

## Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday July 16, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and members Al Springer and April Stein.

Also Present: Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording, and Gazette Reporter Tom Relihan.

Chairman Puleo opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall

### Appointments

#### **Administrative Assessor Kenneth Holmberg:**

- Provided a summary of confusion concerning the history of ownership of Assessors parcel H-44 brought to the attention of the Board of Assessors due to a recent letter from Mr. Peter Gees:
  - It was not until 1987 that 1923 discontinuations of a straightened portion of Wendell Road (a county highway at the time) were completed.
  - In 1987 one dollar reimbursements were made to current owners, including Peter Gees, for 3 pieces of land which had been taken in 1923.
  - H-44 was always assumed to be the “eyebrow” clearing across from Highland Drive, for which Mr. Gees’ recent letter requested a sale back to him for the original dollar.
  - Actually H-44 appears from the maps to be town (perhaps conservation) forested land, lying north of the eyebrow. That land contains a stone wall (along an old road (1923?) layout.)
  - Assessors have access to letters including one from Town Cartographer (in 1982) Bill Randall, to the owner who acquired lot H-44 in 1962, stating the property was  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre.
  - Because of the  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre size, H-44 was assumed to be the eyebrow.
  - The Assessors believe that H-44 was never ascribed to the town as it should have been.
  - Abutting property owners and the Board of Assessors are confused about the progression of ownership and size of lot H-44 and the surrounding properties. They would like a professional title search done before making decisions about property ownership for purposes of current and past taxations.
  - Administrative Assessor Holmberg anticipates the cost of the title search would be less than \$1,000. He added that there could be additional legal fees.
  - Town Administrator Torres stated that it is incumbent upon the town to do the search because it appears that the town is the owner.

**Selectmen unanimously voted to authorize the Board of Assessors to go to Town Counsel to request a title search of lot H-44 and the surrounding properties.**

#### **Police Chief Harding:**

- Not present.

**Summer cottage dweller Mr. Daryl Cupak spoke to Selectmen regarding health and safety issues at the location of 65 & 67 Lakeview Road (owned by Theresa Cupak.) Issue #1:**

- Traffic safety: Though the town has put up speed bumps, according to Mr. Cupak, “Nothing has ever worked.”
- Mr. Cupak reports almost being “wiped out” once by a driver who couldn’t see him due to the sun. Mr. Cupak sees people dropped off at the intersection of Locks Pond and Lakeview Roads, who walk the same area, sometimes 3 and 4 abreast. Mr. Cupak is concerned that other drivers might not see these and other pedestrians. He reports that drivers don’t drive slowly through the curve.
- Mr. Cupak appreciates what the town has done, but reports that the sharp curve and narrow road still exists. Mr. Cupak feels it’s important to make people aware of the problem.
- Mr. Cupak suggests getting rid of any extra road signs to keep driver distractions down.

**Mr. Daryl Cupak Issue #2:**

- Mr. Cupak states that the Lake is a “jewel.”
- Mr. Cupak states that 80% of the wells around the Lake are right by the water and the septic tanks are up by the roads. Their well water is clean.
- Because sound travels well over the water, Mr. Cupak reports hearing a mother (at the state park beach) tell her child to “go in the water.” Mr. Cupak states, “This is a beach not a septic tank. I’m drinking that water.”
- Mr. Cupak praised the “goose patrols” and the plant barrier created to keep geese off the beach: “The bushes keep the mother goose from bringing her goslings up there.”

**Select Board Chairman Elaine Puleo:** We struggle with this issue (traffic on the narrow curve) every year. We have all pondered what could be done. There is no easy solution except to take someone’s property and put up a fence and a walkway somehow.

**Select Board member Al Springer:** Fishes at the Lake in the mornings. The police presence is very effective.

**Town Administrator Becky Torres:** When they are there, it is very effective.

**Select Board member April Stein:** If they are down there sometimes, people may think they might be there.

**Mr. Cupak:** “You have to do something better than what has been done. Land taking on the water side is never going to happen.” Mr. Cupak offers land that he owns on the other side of Lakeview Road to be turned into a sidewalk.

**Select Board Chairman Elaine Puleo:** “We’ll try to do something.”

**Japanese Knotweed Group:** Elizabethann “Liz” Lacy and Meryl Mandell:

- Elaine thanks Meryl for photos which show the effectiveness of the proposed knotweed treatments.
- Meryl: The inventory is complete except for Schoolhouse and Sand Hill Roads and suggests if the Board decides to go forward with treating knotweed, to put a request on the town website that people report where knotweed is growing on town roadways. They can also be invited to mention knotweed colonies on private property, though treating these wouldn’t be at town expense.
- Meryl got a ballpark figure of knotweed treatment costs for town budgeting purposes (clarifying that there is a legal bidding process that the town must follow) from Bay State Forestry Service.
  - They have very good qualifications and licensed pesticide applicators.
  - One of their applicators is on Northfield Conservation Commission, so he is sensitive to the balance of harm and benefit of the chemical treatment of knotweed.
- How to get rid of knotweed:
  1. With direct injection one has to get every single stem.
  2. With spraying one is trying to get every single leaf.  
Spraying might affect neighboring plants but shouldn’t kill them.
- A ballpark figure for budget planning would be about \$1,000/ day for 2 people to go out with a truck to treat knotweed. It is estimated that it would take about 2 days to treat the list of colonies identified on Shutesbury’s roadsides. The estimate states that if they have to go out and find the knotweed, it will cost more.
- The Town would need to get the Conservation Commission’s approval to treat the knotweed.
- Elaine reported on the discussion of chemical treatment versus hand pulling of knotweed that was a part of the July 9 combined meeting of the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen.
  - Many people said the chemicals work for the current year but the knotweed comes back.
  - Meryl: It’s a 3 year process, the first year is the biggest application; the 2<sup>nd</sup> year some knotweed is left; and following the final treatment, nothing should be left.

- With hand pulling, if even just a little of the root is left behind, than, you've got more. Even putting down heavy plastic doesn't stop it.
- Liz: Hates chemicals. She's tracked knotweed for years and doesn't feel that we can get rid of it without chemicals.
- April Stein who is also a member on the Water Resources Committee inquired: About the rate of growth of knotweed. What's the danger? How does this effect water and streams?
- Meryl: It's still in manageable quantities. Liz: Sited North Leverett Road in Montague as an area where knotweed has gotten out of control. You typically see "walls" of knotweed.
- Meryl: Right now ours can still be dealt with pretty inexpensively. We're "teetering." With a concerted effort, we can go out there and get these little patches.
- It travels under the ground. The pesticide treatment will go underground in the fall.
- Meryl: After it flowers, the plant will pull the chemicals back into its roots.
- One story of how knotweed got started is that it was planted as an ornamental plant years ago.
- Meryl: If knotweed is growing near water, it can create such a canopy that it causes washouts.
- Liz: Is "Very scared" of chemicals in wet areas.
- Meryl: Bay State Forestry Service talked about chemicals: They use a less concentrated mix near water, and if you don't want to do certain areas, you don't have to do them.
- April: How would environmental impacts be monitored? Meryl would have to ask a licensed applicator.
- Research will be done to see how eradication has been managed in other towns in Massachusetts, Connecticut and on river islands.
- Liz: A lot of voters would be really concerned to treat knotweed with chemicals. Before anything happens there would have to be some education that explains this really well.
- April doesn't know what these chemicals are made up of. Meryl doesn't know the chemicals but feels the knotweed is a critical problem.
- Meryl would like to turn this initiative back to the Select Board.
- Liz: A request for proposals might get offerings for a variety of techniques. Liz states that she only knows about knotweed from her own experiences, not everything about knotweed. Liz would "go with the big guns" because she knows it works.
- Perhaps the Conservation Commission could inquire of other town sponsored programs through the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions Internet communications system. Or Pete Westover could be consulted.
- Meryl: No one likes going with chemicals, but it's such a persistent plant and so invasive, you have to do it. Pulling doesn't work. We would have to dig. With those methods the knotweed and roots have to be spread out somewhere to dry and die.
- Shutesbury's largest area is on Pelham Hill Road where the gravel was brought in to build the road.
- **Elaine summarized:** Gather more information and hold public meetings. If people want to move forward, ask the Finance Committee how to come up with \$6,000 over 3 years.
- Liz will communicate with the Conservation Commission.
- Meryl will send a link on knotweed treatment to Elaine.

Meryl and Liz left at 7:46 PM

## Topics

1. **Knotweed – methods and costs for attacking invasive plant:** See above.

## Select Board Action Items

1. **Select men unanimously voted to accept the 7/9/13 Select Board Meeting Minutes as written.**

- Elaine highlighted points of the July 9 meeting for April:
    - Emphasis on more public forums during pivotal points of the budget process.
    - The All Boards meeting will be at the Elementary School with a summary of who is on each Board, what the Board does, and how to get on a Board.
  - The Finance Committee is going to have a 2 session public forum about how your town works: State information, local finance officials will discuss what they do, and how we craft budgets.
  - April: What can we do to reach out to people? Elaine answered that writing letters to random people in her own hand-writing is extremely effective beyond announcements, newsletters or the website. It will say, "Please invite your neighbors."
- 2. Selectmen signed vendor warrants totaling \$273,990.15.**
- 3. Select men signed payroll warrants totaling \$85,402.95.**

**Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated**

1. Selectmen unanimously voted to sign annual Personnel Action Forms for:
  - a. Julie Stepanek as a Library aide.
  - b. Fire Department Deputy Chief Daniel Emerson.
  - c. Fire Department Captains: George Davies and Chris Hasbrouck.
  - d. Fire Department Lieutenant Stuart Richter and Leonard Czwerwonka.
  - e. Fire Fighter Benjamin Caulton.
  - f. Fire Department Secretary and Communications officer Marilyn Tibbetts.
  - g. Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting.
  - h. Administrative Support people Carrie Stone and Joan Hanson.

Elaine regrets that she will not be present at the July 30 meeting.

The Select Board **adjourned at 8:01P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge  
Administrative Secretary