

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING HELD
TUESDAY, JULY 12, 2016, AT 7:00 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWN HALL,
84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Present

Vice Chairman Paul A. Bowman; Michael Ecke, Patti Flynn-Harris, Liz Linehan, Sylvia Nichols, Thomas Ruocco, Timothy Slocum and Peter Talbot.

Absent: Robert J. Oris Jr.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; Alfred Smith, Town Attorney; William Voelker, Town Planner; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Police Chief Neil Dryfe.

Guest: Carol Wilson and Rich Ogurik, Energy Commission.

Public Hearing Subject Matter:

**Consideration a \$3 million capital appropriation
For the purchase of the Chapman property.**

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. EXPLANATION OF HEARING PROCEDURE AND AGENDA

3. READING OF LEGAL NOTICE

The clerk read the legal notice into the record.

4. PRESENTATION ON HEARING SUBJECT

Chairman Bowman informed the public that the Town Council was not taking any action on this public hearing subject matter. The parcel is a ten (10) acre site on South Main Street, across from Cheshire High School, abuts Bartlem Park, and the Town has been looking at purchase of this parcel for many years. Mr. Bowman said it is a strategic piece of property adjacent to Town owned land.

Mr. Milone cited the fact that, with Council approval, this matter goes to referendum because it exceeds the referendum amount.

5. QUESTIONS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

Steve Carroll, 70 Hidden Place, asked how this space would be used if approved at referendum.

Town Planner Voelker informed the Council and public that there is a master plan in place for use of this 10 acre parcel, which is adjacent to a 45 acre recreational facility. With acquisition of the Chapman Property there can be student parking moved to the high school (118 spaces); tennis courts moved to Bartlem Park; and plans include multiple purpose fields, additional parking, passive recreation, walkways, rear wetlands can be used for educational purposes, and there can be outdoor classrooms. He noted there would be a broader range of uses for residents, and provision of passive recreation for a longer time. The future project for use of the land would be done in

three phases, and priority of phasing-in is determined by the Town Council. There is a May 2013 map and supporting material available for public viewing, and they are a matter of public record.

Tim White, 1682 Orchard Hill Road, commented on this 10 acre R-40 zoned parcel being a site for a 10 house development, and traffic concerns for this site.

According to Mr. Voelker the reasonable number of single family homes would be 8 on this site.

Mr. White asked about any laws which would supersede more than 8 houses,.

In response, Mr. Voelker cited the fact that this property would be attractive under Section 8-30g CGS, which overrides local zoning regulations. There could be higher density proposed for this property by developers; the property could support 150+ housing units that would not come under local zoning regulations, but under CGS Section 8-30g.

Regarding traffic patterns, Mr. Voelker said the ball fields have events, and traffic comes into the site and leaves. For 8 housing units, on a daily basis, traffic would be 65-70 trips in and out of the site. For 150+ housing units with children, families coming and going daily, 6 trips per day per family, there would be 900+ trips each day.

William Healy, 20 Harvest Court, asked where the appropriation for the \$3 million purchase will come from, as there is about \$2 million in the land acquisition fund. He also asked how payment would be made.

Town Manager Milone stated that the budget ramifications have been reviewed, and if the property acquisition is approved, the Town would be bonding the funds, amortized over 20 years. Everything depends on the outcome of the capital expenditure plan. This \$3 million was not in the plan. The Council can take money from other projects, deny or defer projects, or the CEP stays consistent with last year. There is \$2 million in the land acquisition fund.

Mr. Healy prefers paying cash for the property, but he cannot buy into purchase of this land.

Ron Gagliardi, 5 Dover Court, asked if this farm was ever a dump site and if remediation is necessary.

In that regard, Mr. Bowman advised that the Town has an obligation to conduct studies as part of the entire process, and there is no answer to this question at this time.

Town Attorney Smith stated the contract provides for the Town being dissatisfied with the environmental report, and canceling the purchase contract.

Kevin Wetmore, 103 Stonegate Court, represented the offices of the Board of Directors of Stonegate, a 32 residential, 55+ housing development. The Board supports purchase of this property as the best use for the Town. If there were to be 150+ housing units with children, more educational and town services would be required. With the final plans for this property, Mr. Wetmore asked that there be discussion with Stonegate about a buffer for the properties. He acknowledged the foresight of the Town Council to purchase the subject property for Town use.

The Council and public were informed by Mr. Voelker that for all municipal and educational project development a special permit is required along with a public hearing before the Planning and Zoning Commission. The buffering would be a major PZC concern.

Tim White stated his support of the \$3 million purchase of the Chapman Property, and thanked the Council for bringing the proposal to the public for a referendum vote.

Councilor Ruocco read a letter into the record from his constituents, Gail and Tom Larson, Allen Avenue, in opposition to the purchase of the Chapman property.

Ray Squier, 291 Cook Hill Road, commented on \$3 million bonding floating over 20 years, when there is \$2 million in the land acquisition fund. He questioned the actual cost of the property over 20 years when the Town has 2/3 of the cost in the fund, and floating \$1 million is the alternative.

There was clarification from Town Manager Milone who advised that regardless of how the Town proceeds, the entire \$3 million must be borrowed. In the CEP there is an appropriation available up to \$2.1 million. This is authorization to spend the money, and funds are not bonded until the project is on the way, and the total cost must be borrowed.

Kevin Wetmore cited his response to the letter read into the record, and stated the community pool is an asset to the Town. For the subject property, he noted the assessed value is total of \$636,000; \$500,000 for the buildings and \$136,000 for the property. Mr. Wetmore stated that no one can purchase 10 acres of land in Cheshire for just over \$100,000.

6. PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS STATEMENTS ALTERNATELY EXPRESSED.

None.

7. REBUTTAL AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

None.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Bowman closed the public hearing at 7:31 p.m.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk