

Minutes of Spring Glen Civic Association (SGCA) April 27, 2023

Meeting was called to order at 7:08

Denise Laframboise, President, introduced herself and stated that she appreciates the new members of the Executive Board who have instituted some new changes in the Association. Elaine Dove, Ryan Ott, Stocky Clark, George Schneider and Heather Wainwright were introduced. She thanked the group for helping out when she was embroiled with some family issues.

She stated that the Civic Association is a vehicle for discussion of issues, distribution of information about our town and community. We want Spring Glen (SG) residents to care about the community, neighborhood and town. We are focusing on helping members identify important issues which build community.

Denise noted the SGCA has started an earnest membership drive, which includes a new membership payment platform. The new business drive will hopefully increase membership in the organization.

She encouraged all attendees to join. Interested persons can join or renew here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfb_1CPILB6NC_CrbVDWHUC_vuaIu_ivzPi_3KGq6G_zdmeig/viewform?usp=share_link

Treasurer's Report

Heather Wainwright, Treasurer, reported the following. The books were audited by Thomas Kiely with a letter so stating that the books are accurate. She stated they are available for the members to see at the meeting. Fixed expenses are about \$1,000 per year.

Acceptance of the Minutes from September, 2022 Annual Meeting were approved.

Denise mentioned that Aesthetics Chair, Janet Coughlin, is looking for help. She suggested that people donate plants and help with the Municipal Lot clean up.

High Meadows (HM) Update:

Stocky Clark gave a quick review. The property was initially offered to the Town about 5 years ago. The State of CT still owns the property, but the idea was to have the Town find a developer and transfer ownership from the state to Hamden to a developer. There have been many meetings, with studies that were approved by the Legislative Council. There have been community meetings and more recently the Town has gotten more serious about the redevelopment of HM.

The property is about 50 acres. The State has maintained it since the facility was closed about 15 years ago. Eighteen acres are wetlands, and there are also 4-5 acres adjacent to the property. Due diligence has been done over the past 5 years. All of these results are available on the Town website. The current zone laws allow for a variety of uses.

Stocky stated that he was impressed with the town's engagement process with community meetings regarding a project like this. We have had numerous public meetings as well as a survey which identified community ideas for a reasonable project. However, he stated that the community representatives that are supposed to be part of the Request for Proposals (RFP) review has not been established. This is a serious concern for us. Stocky was told 6-8 months ago that he would be on this community committee, but thus far, there has been no organization or meeting of this group.

Erik Johnson has the lead role as Director of Economic Development.

On the past Tuesday, April 25, two proposals were delivered. GLENDOWER is a local developer which has built a lot of projects in New Haven. DAKOTA has done a lot of projects in New England and has experience in development. A formal review will be done by May 5th by a small group of people which is called “rating and ranking.” These two developers must pass basic requirements regarding fiscal issues, and the Town will interview each by May 16th. By June 2, all should be done. The Town will require a “Term” sheet of town expectations. By mid-June the chosen developer and their proposal should go before the Legislative Council for approval.

Stocky discussed that the track record of the developer is important and the developer must address the comments made by the residents in the RFP. He stated that consistency with residents’ wishes is paramount.

Stocky discussed the definition of affordable housing. Typically for a project to have 20% affordable housing, a developer will need a tax abatement or federal funds to make up for the lost cost of building such affordable housing.

He also cautioned that there is a long period of time between conception to development. Canal Crossing is still in Phase 1 and that land was purchased many years ago and was approved many years ago. He noted that we want to have a community that is liveable. There should be an impact study done on schools and traffic etc. Each proposal is supposed to outline the cost and impact to give an economic outlook for the Town.

The next possible time for public comment is when this development comes before the Legislative Council at the end of June, 2023. If zoning changes are requested, that will allow public comment. One

resident suggested that residents go to Google and find out something about the developers and the projects they have done in the past.

Denise read two letters regarding HM. One writer feels that the cost benefit for development has not been done. A Planned Development District, by State regulations, does not allow for designation in residential areas per this writer.

A second letter written by a resident was read. The writer feels that the Town needs to get this development “right”. He feels that it must enhance the quality of life in Hamden, enhance the surrounding community, diminish environmental negative effects and provide some positive financial gain for the town.

Attendees asked about housing and open space. The RFP requires open space; we must learn what the RFP’s propose regarding these issues. How does the rating and ranking help in the evaluation of an RFP? The interviews will be done with questions requiring exact answers. An inquisitive rater and a good underwriter will be needed. Financial feasibility and how financially stable the developer is are the most important factors.

Christian McNamara reported on the Town financial budget for FY2024. We should have good financial information on three fiscal years. FY 2022 closed in June, 2022. The audited financials came out in February, 2023. They showed a combination of bright spots and challenges. We have a \$5M surplus, but it required debt restructuring. We generated a surplus with this, and we added to the rainy-day fund and got this fund balance up to \$12.9M which is approaching a minimally healthy level. Restructuring is doing what it was intended to do. Our challenge is the surplus was reliant on debt restructure.

The medical expense line grew significantly, which he feels was distorted by the pandemic. The demand for medical care increased because citizens delayed care during the Covid Pandemic. Medical expense is the Town's second largest expense line and the Finance Commission is looking to address these costs.

Fiscal 2023: The finance department is making projections for this fiscal year. The department is currently projecting on \$8-12M surplus. This would make the fund balance at a better range.

Fiscal 2024: Mayor issues a proposed budget which goes to the Legislative Council (LC) with public hearings, and department input. The LC can make adjustments to the Mayor's proposed budget. They can amend the budget and send it to the Mayor for her approval. There are rules regarding a procedure for a budget that is not approved by the LC and agreed by Mayor. Key line items will be discussed at the end of the end of the Budget LC deliberations and hearings. This will be in mid-May (May 17th).

The Mayor's proposed budget is asking for a 1.31 mill rate increase. There is a newly created Finance Commission (3 members) who have sent a note to the LC. They asked for some additional documentation, but on the whole, assumptions made by the mayor are realistic.

Christian McNamara is on the new Finance Commission. He stated that the goal of the Finance Commission is to create a flat rate mill rate. What would it take to get there? Historically, Town has not given residents a realistic idea of what it would take to get to the flat mill rate. Would the sacrifices be OK or not OK?

A resident asked about healthcare insurance and why the cost is so high. Also, what about joining the State Program for health insurance? Chris stated that medical is the single biggest problem in the budget. He stated that the medical insurance issue and the agent

administering same is one area that the Finance Commission needs to really learn about in order to make suggestions to cut costs. State funding for education is changing. ECS formula is being changed and Hamden will receive a slight increase during a phase in period. The state is also in a flush period, so the money coming from the state may be greater for the near future.

Another resident asked about ARPA funding and whether the Finance Commission is looking at those funds and whether some ideas will require town funding after the two years that a position is “funded” for.

Another question concerned capital improvement bonds that the town uses. The town has to take out these bonds per Christian because there are infrastructure needs right now. For example, the Wintergreen sale has been set aside for longer term needs. The Finance Commission is looking at activities that make sense to spend on now if the return on that investment is justified.

Another resident asked about the old Hamden Middle School and its associated costs. The Community Center may be a net positive if other smaller organizations are consolidated into one place.

The Board of Education is an example of the need to plan for the long view demographically. There are trends that may be occurring that will affect education costs going forward.

Denise asked what the audience had for ideas regarding issues and efforts that the Civic Association should focus on. People raised concerns about empty storefronts in the commercial center of SG, unsafe sidewalks, traffic, beautification and consistent communication from the SGCA.

Attendees were reminded to reach out if they are not receiving emails.

See these contacts:

sgcahamden@gmail.com

springglencivic.org

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Dove