

Select Board Sidelines

July 28, 2021

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

Submitted by Bill Lombardi

It is terrific to see so much involvement during the Public Comment section of our Select Board meetings. More input from the citizens is appreciated! It makes for better town government when more voices are heard.

Richard Morgan came to speak about safety on his property, particularly for children, at Morgan Mills a popular swimming spot. He spoke about signage, some that he has initiated and other that he is requesting from the town. A common theme when citizens speak about roads in town is speeding. Richard clearly expressed his concern regarding cars speeding in the area where children are playing. The challenge is how to control speeding given the rules in place from Maine Department of Transportation. Thank you, Richard, for your presentation and the display of color arial photos!

You may recollect that a few weeks ago your Select Board voted to list a tax acquired property on Coggins Hill for sale. The opinion at the time that this was a land locked property, limiting its functionality. Given the emails that the Select Board received and the impassioned presentations at our last meeting, we missed the neighborhood's utilization and attachment to this property when making the original decision to sell the property. It is policy to get properties back on the tax roll by selling town owned properties (more on this later). You may remember the Brown's Lane decision of a few years ago. At this point, the Board is willing to listen to proposals from the citizen's group regarding their potential purchase of the property. There was discussion regarding the potential of a land trust being interested in acquiring the property. Will we receive a substantial offer? Will the citizen's group have a viable alternative? We have been told to expect at least one offer on the Coggins Hill property at the next Select Board meeting on August 3. Stay tuned to see what develops.

The Coggins Hill Purchase and Preservation Association would like to present their plan to the Select Board at the August 3 meeting.

Town Owned Properties: Jay Feyler, our Town Manager, presented the board with a listing of 18 town owned properties. When you exclude the cemeteries and other non-saleable properties like the Public Works site, Ayer Park, the former Dump site, Founder's Park, old gravel pits and non-useable land, there are a few sites with potential value or utilization.

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The Board previously discussed a 25-acre parcel on Stone Road, known as the “former sludge site”. This was discussed at the June 1, 2021 Board meeting. This property will need to be tested for contaminants before potential use could be discussed.

There are parcels on Happy Hollow and adjacent land on Bump Hill that could be utilized for recreation. Perhaps a walking/bike trail could be developed. Might a Land Trust be interested with a conservation easement? Some of this land, by the Medomak River is low and swampy, not substantially useable.

The Committee for the Future of the Thompson Community Center: The committee has narrowed their choices down to three possibilities: Penquis (housing); Mike Mullins (offer to purchase/make space); and Siemens (town own, they renovate and help with financing). They have not received a response to the letter from the Town’s Attorney that was sent June 8. The next committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 4. It will be available through the town’s website on “Town Hall Streams”.

Other Items:

Public Works is leasing a new, more functional, loader. We are trading in the 2004 model for a more functional tool. The cost has been planned and is in the reserve fund.

The Board approved \$5,000 for the Come Spring Food Pantry from the I.C. Thurston fund which is dedicated to help support the “needy poor” of Union.

Ali Crocco has been appointed to the Tri-County Solid Waste Board. Thank you, Ali, for stepping forward. Your community service is appreciated!