

Minutes
Albany NH Selectmen's Meeting
February 27, 2008

At 4:00 p.m. the Selectmen's meeting opened with Robert Mathieu and Dorothy Solomon in attendance. The following business was conducted.

Regular Business:

- Reviewed & approved February 20 minutes
- Signed checks
- Reviewed & approved one timber intent
- Reviewed Town Report Proof
- Reviewed DRA Sales-Assessment Ratio study
- Reviewed letter from LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.
- Reviewed LGC letter
- Reviewed LGC 9-9-9 Workers Compensation & Property Liability program
- Reviewed letter from North Country Council

Steve Knox

Steve came before the Board to update them on the progress of the Land Acquisition Committee. The Committee met with David Houghton and Charlie Levesque of the Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund has a purchase and sales agreement with the Kennett Company. The land is in the process of being appraised and should be complete within 60 days. Steve found out that the floor price for the two parcels is \$850,000. If the appraisal comes in lower than that, Kennett has 10 days to walk away from the agreement.

Dorothy asked if it is appraised now and values keep dropping, would this factor become a bargaining chip for a lower price. Steve said yes it would.

Steve said the both the Town of Albany and The Conway Village Fire District would be required to come up with "good faith money," at least \$250,000-\$300,000 each. Then the next step would be to go for grants through the Ham Foundation and LCHIP, which would be best bets for grants. Steve feels that after Town Meeting, if the special town meeting article passes, the next step would be for Albany and Conway Village Fire District to each ask the Ham Foundation and LCHIP for \$150,000.

Steve inquired about having the Conservation Fund purchasing the property and allowing Albany to pay for it over years. The response was that the Conservation Fund would have to borrow money with interest and have to charge Albany a higher rate of interest. In addition, Albany would have the option of backing out of the deal in a few years, leaving the Conservation Fund holding the property. The Conservation Fund thinks that Albany's best bet would be to bond it themselves.

Steve went on to say that yes, there will be restrictions, but allowed would be forestry, agriculture and recreation, and possibly water usage. The Conservation Fund said that if Albany changes the use of the properties, they would have to buy their way out by paying back the grants.

Steve also met again with the Conway Village Fire District Commissioners. He said that they are still very interested and excited about this project and still want Albany to be the "front man" on the project. Thinking out loud at their meeting, they inquired as to owning the property surrounding their water towers on Bald Hill Rd. in exchange for some of the property that is in Conway. Steve said at this point everything is fluid.

Steve has gotten the interest of Ed McKenzie on this project who is wholeheartedly for this idea. Ed has made it known to Steve that he is willing to make a private donation toward the success of this project.

Steve called the NH Municipal Bond Bank. He received two amortizations for a worst case scenario of Albany paying the full \$850,000. One amortization was for 15 years and the other for 20 years. Steve wanted the Selectmen to be aware that the bond market is in turmoil but the banker he spoke with didn't see it as a problem.

Steve ended by saying that he had spoken to Terry Miller who has volunteered to come to our Town Meeting and speak on behalf of the National Forest Service's position on this potential deal. Terry Miller spoke and said he will give background and maintenance information on the properties. He also said that the National Forest Service is in favor of the Land Acquisition by the Town of Albany. He went on to say that the National Forest's initiative was to cross boundaries with different groups and help facilitate conservation. He says this acquisition is not only plausible but commendable.

Steve said with the dramatic rise in energy and commodity costs, this makes more and more sense to him.

Dorothy asked Steve if he discussed with the Conservation Fund what exactly can we do with the property. Can we build a Town Center? Steve responded by saying no, he did not discuss the Town Center. He thought he'd wait until after the Town Meeting and then decide to go forth. He said there could be a possibility of the article being amended.

Bob asked Terry if the Forest Service would approve of a Town Center somewhere on the property. Maybe take out 4 or 5 acres for it.

Dorothy added that possible funding could come from the arts community if the Town Center included an arts center.

Terry replied to Bob and Dorothy that the Forest Service expected a project as such. In comparison to have the land purchased and subdivided and sold off, the Forest Service would rather support conservation. Terry also said that there is enough land for a Town Center and this would not compromise the beauty of the land and it would still be largely forest.

Steve asked Terry if he thought that the Conservation Group would raise this issue. Terry replied that he did not know.

Bob said he would like to see the Town Center include a Town Hall in addition to being a rentable building. And the Town would not be interested in subdividing the land. He also added that if we couldn't build a Town Center and do what we want with the land that the Town should simply bond the whole amount and buy the land outright.

Steve thought that if we went to The Conservation Fund and asked them about taking out four or five acres for a Town Center, he didn't think that the Conservation Fund would have a problem with it.

Steve proposes that after the special town meeting article passes at Town Meeting, that the Town move forth in signing a purchase and sales agreement with a list of contingencies. Steve thinks that with a purchase and sales agreement in effect, the Superior Court will have to approve the Special Town Meeting because the emergency would be the expiration of the purchase and sales agreement.

Bob asked if the grants could be given after the purchase. Steve responded by saying he would like a commitment from the funding groups that payment will be made.

Dorothy asked that as far as LCHIP, and given their fiscal problems, would we not be able to receive funds from them. Steve responded by saying that

LCHIP must approve their budget by June 30, so we would know if we will be funded or not.

Dorothy asked if it were possible to get a federal grant. Steve replied by saying no, they only give grants that create jobs and this would not apply. He added that our best source would be the USDA. Terry said that the USDA programs' purpose is to encourage this kind of thing to happen.

Dorothy supports having a Town Center and having uniquely Albany property. Terry added that the Conservation Fund wants to preserve but they are more modern about their restrictions and will work with the Town. It's exchange is good overall value.

Bob inquired to Terry about sharing the cost of the replacement of the roof on the Albany Covered Bridge as well as two coats of paint for it. Bob added that the full amount quoted is on the warrant to be voted on at Town Meeting. Terry brought the standing agreement that the Forest Service has with the Town of Albany. He said he tried to contact the forest engineer without success. He knows that previously the Forest Service has worked cooperatively on projects through sources to be tapped. He added that it is no surprise that the roof needs to be replaced. Dorothy asked if it can be assumed that the Forest Service will give some sort of monetary aid. Terry replied that yes and he will meet with the forest engineer to seek out funding sources. Bob asked Terry if he would know by Town Meeting day. Terry said yes and he will share the agreement with the forest engineer.

At 6:10 p.m. Bob motioned to adjourn, Dorothy seconded and all were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen Vizard
Administrative Assistant