

**Town of Somers
Camp Ayapo Ad Hoc Committee Minutes
Thursday, January 23, 2014
7:00pm - Town Hall**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brad Pellissier at 7:05pm. Members present were: Patrice Carson, Lucas Cherry, Ken Coelho, Ed Giza, Walter Nieliwocki, Brad Pellissier, Steve Squillace, and Dominic Wilson. Members absent were: Barbara Capuano. Others present: Barbara Anderson, and Michelle Young; later in the meeting Town Attorney Carl Landolina, Members of the Planning Commission, and Town Engineer Jeff Bord joined the meeting.

2. Discussion, possible recommendation to the Board of Selectmen, lot reconfigurations

Chairman Pellissier and Atty Landolina explained what had gone on since the last meeting. There had been a site walk of the property with Town officials, Dave Stygar of the DEEP, and several members of the committee and public. It was confirmed by the State that any of the buildings that the town wishes to retain would have to be taken out of the area of the grant easement. Any of the buildings remaining in the area of the grant easement would have to be removed within 6 months of the closing. The closing is currently set for March 1, but the town is working with the YWCA to extend the closing to April 1.

The Committee discussed with the Town Atty placing a stipulation whereby if it was decided later that the land the town retained with the buildings was not going to be used, the property should then revert to open space and not building lots, and the Town Atty agreed this could be a stipulation. (This was also discussed with the Planning Commission members when they joined the meeting and the Planning Commission felt it should be a deed restriction that would not allow it to be a building lot.)

S. Squillace discussed the number of organizations that he had talked to since August 2013 that were supportive of keeping the Camp running and would help to preserve and maintain the Camp so it could continue to be used. These organizations included the Lions Club, Fire Department, New England Mountain Bike Club, Scouts (including an Eagle Scout who wanted to do his project at the Camp), Kittridge Kitchens, Rotary, a hydrologist, Somers Historical Society Chairman, Somers High School Basketball and Cross Country Coaches, a fence company, sign maker, Director of Pine Knoll Recreation Center, Somers Recreation Director, Bank representatives, Johnson Memorial Hospital representatives, Somers Beautification Committee, USA Hauling, Somers Women's Club, Home Depot. There seems to be enough support to prevent having to tear down all the buildings and allow for reuse. This would take some of the financial burden off the town to have to remove the buildings in 6 months. The buildings could still be removed after a plan is in place but it could be done at the Town's discretion when it had funding or sources to take them down.

B. Pellissier agreed that we can't keep all the buildings, but we also can't tear them all down either.

K. Coelho was concerned about security that the group will be addressing, but agreed all the buildings do not need to come down. If a building stays and then comes down, the town still has options for the land to build another.

The AHCommittee reviewed a plan by J. Bord which encompassed 1.46 acres of land keeping 4 buildings - Avery Hall, the bathrooms, Hilltop, and the care takers cottage. The AHCommittee then discussed the plan they had drawn which encompassed 3.89 acres keeping 10 buildings - all the buildings in J. Bord's plan and the 6 buildings to the south of Avery Hall.

The AHCommittee felt the 3.89 acre plan had more to offer because:

- It maintained the primary buildings and added some secondary buildings that had and could be used as shelter for campers, an infirmary, or storage, or other.
- The shape of the 3.89 parcel was rectangular and easier to understand and mark than a winding line. It would be easier to maintain uses on the camp property if the boundary were uniform.
- The shape of the 3.89 parcel would also give the town more options depending on how they decided to use the property, i.e., if camping tents were to be set up, there would be enough land to do that.
- The upfront cost to the town to remove buildings within 6 months would be lower by only having to remove the remaining 8 buildings instead of 14, and it would reserve the right to take down the rest of the buildings when the town could (either afford to or sold the building to someone to take down) and reserve the right to use them.

There was discussion about a possible income stream coming from the use of the camp. There was further discussion about trying to merge the two plans and meet in the middle, but that only led to a 0.5 acre difference and it was felt that was not worth removing from the 3.89 acres. After discussion of the buildings and the lot shape, the consensus was that in the scheme of things, this was only 3.89 acres coming out of the open space area that was still going to be used for recreation.

The AHCommittee then discussed what area should be removed from the "lot areas" to balance the removal of the 3.89 acres from the grant area. (The land behind the houses on Stafford Road was not part of this calculation since the DEEP had said that did not have to be included.)

The following were issues discussed (referencing the map used in the grant application):

- Lot 1 on Camp Road should be removed. With regard to security, it would be easier if the lot were not on Camp Road in case the town decided to close the road. The road is also not in good shape for a house to use as access.

- Lot 2 on Mountain Road should be looked at for removal due to the wetlands, drainage issues, the two abutting lots on Mountain Road both have drainage issues and are concerned about any change to the way that land drains and wet basements, their wells are contaminated with uranium, this is an area that serves at the Blue Trail connector as well as a greenway corridor for wildlife, and it has a direct impact with 3 existing residences by sharing a property line.
- Lot 5 on Stafford Road should be looked at for removal due to its environmental sensitivity. A hydrologist in the area looked at this lot and felt it had an impact to the brook that is next to it and Hurd's Lake.
- The neighborhood lots are larger in size and it would make more sense to make 2 lots on Stafford Road where 3 were shown.

The audience questioned why these were being referred to as "lots" since there still needed to be a process to turn them into lots, and expressed concern that the First Selectwoman represented that these "lots" were not going to be sold anytime soon because they were simply insurance for down the road.

The AHCommittee discussed eliminating lots 1, 2, and 5, leaving lots 3, 4, 6, and 7 on Stafford Road. That acreage added up to 4.49. The AHCommittee questioned why area for lots further down Mountain Road (past Dillenback Road) wasn't considered where they would not be abutting anyone's property line and wouldn't be across the street from anyone therefore having no impact on existing property owners. This was how the lots were located when Whitaker Woods was purchased for open space.

Motion by S. Squillance to use the AHCommittee's plan taking out a 3.89 acre parcel encompassing 8 buildings and eliminate lots 1 and 5, add the remaining 0.1 acre to the west side of lot 4 making it 1.26 acres, and relocate lot 2 in an area further down Mountain Road past Dillenback. This plan would offer a good, usable footprint for the camp and its activities, remove lot 5 which was environmentally sensitive and has a potential impact on the aquifer supplying Hurds Lake, eliminate lot 1 on Camp Road to allow for more options for security of the camp, relocate lot 2 directly abutting and affecting neighbors which is wet, has drainage concerns, uranium contaminated wells, allows time for the town to take down buildings, and keeps the Blue Trail and greenway open. **Seconded by** W. Nieliwocki - Unanimous.

The AHCommittee discussed whether they should present a second option. **Motion by** K. Coelho to use the AHCommittee's plan taking out a 3.89 acre parcel encompassing 8 buildings and eliminate lot 1 and 2 and reduce lot 5 by 0.55 acres taken from the side by the brook and combining lots 3, 4, and 5 into two larger lots. This accomplishes the same as the previous plan in a different configuration. **Seconded by** W. Neiliwocki - Unanimous.

Motion by P Carson to request that in the event the Town rejects both of the AHCommittee's options, the only 2 lots that directly abut and impact existing properties, specifically lot 1 and 2, be removed and other areas along Mountain Road

be reviewed to locate those lots so they don't interfere with existing homeowners. There was no second - motion failed.

There was further discussion agreed upon by the AHCommittee:

- Acreage is necessary for the success of this venture for planning, operating a camp and recreation activities.
- A smaller area is very limiting to what can be done.
- There are a lot of constraints on the land encumbered by the open space grant.

Motion by K. Coelho that discussion was unanimous by the AHCommittee and Planning Commissioners that in the future if the camp isn't successful or the town doesn't want to use it for recreation any longer, the property where the buildings are must revert back to open space and not sold for lots, and the buildings should be removed. **Seconded by** D. Wilson - Unanimous.

Motion by K. Coelho that if lots retained by the town are to be sold, the abutters are given a right of first refusal for those lots. **Seconded by** S. Squillance – Unanimous.

Motion by P Carson to request that in the event the Town rejects both of the AHCommittee's options, the only 2 lots that directly abut and impact existing properties, specifically lot 1 and 2, be removed and other areas along Mountain Road be investigated to locate those lots so they don't interfere with existing homeowners. **Seconded by** D. Wilson - Passed 7-0-1.

The AHCommittee decided it would meet in Kibbe Fuller starting the next meeting on January 30, beginning at 7:00pm.

3. **Review of Minutes**

Two corrections were made to the minutes:

Page 2 - second bullet, the word "is" to be removed. Under Comments made by Committee Members, first sentence, "K. Coelho" was replaced by "D. Wilson".

Motion by P. Carson to approved the 01/16/14 Minutes as amended. **Seconded by** K. Coelho - Unanimously voted.

4. **Adjournment**

Motion by L. Cherry to adjourn the Camp Ayapo Ad Hoc Committee meeting at 9:00pm. **Seconded by** D. Wilson - Unanimously voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrice L. Carson
Committee Secretary