

MINUTES
SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2011 – 5:00 PM
MUNICIPAL BOARD ROOM

The Board of Selectmen met at the Town Offices on Monday, August 15, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. for a special Selectboard meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to make a final decision regarding engineering plans for Spring Street between Mt. Pleasant Avenue and Winter Street. The Board had discussed this matter on three separate occasions. The Dufresne Group was asked to prepare alternatives, including cost analysis, and to share their alternatives with concerned residents prior to the Special Meeting. All residents in the affected area were notified of the Special Meeting by mail.

Present were: Chairman Bryon Quatrini, Jim Rust, Rodney Lamotte, Alan Ruggles, Bill Merrow, and Town Manager Ralph Nelson.

Also present: Red Dufresne and Chad Whitehead of the Dufresne Group, George Sylvain, Marie Sylvain, Layne Higgs, Lorna Higgs, Police Chief Clem Houde, Fire Chief Troy Ruggles, Lorette Desrochers, Elizabeth Emmons, Alice Silverman, Sam Silverman, Wendy Hanson, Irene Nagle, Brian Gilmartin, Taylor Reed and the News 7 crew.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge at 5:00 pm.

Spring Street Plans for the Westside Infrastructure Project.

Chad Whitehead of the Dufresne Group made a PowerPoint presentation to explain the alternatives. The presentation is enclosed as part of these minutes.

Several residents asked general questions with regard to the presentation and various alternative designs, including the reason for widening the street, the width and length of sidewalks on either or both sides of the street, width or grass strips, the cost of maintaining sidewalks. Residents also asked about the possibility of turning Spring Street into a one-way street and various alternatives for parking. Mr. Whitehead stated that adding a second sidewalk to Spring Street would mean an approximate \$100,000 in additional costs.

Wendy Hanson read a letter into the record that has been included at a part of these minutes.

Chief Ruggles reiterated the need for wider street to accommodate emergency vehicles.

Lorette Desrochers stated that narrow streets serve as a deterrent to cars speeding in the neighborhood. Irene Nagle stated that it is "overkill" to widen streets just to remove obstacles for emergency vehicles. Alice Silverman asked if 4', non-ADA compliant sidewalks would mean that the Town could lose funding. Mr. Whitehead stated that the VTrans requirements state that new sidewalks will be 5' wide to avoid litigation. Mr. Rust stated that if Federal funds are involved, sidewalks must be ADA compliant (5' wide).

Mr. Rust asked Mr. Nelson if this change would necessitate the need for new easements. Mr. Nelson stated that the present easements are tied to the current plans and any changes to the plans could conceivably mean new right-of-way work, but that that determination would need

to be made by Ed Zucarro. Mr. Nelson stated that new right-of-way work could cost as much as \$11,000.

Alice Silverman talked about how much she enjoys living on Spring Street and living in Town. She would prefer not to buy a mansion on a hill in Danville. She said she struggles professionally by remaining in St. Johnsbury. She stated that she turns down job offers for a higher salary to live elsewhere, but that the current plans would make her consider moving.

Wendy Hanson stated that she was not aware that the plans were final at the time of signing her easement. She too stated that she "is hanging on a string to live in this place" and that she thinks that regardless of the proposed cost increases, she thinks residents would be happy in the long run.

Mr. Rust stated that he has heard from several residents who did not want to stand up in a public forum, but who opposed the changes. He also stated that only a minority of the affected residents had attended the meeting.

Several residents praised the process of involving property owners in discussions. Mr. Merrow stated that the process should not be delayed any longer. He said that in the last meeting, residents were instructed to meet with the engineers prior to tonight's meeting so that a decision could be made. Mrs. Silverman stated that the group had not been together since the last meeting. Mr. Merrow stated that he assumed the latest alternatives were the result of communication with the residents. Mr. Whitehead stated that he informed residents that they could comment on the alternatives via email and phone. He stated that he had only received one email and one phone call.

Mr. Whitehead discussed alternative C-4 in which sidewalks were on the west side of Spring Street with a one-foot grass strip in which poles would be located. Mr. Quatrini suggested that a sidewalk could be added to the east side of the street, if bids were low enough to include it as a change order. Mr. Quatrini stated that in the event the sidewalk could not be afforded in the bid for the project, the Town would look to alternative funding and add the sidewalk later. Parking would be allowed on the side of the street with a sidewalk.

Mr. Rust expressed concern that all residents may not have been informed of the Special Meeting. Mr. Merrow made a motion to accept alternative C-4 with the stipulation that a second sidewalk, the east side of Spring Street would be added to C-4 if the bid allowed it (under engineer's estimate). This would mean from Mt. Pleasant to Winter Street. Mr. Ruggles seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

On a motion by Jim Rust and a second by Alan Ruggles, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn at 6:44 p.m.