

Select Board Sidelines

December 15, 2021

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the Sidelines are the individual thoughts of the Select Board member.

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

We encourage viewing Town Hall Streams to get a full appreciation of the discussions that take place in a Select Board meeting. Granted, our meetings have been taking longer. The Sidelines is a summary, not a comprehensive report. This issue may be a bit longer than most Sidelines as the discussion regarding the Thompson Community Center and the possibility of the Town purchasing a property require more space than usual.

Submitted by Martha Johnston-Nash

Committee for the Future of the Thompson Community Center (CFTCC): The CFTCC continues to put forth efforts to help the TCCA with the operations of the facility. A joint committee was approved by the TCCA, to include three members of the CFTCC. The purpose of this committee, CFTCC member Paul Raudonat pointed out, is to help the TCCA keep the facilities operational until such time the Town approves a change in use and operation.

A first meeting was held December 1st. The report from that meeting indicated the meeting went well, but the TCC Manager was hesitant to offer any encouragement of getting financial information without unanimous approval of her Board. There were two members of the TCC Board present, along with Manager Lori, and the three CFTCC members (Raudonat, Lorain Frances, and Erik Amundsen).

Some of the information from that meeting include: The TCC has heat now, but not for much longer (it wasn't clear how long, or if it was for lack of funds); holding concerts or other events is hampered for lack of systems being up to code, and COVID considerations; there is uncertainty about when a changeover will take place of the facilities; the Thrift Shop is back operating full time and taking donations; financial information, if approved for disclosure, may still not be accurate.

The CFTCC has not met since this meeting, but will be meeting on January 4th with the Select Board.

At the Select Board meeting, members expressed frustration over the constant delay of cooperation. Board Member Bill Lombardi offered a motion to start legal proceedings if the financial information isn't disclosed by December 20th (the day prior to next SB meeting). It was seconded and discussed by the Board. After discussion about the joint committee's work only just beginning, the motion was withdrawn. However, it is expected to again be proposed at the next meeting if the TCCA refuses to share the financial information and cooperate with the CFTCC.

It should be noted that the Town of Union has no budget for the operation of the TCC. The Town has not budgeted any funds for the operation of the TCC since shortly after the TCCA was started over 30 years ago. Please note, the property belongs to the Town, and as such it is ultimately the Town's responsibility to see that it is properly maintained. It is up to the Select Board to ensure that is done.

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

Discussion on Purchasing Property: It has been brought to our attention that the owners of Map 8, Lot 2 wish to sell 20 –22 acres of this property. The property abuts the BM Clark facility on Rt 17, the St. George River and the fairgrounds.

Some feel that this would make an excellent location for future recreational space. This lot offers a great location for a soccer pitch and new ball fields plus a walking path along the river which would also feed into the fairground over the river bridge. A small section, about 100 feet that borders the river, is in a flood zone. Environmental hazards would need to be reviewed along with other due diligence before any action would be undertaken.

It is projected that funding may be available from the Pullen fund for this project. The criteria of the Pullen Fund are:

- 1.) Must be a benefit to the youth and/or citizens of the Town of Union.
- 2.) Must be a Town of Union Organization.
- 3.) Should be a project that is not normally funded by traditional sources.
- 4.) Can't be used for capital improvements.

If undertaken the development of this property would be a multi-year project. It is anticipated that most of the funding to improve the land and build the sports fields would be generated from Grants. Your Board voted to have the Town Manager investigate this property.

Aging in Place: The Vose Library in conjunction with the Union Elementary School has developed a marvelous idea to assist our community on multiple levels. One large issue that the AIP committee has been discussing is the long-term effects of isolation being felt by our seniors, particularly in the time of Covid and the resulting feelings of loneliness. The partnership between the Library and the School with focus on the students interviewing and writing biographies of our Seniors and co-engaging with Maine-based authors, illustrators and artists strives to create an intergenerational project that brings our youth and our seniors together to combat loneliness and increase empathy. Grants have been written to fund this effort. The AIP committee is extending our full support for this effort called the Gen Alpha Project (GAP). The ability of our seniors to tell their life story to an elementary student over a period of time while fighting isolation, provides a link to the younger generation and supports connections to the community. This project is due to begin in the late summer/early fall of 2022. If you or someone you know are interested in participating in this project, please reach out to debra@voselibrary.org or stop by Vose Library for more information.

Select Board Sidelines – December 15, 2021

We look forward to being able to tell you more about this endeavor as the program develops.

Select Board Sidelines: The topic of the Sidelines will be on the agenda on December 21.

You may remember this communication from October 2020:

Your Select Board has made a commitment to improved communication and transparency of Town issues. We have decided to produce a twice monthly email that summarize our thoughts.

The parameters of this email will be to keep all communication kind, clear and direct with no foul language or demeaning or nasty comments regarding any person or group. We will strive for relevant commentary without political endorsements, messages, or innuendo. This does not mean that we will avoid controversy (Can anyone say Sidewalks?).

The opinions expressed in these emails are the individual thoughts of each Select Board member. Your Board will not be in agreement on every issue. We are committed to express our disagreements with a civil and conscientious tone. Yes, really, this Board is committed to work together for the benefit of all Union citizens. Not every Select Board member will contribute to every email. There will be times when one Select Board Member will publish an email on a topic that is particularly important to them.

Let us know how you think we are doing! We want to hear from you. Our email addresses are on the Town website.

So really, let us know what you think of the Sidelines! Is it of value to you? If so, why, or why not. How can it be improved?