



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

P.O. BOX 495

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

Thomas F. Cooke - Director of Administrative Services

Board of Selectmen **Special Meeting**

Thursday, October 3, 2013 at 7:00 A.M.
Main Meeting Room
Simsbury Town Hall – 933 Hopmeadow Street

MINUTES OF MEETING – DRAFT

Call to Order

First Selectman Mary Glassman called the meeting to order at 7:00 a.m. Deputy First Selectman Lisa Heavner and Selectmen Nancy Haase, Moira Wertheimer, Shannon Knall and Sean Askham were also present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Audience

Nobody spoke at public audience. Mr. Hensley subsequently requested the opportunity to address the Board and was provided with an opportunity to speak at public audience.

Selectmen Action

a. Approve tax refunds

Ms. Glassman asked for a motion to approve tax refunds in the amount of \$6,458.85. Ms. Wertheimer moved approval of the tax refunds and Mr. Askham seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed unanimously.

Update on The Hartford consulting report and next steps

Ms. Heavner recused herself from the discussion concerning The Hartford.

Ms. Glassman reported that Town Planner Hiram Peck who coordinated the charrette process with respect to The Hartford's property on Hopmeadow Street was unwell and unable to be present. The Board extended its best wishes to Mr. Peck for a speedy recovery.

Ms. Glassman distributed the final report prepared by Gateway Planning in connection with the charrette process conducted in September. The charrette process was conducted to explore future options for The Hartford's Simsbury facility. The report itself is the result of a five-day town-wide charrette process. Ms. Glassman noted that the report is on the Town website and has been made available to The Hartford and its real estate broker, CB Richard Ellis, and to State Department of Economic and Community Development personnel as well.

Ms. Glassman described the next steps for the process, which include review of the report by the Land Use Study Committee and their recommendations with respect to next steps. Simultaneously, Gateway Planning is preparing a draft of code changes to bring back to the Town of Simsbury. A date is being scheduled for Gateway to complete the draft and to present the information. She noted that the report had already identified action steps for the Town, The Hartford and the CB Richard Ellis. The charrette process provided a useful forum for sharing information. Upon Mr. Peck's return, he will coordinate the next meeting of the Land Use Study Committee and a date for Gateway Planning's presentation.

Ms. Glassman added that Town Counsel is currently reviewing all legal programs available to assist municipalities in working with economic development initiatives. Based on her recent meeting with DECD, Ms. Glassman reported that the State is prepared to market the site to state contacts, to include a developer's showcase tour for potential investors in The Hartford's property.

The Town has requested an update from The Hartford, including updated information with respect to a transition timeframe in order to assist in marketing the site. She added that The Hartford had already reported that it would take two years to move all of the on-site employees to new locations. The Board discussed the importance of determining the specific timeframe for this move.

Ms. Glassman stated that the Town is exploring other potential partnerships with organizations such as the MetroHartford Alliance and the Connecticut Economic Resource Center to assist with the development of future use strategies. She added that the Town is also exploring other potential collaborations such as economic development forums, a local business ambassador program and other public outreach efforts to highlight the benefits of the facility.

Mr. Askham noted that the report was high level and that he was expecting the consultant to provide more specifics. Ms. Glassman responded that specific recommendations were expected as part of the next report from Gateway. Mr. Askham also expressed concern that the real estate broker had only learned about the significant power capacity benefits of the current structure through the Town's charrette process.

Ms. Haase expressed concern that emphasis on residential development might put the site in competition with existing residential developments and asked that the recommended balance between business and residential development be carefully considered. The Board also discussed the level of community participation in the charrette process.

Ms. Haase asked if there had been any further discussions with potential purchasers. Ms. Glassman responded that conversations of a confidential nature were underway. She also reported that there was an educational institution that had expressed interest and that tax-replacement options were being considered. The Board went on to discuss the potential benefits and risks of using a firm to generate leads for sale of the property.

Ms. Wertheimer asked whether there was a record of how many people participated in the process. Ms. Glassman deferred to Mr. Peck's records but estimated that approximately 250 residents had been involved in the charrette process.

Mr. Askham expressed concern about the \$10 per square foot carrying cost of The Hartford's property and its potential effect on The Hartford's timeline. Ms. Glassman recognized Paul Henault, Chair of the Board of Finance, who stressed the importance of best-case and worst-case scenario planning.

Ms. Knall stated her support for moving forward with an economic development forum and other initiatives to keep the public informed and to alert potential developers of the property. Ms. Glassman concluded the discussion by noting that DECD was going to help coordinate potential investor visits to the property. She added that the next steps would be taken by the Land Use Study Committee and that the Economic Development Commission would be involved as well.

Discussions with respect to The Hartford were concluded and Ms. Heavner returned to the meeting.

Public Audience

Ms. Glassman extended the opportunity to speak at public audience to Robert Hensley, 21 Cedar Hill Road, chair of the Performing Arts Center Board. Mr. Hensley reported that the Performing Arts Center had a wonderful year and that the season was financially successful. He noted that he would not be present on October 16, 2013 to make a full report on the Performing Arts Center finances and that he wanted to take the opportunity at public audience to provide an overview of the season. Mr. Hensley thanked the Performing Arts Center Board, Town Staff and liaison Sean Askham for making the year a success. He also noted that talks were underway with Premier Concerts and the Hartford Symphony Orchestra with respect to next season and said that negotiations with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra were nearing conclusion. Ms. Glassman offered a meeting with Performing Arts Center representatives to discuss the possibility of shared volunteer management software and Mr. Hensley agreed to explore the possibility.

Ms. Heavner asked if the current Performing Arts Center Board members had been invited to serve on the new Performing Arts Center 501(c)(3) board. Mr. Hensley said that many of them were already serving on the new board and that he would speak to board chairman David Ryan about inviting others to serve.

Aquarion Rate Increase Decision

Ms. Glassman and Ms. Wertheimer recused themselves from discussion of Aquarion Water Company's PURA-approved rate increase.

Ms. Heavner reviewed a recent press release concerning the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority's approval of an 8.6% rate increase for Aquarion, noting that PURA had urged Aquarion to avoid spending on any unnecessary capital improvements. She then reviewed a letter sent by Thomas Cooke, Director of Administrative Services, to Aquarion requesting information about the increase, including (1) how the rate increase would impact the average Simsbury resident; (2) requesting any and all correspondence sent to Simsbury residents about the increases; and (3) any capital improvement plans developed by Aquarion for long-range capital spending. The Board expressed its disappointment with the fact that the increase, at 8.6% is still high and much higher than any increase the Board of Selectmen would consider. Ms. Knall expressed her frustration with Aquarion's lack of communication with the Town. Several of the Selectmen expressed concern that an increase of this magnitude would present a real hardship for Town residents.

Mr. Askham and several other Board members added that they were disappointed with the paving job that Aquarion was doing on a site in front of Ensign Bickford's property on Route 10. The Board of Selectmen asked Mr. Cooke to contact Mr. Roy with respect to his concerns about Aquarion's work and his assessment of the work done on the Route 10 site.

The Board of Selectmen agreed to wait for a response to Mr. Cooke's September 30th letter before taking any further action.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Ms. Haase moved for adjournment and Mr. Askham seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Cooke, Director of Administrative Services