ray Knox said that he didn't have a problem with an advisory committee that had a purpose, but did not want one that he had to report to as he had in the past. It was mentioned that since most residents want a pool it might be beneficial to reconstitute a committee to study this.

Johnson said that there was \$4 million in the recreation fund. Honeck asked Knox if it would make sense to move everything to the 10 acres near Toilly Foster- especially if a swimming pool and water park were built.

10. Water Park Status:

This will not be built this year. Because there is no swimming at Wells Park the enrollment has gone from 200 kids down to 35.

11. Leaf Pick-up:

Councilman Gross said that this had been a real concern when he was campaigning. Now there are 3 pick-ups a year which isn't enough. Especially as the bags are costly (\$2 a piece). Leaves are currently taken to the Highway Department.

12. Bond Counsel:

Because of the major expenditures pending Supervisor Rights would like to switch bond counsel. Honeck and Johnson like the present counsel and Johnson said that after they had used larger firms had found ours cheaper. Rights would like to vote on this May 15th.

13. Sheriff's Contract Amendment:

The Board agreed that it was important for the sheriff to attend a meeting to see what agreement could be reached re a contract revision.

14. Developer Impact Fees:

Supervisor Rights would like developers to pay higher fees since the cost of schools, roads and fire districts are impacted by new development.

Town Attorney, Willis Stephens said that since impact fees had not held up in court. He then mentioned the Route 312 TID (Transportation Impact District) which had been looked at but never put into place as it had gotten 'bogged down'.

Rights suggested making impact fees voluntary.

15. Town Cell Phone Consolidation:

Highway Superintendent Mike Fila had looked into this as highway personnel have town issued cell phones. The current charge for 14 phones is \$1000 per month. The new Verizon contract will be \$750 for 17 phones.

16. Development Impact Fees:

See above.

17. Volunteer Park Dugouts:

Contractor, Robert Conlin declined to appear before the board. Yee added up the building expenses which came to: \$29,941.

A spirited discussion on their construction ensued. It was determined that the dugouts had been knocked over by hand and that the roofs could be salvaged. In addition the dugouts had not been positioned correctly. The board will need to decide if the contractor should be sued.

COMMENTS/OPINION:

Minor Road Stop Sign:

Dear God...will it never end?

Now it's my understanding that the pro-stop-sign people have regrouped and may present a petition to install a stop sign. Hopefully this war torn neighborhood will not have to resort to 'neighbor against neighbor, father against son, husband against...' well, you get the picture.

At this point my mind wandered and I tried to picture how Team SOS and the 'Old Guard' would have used the great stop sign debate in their mind-numbing campaign of '07. In my mind's eye I could see Rights, Yee, Neuringer and the always dreamy Mr. Ball in a oversized 4-color mailer, looking tough (but well coifed), hands on hips, standing on the corner of Bearberry and Minor lambasting the 'good ol' boys' for giving their 'cronies' a stop sign. Oh, and the 'Old Guard' would somehow be 'lining their pockets' as well.

The defensive mailer from Mitts and Co. would have been cartoonish (I'm thinking Neuringer speeding through the intersection on a tricycle- with maybe even the flipped Rights' Jag worked into the mix). The also glossy, oversized 4-color postcard would have painted Team SOS as contemptuous of the neighborhood's Security, Safety and Welfare (maybe even working 9/11 into the deal). Undoubtedly Neuringer's age and residence of 6 minutes would have been thrown in for good measure.

Look, I'm begging the board to take action on this before it tears Southeast apart. Oh right... it's only a stop sign and no one in town gives a crap except for the neighborhood and maybe the 10,000 commuters who cut through there daily.

I have never seen so much energy be expended on such a minor (pun intended) topic. Guys... you're gonna have to p*ss off someone but please... make a decision.

Agenda Protocol:

'Robert's Rules of Order' how do I love thee? Let me count the ways... thank you, thank you, thank you. Although I will kick Roberts *ss if Rights finds a loophole by next Thursday.

Green Building Code:

Well, my honeymoon with Planning Board Chair, Tom LaPerch continues. It would be more than terrific if the town could codify some meaningful green initiatives. And it would be really great to get these passed so that the Stateline project would be able to incorporate them.

Security or "The Case of the Missing DVD's:

This was courtroom drama at its worst. The over the top emoting, the caricatured, nervous security guy, the shifty-eyed refusal to answer questions. Come to think of it seemed more like a never-ending game of "Clue". Hmmmmm, let's see... It happened in the lunchroom, with the lead pipe, and Professor Plum! Am I close?

Okay, okay, it happened in the Tax Assessor's office, with the rope and Mrs. Peacock. Hey, wouldn't it be fun to assign Town Board members their very own Clue character. Whoa, this is easy.

Michael Rights: Miss Scarlet

Dick Honeck: Mr. Green

Paul Johnson: Mrs. Peacock

Roger Gross: Professor Plum

Dwight Yee: Colonel Mustard

Ruth Mazzei: Mrs. White

I've assigned characters based on the clue board pieces of the 60's- I have no idea what they're like now. I trust that my beloved Supervisor won't be annoyed for his trans-gender assignment but Miss Scarlet was the bomb... the piece that *everyone* wanted to be. And that hair... oh la la! Besides, knowing what a good sport Councilman Johnson is I just knew he wouldn't mind cross-dressing as the Grand Dame herself... Mrs. Peacock. I could just picture Mrs. Peacock ensconced behind the dais looking disdainfully down her lorgnette at Miss Scarlet while enquiring about the tacky mustard-colored executive lounge. "My dear, you paid what!!!! For that!!!!"

But back to business... did it happen in the Lunch Room with Miss Scarlet, Colonel Mustard and a dolly? After all, they were the hottest, most sought after couple on the board. Game, that is.

Seriously, if I did the hiring and firing in this town I'd have deep-sixed this security company. Look, they were advised that there was a security breach and rather than put the DVD on ice they chose to let it be recorded over. In my mind that's incompetence.

Contractor's Law:

A piece of useless 'feel good' legislation. This screams, we're really, really doing something about illegal immigration. I don't really care about this except for the chronic bickering over something that should have been done correctly from the get-go.

Recreation Advisory Board:

Of course I thought there was an attitude problem here. Just the fact that Ray Knox doesn't want to give a report to an advisory board once a month annoyed me. What!#\$%^&* Once a month the guy had to let residents know what's going on and this was too much trouble?

But hey, it's fine if a group of residents serve on an advisory committee and work really, really hard to put together plans for a pool and water park. Yeah, that's okay because it cuts down on his obligations. Sorry to snap but honestly, is the SE Recreation Director's job really all that difficult?

Bond Counsel:

New Counsel, old counsel, big firm, small firm??? I have no idea who was right or wrong here. What I do know is we should shop around for the best deal. Between the landfill and Old Town Hall there will be lots of major expenses coming up. It's up to these guys to make sure we get the best terms and lowest rates possible.

Sheriff's Contract:

Let's see, we've been arguing about this throughout 'The First 100 Days' and we're still no closer to fixing this \$60,000 give-away than we were three years ago.

Normally I would agree that having the sheriff himself address the contract is progress but I think we've tried this angle before and the elusive fella was a no-show.

Developer Impact Fees:

Well, the unflappable Mr. Stephens assured us that impact fees don't hold up in court. Even modest fees? Query: The how do we manage to collect a Recreation Fee? What makes this so different from, say, a 'Road Usage Fee'?

What I have seen done is compelling developers to pay for the cost of immediate road improvements necessary to the site. Traffic lights, additional turning lanes etc.

As far as the Route 312 TID... If memory serves I thought that this went the way of the Pterodactyl as there were some properties in the commercial district that were presently used residentially. I also kinda, sorta remember a four-lane 312 scenario eventually kicking in. Horrors!

Cell Phone Consolidation:

Thanks to Mike Fila for finding a more economical rate. I must say, I was amazed and pleasantly surprised that D. Michael and Dwight didn't accuse Councilman Johnson of 'lining his pockets' when the new carrier turned out to be Verizon.

Volunteer Park Dugouts:

Sure we've been through this a million times, sure we've heard the horror stories about shoddy workmanship, the evidential videos taken, the cheap roofing nails used, the lack of concrete foundation and now we find out that the dugouts weren't even built where they should have been. This has been a fiasco for over a month now. Can't we get the contractor to make good on these or sue his *ss off?

As entertaining as I once found this it's now entered the realm of hindquarter-drag-out. Although, to be honest, the fact that the dugouts weren't even built in the right place amuses me no end. You really have to ask what the rush was last November... Ahem, calling Mr. Conlin and the Town Board that authorized this.

That's it from my desk on this cold Monday in May. As always feel free to e-mail me with any comments or queries you might have.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt