

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION'S
MUNICIPAL LAND USE PLAN COMMITTEE
Meeting Date: January 12, 2010

MINUTES

PRESENT: Karen Buckley, Chairman
Bob Appleby, Recreation Commission
Don Bourdeau, Public Works Director/Fire Marshal
Mary Ann Chinatti, Town Planner/ZEO/WEO
Jim Fogarty, Selectman
Gene Maiorano, Chief, Salem Vol. Fire Dept.
Jim Savalle, Chief, Gardner Lake Vol. Fire Dept.
Dan Kung, Chairman, Board of Education (arrived late)

ABSENT: Hugh E. McKenney, Chairman, Planning and Zoning Commission

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Buckley called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

In-depth Discussion—Fire Companies' Facilities

Fire Chiefs Maiorano and Savalle led this discussion. Both fire stations are in good condition and are regularly maintained. Each is experiencing some shortage of space, but in different ways.

The property of the Salem Volunteer Fire Company (SVFC) is owned by the town of Salem and is leased by the SVFC. It is running out of storage space--the sheds are full and there isn't enough room for gear. The Chief's office is the storage space of last resort and holds things like projectors. The lot size allows little room to expand the building, but it might be possible to raise the roof and add a second floor. The SVFC leases some parking spaces from Maple Shade, but even with that addition, parking at the fire house is limited. At one time an abutting property owner (Wlodarzck sp?) offered to donate some land, but the land was not zoned properly for that purpose. It would have been necessary to subdivide the donor's property, a substantial cost if it were borne by the donor. If the Town were willing to forego the usual fees and bear the other costs, it might still be possible to enlarge the lot. The Committee asked Chief Maiorano to quantify the increases that would be needed to improve the situation and he will do that by the next meeting.

The Gardner Lake Fire Company owns its land and building and the Town provides the funding for its operation. Its building is significantly larger than the SVFC and the facility is widely used by various constituencies in Town—the Recreation Commission, Boy Scouts, the VFW, eighth-grade dances, town meetings, socials, etc.—keeping it booked most days and evenings. Its engine bay is short on space, but an addition planned for this spring—12' X 42' to the back of the engine bay--will alleviate that problem. The parking lot is large but requires maintenance. The septic system is in fine shape, but growing use could impact it. The furnace was recently repaired and is in good shape for the foreseeable future.

There was discussion about the cost to the Town of maintaining two separate fire companies when perhaps they could be combined into one and do the job at a lower cost. Neither station is geographically central to the town, and if one location were chosen over the other, the "other" portion of the town would be at greater risk. It was suggested that building a new fire house to today's standards at a central location would cost the Town seven to eight million dollars. Mr. Fogarty said that even though he has long been an advocate for combining the fire companies, he does not think we should do so as long as the current facilities are going to last another 15-25 years. The Chiefs agreed that when the time comes to join the companies the Town will experience some savings on firefighting equipment. At the present time, the two companies have developed a solid partnership. They work together to avoid duplication of costs and they achieve economies of scale by purchasing equipment jointly.

Use Constraints—Town Office Complex Property

Some of the land on which the Town's buildings sit and on whom Town activities are conducted are restricted as to their use by the conditions of their original purchase or donation to the Town. Ms. Chinatti has been working to clarify those uses but has had difficulty locating all of the deeds. She reported the following:

- the land behind the Town Hall at 270 Hartford Road may not be used except for recreational or conservation purposes. Public Works is encroaching on that land slightly (approximately .91 ac.). We need to rectify, either by obtaining permission or acquiring new property to compensate.
- the Old Library property may only be used for library purposes.
- there is a recreational area on Woodchuck Road for activities by Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and similar organizations. Not currently used, there is a custody agreement between the Town of Salem and the Boy Scouts of America.
- though it is generally understood that the Town owns the property of the SVFD, she has not found the deed(s) transferring ownership to the Town w/lease to the SVFD. She will continue looking for it.

Chairman Buckley and Ms. Chinatti will consider a less time-consuming way to finish the research and create a meaningful exhibit for the report of this Committee.

Functional Usefulness Assessments—Report on Interviews

Chairman Buckley reported on the status of the interviews she is conducting with Town officials and employees about the functional usefulness of the Town's property. She did not begin the interviews in December as planned but has conducted several as of this date in January and others are scheduled. Completed are those with the Town Clerk, Treasurer, Planner/ZEO/WEO, Building Official, Sanitarian, and Land Use/Selectmen Administrative Assistant. A common thread so far is that absolutely everyone needs more storage space. Also, there is not a suitable room for confidential discussions about health issues or zoning violations.

OLD BUSINESS

Follow-up on Physical Condition Assessments

The Committee reviewed the exhibit (attached) of the physical assessment of the Town properties. Still outstanding are the addition of one garage to the report, the adequacy of parking for each facility, and a water/septic assessment. Completion of these items rests with Mr. Bourdeau and Ms. Chinatti.

Mr. Fogarty reported that he had checked the insurance on the new Library and determined that the square footage on the policy is accurate.

Progress Plan: Assess Progress

Chairman Buckley reported that we are on track to complete the data-gathering phase of the project in January as planned. However, the follow-up items mentioned above are still outstanding.

NEXT STEPS

Chairman Buckley and Ms. Chinatti will decide how to report on deed restrictions.

Mr. Bourdeau and Ms. Chinatti will complete the report on Physical Condition Assessments.

Chief Maiorano will quantify the space needs of the SVFD.

In February the Committee will enter a new phase in which we define the Town's Land Use Plan. The agenda of our next meeting will include time to discuss the means for doing that. Chairman Buckley asked each member to think about the methods we might use and to come prepared with suggestions.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/S/C (Fogarty/Maiorano) to approve the minutes of the meeting of 11/30/09 with the following amendments:

Page 2 first paragraph, replace "Tuesday, 12 noon to 4 pm" with the second Tuesday of each month, 9 am to noon."

ADJOURNMENT

M/S/C (Maiorano/Chinatti) to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm. Carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Buckley, Chairman, Municipal Land Use Plan Committee