

**TOWN OF SOMERS
SOMERSVILLE MILL STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, July 21, 2015
7:00pm
Selectmen's Conference Room
Town Hall**

Call to Order:

Chairman Tim Keeney called the meeting to order at 7:10pm.

Members Present:

Members present included Chairman Tim Keeney, Vice Chairman Brad Pellissier and Members Tim Potrikus (via conference call) and Ralph Williams. Member Erik Ness was not available. Also present were First Selectman Lisa Pellegrini (recording) and Attorney John Wertam and one interested resident.

Discussion with Environmental Attorney re brownfields regulations/cleanup legislation and programs, funding sources, municipal liability and reuse potential:

Ms. Pellegrini introduced Attorney John Wertam from Shipman and Goodwin. Chairman Keeney summarized the meeting last week with DECD Deputy Commissioner Tim Sullivan and DEEP Brownfield Coordinator Mark Lewis. Chairman Keeney then asks Attorney Wertam about his experience.

Attorney Wertam states that he has been an environmental counseling attorney for the last 30 years, representing municipalities and developers. Involved and familiar with all the unique issues and characteristics involved in the remediation of brownfields, as well as the economic development of brownfields. He does not litigate and thus is not viewed as an adversary to DEEP. His goal is to educate and work on projects that all can embrace. He has worked with hundreds of mill sites across the State.

He elaborated that for years brownfields sat because towns had no funding to deal with them. The State has done a good job, especially with regard to liability programs if the municipality takes ownership of the site. He is currently working on a project in the lower CT valley with a town and a potential buyer.

Chairman Keeney asked him when is it the right time for the Town to find a potential buyer. He replied when things start to happen. It is important to know the results of the ongoing environmental testing. It is also important to have some type of plan based on the actual test results. He would recommend filling out the municipal relief applications as discussed by Mark Lewis at a previous meeting. But it doesn't make sense to proceed with the municipal relief programs until the town gets the testing results. Attorney Wertam asked if the Town has site access for the testing and the answer was yes.

Attorney Wertam says the Town will have a choice as to what program they will want to enter into. The answer will be determined by what the Town wants to do with the site and what partner the Town chooses to work with.

Discussion then centered on what was the possibility of the Town taking over the site contingent on the Town receiving funding for clean-up and remediation of site. The attorney said that was not the common standard approach.

Mr. William asked about entering into Municipal Brownfields Liability Relief (CGS Section 22a-133ii) and then seeking to apply for additional relief programs such as Abandoned Brownfield Cleanup Program (CGS Section 32-768) or Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program (CGS Section 32-769). Attorney Wertam stated that contingent applications would be ideal.

Mr. Williams made a comment that he anticipates residents will be asking why the Town would agree to assume risk, if in fact the decision is made to take over the property. Attorney Wertam replied that in order to get funding to remediate the site such risk makes the application stronger- “more meat on the bone”. Attorney Wertam stated that the Town must consider other liabilities. They include the attractive nuisance of the site and how long is it anticipated that the site will sit there looking the way it is.

As for obtaining brownfield remediation funding, Attorney Wertam says best scores include those plans that increase jobs and economic development of the area. Passive recreation plans don’t score as well, however a case may be made as it is better than what is already there now.

Mr. Potrikus said that it would be smart to look at development not just limited to the mill area, but stated that we need to concentrate on the immediate risk at this site.

Other questions were asked by the members and answered by the Attorney. They include:

-What is the downside of the Town owning it from an environmental point of view?
Answer: It is limited.

-When do we do the RFP to determine interest from developers?
Answer: Not until you know the test results. He also mentioned that you can also have a planning consultant do renderings or drawings of proposed development.

Attorney Wertam said that the projects rating the highest scores now are transportation oriented developments.

It was mentioned that it is possible that a canoe launch site would bring some type of economic development to the area.

It was also mentioned that nature conservationists are very keen on fish ladders. They are very expensive. However this might be a vision that is developed later on.

Chairman Keeney asked about Towns that have similar sites such as ours and asked what is happening to those sites. Attorney Wertam brought up the Town of Glastonbury taking over a site and wanting to develop a riverside park. He mentioned that the DECD or the DEEP may have examples of a public/private component partnership.

Attorney Wertam was asked to look into DECD's view and potential agreement of the possibility of the Town taking over the site contingent on the Town receiving brownfield grant funding.

Process Discussion and Schedule for Future Meetings:

Discussion began as to future possible guests. They include Glenn Chalder from Planimetrics, the Town Engineer and adjacent business owners. They also discussed the need to have a meeting without guest speakers to review all that has been heard. It was decided to have the next meeting on 7/23/15 with the Town Sanitarian and possibly the adjacent business owners.

Approval of Minutes:

July 14, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Tabled until next meeting.

Adjournment:

Mr. Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm, seconded by Vice Chairman Pellissier. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Pellegrini, Recording

Minutes are not official until accepted at a subsequent meeting.