

SE Town Board Recap 5/17/07

Hi All,

After taking a Thursday night off several weeks ago I did attend the Town Board Regular monthly meeting on May 17th. You can tell it's an election year as candidates made up at least half the audience. In fact, if this list continues to grow we'll have to move all meetings to Lakeview Manor. Mr. Vink and Mr. Debellis were there as was Matt 'I'm always on my Blackberry' Neuringer. Mayor Degnan walked in later and actually got raised eyebrows and a sidelong-glance-to-Willis from Councilwoman Mitts. As always Cathy Croft, candidate for Town Clerk, was ensconced in the back row busy taking notes.

The coveted 'Worst Actress in an ongoing mini-series' statuette was won handily by Councilwoman Mitts. Now here's a gal with whom I'd love to play poker. After the early Degnan eye roll her exasperation with me was palpable. When I asked about 'As the Camera Turns' (for the *third* straight month) Mrs Mitts muttered something like 'I'm soooo sick of this.' Well, join the club. Because the camera question should have been resolved months ago.

The rest of the meeting would have flown by except for the reading of the entire long, long resolution authorizing the issuance of bonds for the UJA 'open space' (note: giant air-quotes) land acquisition- and of course, 'New Business'.

As usual 'New Business' was the most fun although I believe changes may be afoot as far as allowing this portion of the meeting to continue as is. The Board *finally* deigned to 'vote' on 'As the Camera Turns'... or doesn't. And apparently we'll be getting a podium up front.

Woooooo Hoooooo!!!!!! Think how important and professional those with questions will look on TV now. Time to check that wardrobe (Please! No plaids, no stripes!), powder your nose and forehead (watch that nasty glare!) and then you'll be all ready for your close-up. Anyhow, many thanks to Councilman Bonanno who cut through all the BS, and rather eloquently I thought. More below.

My usual disclaimer kicks in right about now: This recap is strictly my own utterly uncalled for and biased account of the last Town Board meeting. It reflects no one's opinions but my own- and definitely represents no organizations to which I belong.

AGENDA:

1) Review of Minutes

Approved 5-0

2) Correspondence

Reading waived- Accepted 5-0

3) Approval of Voucher List

\$867,328.21- Approved 5-0

4) Motion Setting Meeting Dates:

June 7, 2007	7:30 Civic Center	Special Meeting- Work Session
June 14, 2007	7:30 Civic Center	Work Session
June 21, 2007	7:30 Civic center	Regular Meeting

5) Motion setting Public Hearing Dates

June 7, 2007	7:30 Civic center	MS-4 Plan 2007
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6) Approval of Budget Transfers

Approved 5-0

7) Motion to Purchase Defibrulators

Five will be purchased. Two for the Town, three for Little League. Passed 5-0

8) Motion to hire Architect for the Proposed Recreation Center

Anderson, LaRocca, Anderson will be hired for \$42,000. Passed 5-0

9) Resolution to Hire Special Prosecutor

Beatrice Marin requested an attorney (other than Town Attorney, Willis Stephens) handle the Town of SE case against her junkyard in Dykemans. The Town has hired Richard Mulvany (sp?) from Poughkeepsie for \$150 an hour.

10) Resolution SEQRA Regarding Open Space Acquisition

This is an unlisted action with a negative declaration so the SEQRA review is complete. 5-0 Passed

11) Resolution Authorizing Issuance of Bonds- UJA Property

Passed 5-0.

Paul Johnson announced that any illegal encampments or 'shanty towns' should be reported by calling 279-4313 (Editor's Note: This is the Supervisor's number)

New Business:

Mildred Nugent (Open Space Committee) asked if all vegetation on the UJA property would be left alone for the animals? Ans. Yes. Would SEQRA be done on the Humane Society Project? Ans. Yes. Where will the Recreation Center go? Ans. Maybe Mt. Ebo South where a parcel of 8 acres may be donated.

Doansburg Barn:

Kathleen Dwyer asked about the possible demolition of an historic barn on Doansburg Road [Editor's note: this is the Strazza subdivision]. Ms. Dwyer lives on 'Rocky Dell Farm' and the barn was originally part of this farm. Ms. Dwyer went into the barn report done by AKRF (Town Planners) which said that the barn had historical significance. She urged that the driveway into the subdivision, which is slated to go through the barn, be moved. Ann Fanizzi spoke out against the demolition as well. The Historic Sites Commission had ruled some time also that the barn does not have historic significance and should have been taken off their list.

Town Attorney, Willis Stephens said that this point there was little that the Town could do and that the only remedy at this point would be an Article 78.

Gateway/Fairways:

Ann Fanizzi asked if the Town Board would be participating in the Public Hearing (and comment period) on the Gateway Fairway project in Carmel. She mentioned that Supervisor Dunford had sent a letter a while back voicing concerns with the project as it is on the SE border. The project consists of a Hotel Complex and Senior Housing located east of Putnam Plaza - it abuts Centennial Golf Club. Ms. Fanizzi also mentioned the problems that have occurred in Carmel due to blasting on two of Mr. Camarda's projects

Supervisor Dunford said that he would have the Town Planner look into it.

I asked:

Video Camera:

Whether or not the video camera would be allowed to focus on the audience questioner rather than trained solely on the Board. Councilwoman Mitts said she was tired of the question. Councilman Bonanno said that since the meeting was for the public- not the Town Board that of course the camera should focus on the public. It was decided that there would be a podium brought in, placed up front and that any questions from the public could be addressed from there. Councilman Honeck mentioned that he'd like to limit questions to a two minute time period.

Landfill Status:

The MTA has issued a permit crossing. Still no DEC letter. No idea on capping costs.

Courthouse:

Cost: Appraisal came in at \$850,000, there will be another appraisal and the difference will be split.

Gateway/Fairways Project:

I mentioned that originally Supervisor Dunford had sent a letter regarding this project but it had been sent after the comment deadline was passed.

Ball Fields at Terravest:

Bidding specs for fencing, backstop and bathrooms have to be put together.

Evaluation of Town Office Space:

This project has been shelved after spending \$2500 so that the evaluator can work on the new courthouse.

Sheriff's Patrol:

Nothing new. Contract remains unsigned. Smith has been invited to a meeting but has never shown up. Supervisor Dunford suggested that I give him a call.

Cost of Building Renovation for Building Department:

No idea of cost. Bills have not been compiled yet.

Cathy Croft asked that since it was announced that we're only paying \$13,250 per acre were we going to sell the 10 acres to the Humane Society for \$132,500. The Supervisor said probably not. Cathy asked about the 10 acres the town owns at Tilly Foster and the Supervisor said that he had plans for the land which he'd release at a later date. Cathy also asked if appointments were going to be made to the ZBA, Planning and Open Space Boards. The Supervisor said that the TB didn't yet agree on appointments.

Brad Schwartz asked if all the appointed Boards were autonomous. Ans. Some are some aren't. He asked if members can be replaced- Ans. Only if their term expires or they break the law.

Comments/Opinions:**8. Motion to hire Architect for Recreation Center:**

Although I'd already heard about this through the grapevine this still took me slightly aback. I mean, since the surveys hadn't been completely tallied this seemed a bit premature. I also understand that, as usual, the Town Board did not include all 'households' in the survey. It seems that once again some tenants were left out of the loop.

This *still* really annoys the snot out of me and apparently some tenants as well. Does anyone actually believe that property tax increases due to the that infamous laundry list below are not passed along to tenants?

- Landfill capping
- A Rec Center
- Ball fields at Terravest
- MS-4 phase II regs
- New firehouse
- Renovations to Old Town Hall
- A New Town Hall
- A \$2.1 million 'Open Space' land purchase
- A new Court House

I understand that the Town Board *finally* distributed some extra unsent Rec surveys to tenants at a Senior Meeting at Lakeview Manor.

9. Resolution to Hire a Special Prosecutor:

Talk about a can of worms. The history of this debacle goes back to the '90's. In fact, no one (read: elected officials) cared all that much about Southeast's junkyards until a 'tony' little subdivision was proposed just to the north of the Dykeman's junk yard on Route 312. Then suddenly, the junk yard had overstepped their bounds and needed to be prosecuted.

Now, don't get me wrong. I don't want or like junk yards- but they are pre-existing, non-conforming. Nah, the killer here is that the town had showed little interest in cleaning up junk yards until a 'politically connected' developer made the scene. Either that, or it was, at the very least, an interesting coincidence. I'm told that even the Feds took notice.

Cut to 2007, and, as I understand it, further violations have been cited at the junk yard. Trouble is, the Marins supported the always dreamy Mr. Ball in the Assembly race last year. Exit Town Attorney Stephens, enter Mr. Mulvany.

The Barn on Doansburg Road:

Yet another can of worms. Several years ago, this barn was mysteriously added to the list of Southeast's Historic Sites and months later was voted off the island by the Historic Sites Commission. The AKRF report states that the Barn is historic *in context* with Rocky Dell Farm. And if I recall it correctly the Strazzas (owners of the barn and neighboring subdivision) offered the barn free to Ms. Dwyer if she would have it moved. Obviously this solution wasn't manageable and I think the time to file an article 78 has lapsed.

Down comes another barn- one might even say another part of our 'rural heritage' (you know, the 'heritage' our Town Board so assiduously protects) will be demolished.

Gateway/Summit:

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha... Did Ms. Fanizzi really think that the Town Board was going to take a sudden interest in a project on the Southeast/ Carmel border when they couldn't be bothered to meet deadline (as an interested party) back in early 2005. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Video Camera:

Yeah, I'm shallow so I have to admit that this had become one of my all time favorites. First, we never figured out how or why policy changed so that the camera focused solely on the Town Board. Next we had to go through an excruciating 3 month ordeal, okay, okay, maybe 'deadlock' is a better word... To their credit Councilwoman Mitts and Supervisor Dunford weighed in early for the 'moving cam' while Honeck and Johnson wanted only 'face time' throughout. Basically the whole deal was like when you and your sister put down the 'Toilet paper line of demarcation' in your bedroom. Of course when you were six this only lasted 24 hours.

Councilman Bonanno put it perfectly. He asked if the Town Board meetings were for the public or for the Town Board. This finally put a sock in Johnson's and Honeck's objections.

That said, I'm guessing that Councilman Honeck will lobby for the 'two-minute' rule. And that is to limit Q & A to two minutes.

Landfill Status:

I'll spare you the rant. Unfortunately I forgot to ask about the insurance costs involved with the MTA crossing but it was noted that there are no updated overall estimates yet.

Court house:

In one of the most harebrained schemes (AKA dodges) to date the Town Board has expedited the Route 22 Court House project- in fact, it's almost a poster child for 'green-lighting'.

Sure, in Southeast it takes over twenty years to cap a landfill but the moment shared services with the village become an even *remote* possibility it's 'pick a court, any court'... and fast. Never mind that getting in and out of the temple site is a 'challenge' even on a good day, never mind that if Route 22 is ever widened this will become a construction war zone (on the bright side flagmen will probably get you in and out more safely), never mind that our brand new court house was barely worth a mention in public, never mind that a shared facility would save us money.

Nah, this is all about turf, control and having our brand new 'Town Center' out on Route 22. Final cost for the project? I'm low-balling it at \$1.2 million.

Ball Fields at Terravest:

You guessed it. We have no idea of the cost here either. And given all the other long overdue crap we have to do in Southeast it might be nice if *anyone* on the Town Board had a clue or even a guesstimate on these upcoming balances due.

Evaluation of Town Office Space:

Hey, have you heard the one about SE hiring a guy to tell us we need bigger digs? No seriously...

To be fair the consultant was going to evaluate how much space was needed for each department. Anyhow, according to Supervisor Dunford this cost us \$2,500 and then the project was shelved so the consultant could help out with the Rec Center. I'd love to see the \$2500 report... Ugh, another day, another FOIL.

Sheriff's Patrol:

Same old, same old... No contract and no sighting of the sheriff at a Town Board meeting. So, even though we've been paying 60 grand without a contract for almost six months and even though we have no current explanation of what we're getting for our money, our Supervisor can't seem to jump start Sheriff Smith's special guest appearance and suggested I try. How terribly droll.

That's it from my desk on this absolutely beautiful day. As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments you might have.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt