

ESSEX PLANNING COMMISSION
January 13, 2011
7:30 p.m.
Essex Town Hall - Meeting Room A

REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order and Seating of Members:

Chair Tom Danyliw called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Seated were Chair Tom Danyliw, Claire Tiernan for Vice Chair Linda Herman, Bob Laundry for Ralph Monaco, Alan Kerr, and Carla Feroni, Linda Herman arrived at 7:40.

2. Approval of Minutes – December 9, 2010

Motion by Bob Laundry to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2010 meeting.
Seconded by Claire Tiernan. **Motion carried.**

3. New Business

a. Preliminary Discussion – Boy Scout Building at Viney Brook Park

Terry Lomme presented for the Essex Foundation. The Essex Foundation owns the Bumpy Warner building on Bushnell St. It has been patched and is no longer safe. Clubs such as the Boy Scouts are only allowed in residential zones. The proposal is to construct a new facility at Viney Park, with a lease of 99 years and in exchange, turn a piece of land over to the town. This will insure that no one builds there. The existing parking area can be used, and no trees will be removed. Scouts generally do not meet locally in the summer. Scouts will build a boardwalk over a wet piece of land so as not to go all the way around. The proposed cabin is 990 sq ft. Power lines would be underground, and the septic and well will be on the property. The McWhinney property is currently under contract. The park currently closes in November until April. A Memorandum of Understanding would exist between Scouts, Conservation, and the neighbors. This protects the town from litigation. Parks and Recreation and Conservation have approved this project. This would provide greater utilization of a facility (Viney Brook), good partnership, and opportunity for service projects. Jim Rawn and Dennis Robida were also present and discussed the sale of Bumpy Warner and then use of that money to purchase the lot from the McWhinneys. Carla Feroni asked about the possibility of composting instead of septic. Jim Rawn thinks it might not be practical financially. This will be done with private monies. Parks and Recreation will have access and use of the facility June to August. Utilization will be low, so that was considered in planning the well and septic. A transformer will be in, so if power wants to be put in at the beach, that can be done. There is more than adequate parking with the upper lot. Tom Danyliw discussed the precedent of putting a private non-profit structure on public land. Dennis Robida noted that the town is gaining 3 acres in return. The

Fire Station is under a similar lease. The utilization and the "groups" involved fit this opportunity, which is the only reason why Conservation and Park and Rec. are in support of this. Are the Scouts exclusionary? Is there discrimination within Scouts regardless of gender and sexual orientation? Jim Rawn's biggest concern was leadership. Tom Danyliw thinks the Selectmen should look into this issue. Carla Feroni asked what the town policy is on that. Jim Rawn noted that language needs to be drawn up carefully. A neighborhood meeting will be held on January 23rd. This proposal allows for greater utilization of park. The precedent of the VFW and Firehouse don't address the issue being raised.

This will be a Zoning referral. The question was asked if the Essex Foundation would consider donating the money for a long-term lease of building rather than the land. The neighborhood will not approve of this option. One concern of the neighbor's way back, was not wanting a pavilion or teen center. This goes back to the building of the park. This drifts away from the original mission, and is better use and the kind of use desired. There are presently only 17 Boy Scouts and 23 Girl Scouts, and no "jamboree" kind of activities. The Memorandum of Understanding has dealt with fires, bow and arrows, does allow mock campsites, and allows it to be available to families who want to spend the night by application to Park & Rec. A port o potty is at that site for the summer near the parking area. This will also allow boat safety class, canoeing etc, in the spring and meld Scouts with Park & Rec. This can't be offered today, but with Scouts they can now run programs because of increased numbers. Park & Rec. summer program will use the site.

Dispute resolution and enforcement will be drawn up. Essex Foundation is not going to let this become a nuisance. Tom Danyliw suggested a town owned facility and having Park & Rec. sponsor all the activities rather than joining a private organization with a town owned and run facility. Jim Rawn noted that the presenters came for suggestions and feedback. Alan Kerr feels it would be unfortunate if it became designated as the (Boy) Scout facility. Linda Herman would like to see more boys and girls have the opportunity to become a Scout and this facility would allow that opportunity and vouches that they do not meet in the summer. She is in favor of this to provide a facility, and an opportunity to work with Conservation and enhance the property through Eagle Scout projects. Linda understands the concerns, but is in favor. Carla Feroni has issues with the relationship of a public area with an exclusionary group. Putting funds into an area should be for public use, and there are some abandoned Scout areas. If it is abandoned, it would come back to the town. If the Scouts disband, then it becomes a town building.

This has been reviewed by Conservation Commission and Park & Rec., and will have to be voted on at a town meeting. Claire Tiernan noted that the building is pretty small, so that limits many uses. From June to August Park & Rec. will use it. Discussion then returned to private use of public property. The Memo of Understanding should be able to address the issues. It is like Little League baseball using Hubbard Park. John Guskowski will see what the Plan of C&D says about this. Terry Lomme also suggested considering allowing clubs in the Commercial Zone because currently the town only allows the in a Residential Zone. Tom Danyliw will ask Zoning to look into this.

4. Old Business

a. Transportation Study

John Guskowski reported there is continued discussion on the Recommendations. An update was provided. Jason Schreiber presented at the last meeting. A fuller and more complete draft will be finished in the next month for the February meeting. Comments should be relayed to Nelson Nygaard. Linda Herman requested they show the parking by Moeller, not as a cluster in the center of Ivoryton, to dovetail with Ivoryton report.

b. Subdivision Fees Ordinance

The proposal was sent out with Affordable Housing changes. The final version went to the Selectmen to carry forward to a Town Meeting. Language issues were completed.

c. Historic Preservation Survey & Planning Grant - Update

A draft of the survey (100 properties) should be done in the next month. The Toolbox will also be sorted through, and they will be taken around to show Registry possibilities.

d. Toby Hill Road Discontinuation – Update

This proposal was forwarded to the Selectmen. It will probably be on the agenda for the next meeting.

e. Affordable Housing Study – Update

This is making progress. Zoning is moving forward on the Plains Road district, so this should be next on their list of priorities. Joe Budrow is not too familiar with Affordable Housing. Planning continues to have high interest in this and feels it should be encouraged.

f. Safe Routes to School – Update

Susan VanBenschoten, as a town volunteer, helped draft a plan. She is a Planning Engineer. The Memo prepared talks about SRS as a multi year project. Considerations 1 through 5 are goals that are compatible with the Transportation study. They want the project to start from the school and radiate outward. The Centerbrook intersection and the Rt. 9 area are possibilities for state involvement. This is to make the most difference in the short run. Recommendations are for replacing the walkway in front of the school, and install sidewalk on south side of Main St., extending along the entire frontage of the school and westerly to connect Earl, Charles and Cedar Streets with the existing sidewalk system. John Guskowski noted they walked this section, and don't think trees will be lost. Augie Pampel has not been involved, but Bob Doane is pretty sure trees won't be lost. The crosswalk at Earl St. is not great, so it is proposed to install a full pedestrian crosswalk. Some

sections on the north side are inadequate. Improvement of the existing sidewalk all the way to Falls River Drive is recommended. DOT will accept a 4ft wide walk. The final component is at the overpass on Dennison Rd. There is a large population in that area, so ways to get children safely to school, on bike or foot will be addressed. This is as obvious corridor that needs to be safer and friendlier. Carla Feroni feels it is treacherous, the bridge is narrow and speed is a factor. Could speed bumps be considered? Site lines aren't conducive to stop signs.

Carla Feroni would like to see monies put into Dennison Rd. and not do sidewalk s on the North side.

Linda Herman is concerned with people walking on Rt. 153 between Bokum Center and Mare's Hill.

These recommendations are to complete this first phase and then acquire funds for a second phase. DOT funds are available for construction not design.

Motion by Claire Tiernan to approve the Safe Routes to School Phase I Proposal.

Seconded by Bob Laundry. **Motion carried.**

5. Report of Committees and Officers

a. Report from Inland Wetlands

None.

b. Report from CRERPA Representative

Alan Kerr reported that the Preserve was discussed. There are concerns about the proposal with drainage etc. They want to see the Transportation Study. Drainage is a big issue for Essex and there are enforcement issues. Gateway is administered CRERPA. The Board Of Selectmen has to sign on, and it would have the weight of an ordinance. There are concerns with Gateway reviewing a project unfavorably. This can force a more severe vote. Tom Danyliw wants a presentation on Gateway.

c. Report from Economic Development Commission

The meeting was cancelled.

d. Report from Architectural Design Review

Neil Nichols reported the meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum twice. Three members are no longer participating. Suggestions for new members were made, possibly the owners of Gather.

e. Report from Ivoryton Subcommittee

None.

f. Chairman's Report

g. Planner's Report

John Guskowski has asked Joe Budrow, ZEO, about bringing the Plains Rd. proposal to Planning. The referral is coming at the end of February or March. John met with the CT Citizens for Clean Energy. He is tracking rumors of offers on the Mazda property. The burned out house next door has activity.

6. Correspondence & Invoices

Correspondence was reviewed. 21 River Rd. wants a dock.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Alan Kerr to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. **Seconded** by Linda Herman.
Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sandra Meinsen
Recording Secretary