

**Board of Finance
Marlborough Elementary School
Public Hearing
November 9, 2016
7:00 P.M.**

Call to Order

Chairman Knowlton called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. Present and seated were regular members Doug Knowlton, Cliff Denniss, Ken Hjulstrom, and Susan Leser. Riva Clark was seated for Erik Young and Midge Denno for seated for Dieter Zimmer until he arrived.

Public Hearing on Potential Purchase of 17 East Lake Drive

Chairman Knowlton gave a PowerPoint presentation explaining how this possible land purchase came about. The Planning and the Inland Wetland Commissions have met and voted to recommend moving forward to a town meeting. The homeowner approached the town about purchasing his property which is adjacent to Blish Park. The purchase price is \$200,000 and the closing would be held by December 31st. According to the deed for Blish Park, no enclosed structures can be built on the property, which makes this adjacent property a good purchase. Mr. Hughes explained exactly where the property is and that it has 44 feet of lake frontage on the .75 acre lot. Someone in the audience asked if this had ever been offered to the town before. Ms. Traversa said not to her knowledge, but others said it had come before the First Selectman years ago, but that administration decided not to bring it to a vote with the public. The appraised land value, based upon the last revaluation, is \$285,400, with the building appraised at \$58,200 for a total of \$343,600. The town had an independent appraisal done and it was appraised at \$250,000. The town would assume the sewer benefit assessment. The taxes are \$8,214. In today's budget, that would only amount to \$3.00 off of the Grand List. Some reasons for consideration include: being adjacent to the park; restrictions prohibit building for municipal use at Blish Park; town can seek grants/capital funding for a future building. An environmental study was done and there is a little bit of lead in the paint; no ground contamination, and some asbestos in the laundry/bathroom area. The abatement would be done before demolition. Funding has been identified in the current accounts as follows:

\$ 50,000 Open Space
\$ 22,000 Land Acquisition
\$ 50,000 Undesignated Capital Reserve from CNR
\$ 78,000 Undesignated Fund Balance
\$200,000 Total

No bonding would need to be done. Some asked what the total cost would be including closing costs, mitigation, demolition, etc. Closing costs would come out of the attorney fees line item in the current budget. Mr. Hughes estimated that for everything including demolition, it may cost an additional \$12-\$18,000.

There is a clause in the agreement that the homeowner can stay in the house for up to six months if the winter weather was a problem for him to move. He would continue to pay utilities. Once he vacates, the demolition would occur.

Public Comments

Mrs. Peng, 23 Lakeridge Drive, asked how buildable is the lot. Mr. Hughes responded that it is extremely developable.

Dave Bourbeau, 174 North Main Street, was against this project when he came tonight due to the loss of the \$8,000+ in taxes, but now after hearing everything he is in favor of this purchase.

Larry Prior, 421 Jones Hollow Road, stated that we are \$21 million in debt and therefore this is not fiscally prudent.

Dave Porteous, 15 Edstrom Road, said that he agrees with Mr. Bourbeau. This is an opportunity looking for a plan. What we have read about this does not mirror what has happened. If this goes on the market, someone is going to build a big house there. The BOF has cut the Board of Education budget in past years being very frugal. This may be a good idea but it needs a plan. We need to see some positives, money aside.

Amy Traversa, 21 Jones Hollow Road, said that the town has not given part of a story as has been written on Facebook. We gave the details as we received the facts. She believes this is a good idea. It could give us a bigger meeting place than the senior center down the road. Adults and children could come together. She also stressed that this is a want and not a need.

Mr. Langlois, 65 South Road, said we definitely need more meeting spaces.

Rich Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, said he is still on the fence. Budgets are made out of needs, not wants so he questions spending money on a "want". Also, he is not sure about spending \$50,000 out of the CNR account.

Mr. Knowlton said there is \$1.1 million in the CNR account. He continued to say that money gets appropriated for a certain purpose and the purpose for the funds cannot be changed. In 2009, we borrowed \$50,000 for land acquisition in case some land became available.

Debbie Bourbeau, 174 N. Main Street said she came out tonight thinking this was a bad idea. She has seen so many bar charts of our town debt. The debt is finally starting to go down a little. But with this being the only piece of land that abuts the park, and it is for a small amount of money, she thinks we would be remiss if we didn't purchase it. If we do buy it, hopefully we will sit on it until the debt is much lower before adding more debt for a building.

Mr. Knowlton said that he has been reviewing and trying to keep track of all the capital projects and the debt. If we don't bond something else in the near future, then we should be much better off in four to five years.

Patty, 31 Parker Road, doesn't know what we would do with the property. We don't even know the total cost. I'm not sure I am willing to put out \$200,000 for something that we don't have a plan for. It was mentioned that the older and younger residents could both go to this center. How would we get there? Walk even further than the park is now to the lake? With a cane or a walker? I don't think so.

Mr. Hughes said it would cost about \$12-18,000 for the demolition. That would be in another budget with a future presentation.

Ken Craigs, 232 N. Main Street, said he grew up on the lake and there is more use now than when he was little. It's a good idea to expand the park. We have the money. If someone else buys the land, you don't know what they may do with the property.

Larry Prior said an insurance analysis should be done to tell us how much of a benefit it would be to the town. You have to take the emotion out of it.

Patty said again that if this was offered in the past, why didn't we buy it then. This seems suspicious. That is a steep road. Why couldn't we buy it and put it on the market? I'm worried about the future. I still have doubt in my mind. Nothing has been done on the industrial park.

Amy Traversa said the gentleman moved into a new stage of life. He would have loved to have been able to donate it to the town, but he is not in a position to do so. He has lived there since the 1960s. We are being upfront with the public. We are not trying to hide anything. We always come before a vote for whatever we do. If we pass this up, then it is gone forever. We are not trying to assume any new debt at this time.

Larry Prior said that although the monies don't have anything to do with each other, the Board of Education's budget was cut by \$200,000 last year.

Riva Clark, board member, said that she knows this man. He is very generous and when he was ready to move, he always said he wanted to offer it to the town.

Al Daigle, 173 South Main Street, said it should be re-appraised because property values have dropped 26% with Obama.

Mr. Adams, Myrna Drive, was concerned about the tax revenue we would lose by purchasing the property. Although the taxes are only \$8,000 now, if someone bought the property and built a bigger house, the taxes would be higher. Also has an issue with giving a deadline.

Mr. Knowlton replied that the deadline is for us to have the first right of refusal. The taxes are currently \$8,214. The town did have the property appraised and it is worth more than the asking price.

Al Daigle, 173 outh Main Street, thinks we should let him keep his property because he doesn't know who would pay \$200,000 for a little piece of land like that, in his opinion.

Richard Denno, 417 Jones Hollow Road, said as an observation he thinks the house should be boarded up as soon as possible or demolished for liability reasons for the town.

Joe Asklar, 24 Islieb, thanked the Boards of Selectmen and Finance for bringing this to the town residents for their opinion and a chance to ask questions.

Dave Porteous, Edstrom Road, thanked the Boards also and seconded what Mr. Asklar said. It is right to bring it before the townspeople and not just the First Selectman. Peter Hughes has great knowledge and thanked him for being there to explain and answer questions.

Ken Hjulstrom, board member, asked regarding the shared well if the neighbors have given up their right of use. He also asked if the town would pay for amending the deeds.

Amy Traversa said all that will be taken care of before the closing.

Cliff Denniss, board member, said that he wouldn't expect the town would begin building on the property until the debt goes down. He also wanted to comment on the lost revenue in taxes. If someone built a McMansion there in speculation we could lose \$16,000 in taxes a year.

Riva Clark, board member, said she was glad to hear the public's thoughts tonight.

Midge Denno, board member, said when purchasing property it is all about location, location, location. She thinks this is a great opportunity for the town. We have the money, and don't need to borrow anything.

The public hearing closed at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Rihm
Board Clerk