



BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING RICHARD H. SMITH TOWN HALL

Regular Meeting

XX Special Meeting

Date: February 20, 2024

Time: 6:00 PM

Attendance:

Selectmen: Carol Jones, Duane Gates, Kathryn Russell;

Audience of Citizens: There were 6 residents in attendance; The meeting was held with a hybrid component. No one joined via Zoom.

1. Call to Order:

The special meeting of the Board of Selectman was called to order at 6:01 pm by Jones.

2. **Discussion and consideration of a stipulated judgement in the tax appeal litigation between Mount Saint John, Inc. and the Town of Deep River, entitled Mount Saint John, Inc. v. Town of Deep River (CV20-6062696) and Mount Saint John, Inc. v. Town of Deep River (CV21-6066437).**

Jones read a statement submitted via email on 2/20 @ 2:35 pm, by resident, R. Ghinder for the record:

Dear Members of the Board of Selectmen,

I am writing to share my concern regarding the upcoming discussion on Agenda Item #2 regarding Mount St John. While the specific details of the agenda item remain unclear, I wish to express a general opinion on the matter. It is crucial to uphold fairness in the resolution of any tax-related issues. Regardless of the nature of the discussion, I advocate for a consistent approach that avoids any negotiation of a lower tax bill or settlement for Mount St John. Such negotiations, if they were to occur, could potentially create an unfair precedent for other delinquent property taxes in Deep River for any other individuals or businesses.

As Mount St John's property is currently on the market, any delinquent taxes should be settled through standard practices, either from the proceeds of the sale or by the new owner. This approach ensures equitable treatment for all property owners within the community. Whatever taxes have been assessed should remain payable by the current owner or any future owner. Any out of court settlement should state just that.

I understand the complexities of the case filed in Middlesex County Court, but I believe that the time for negotiating tax assessments should be limited to the initial assessment period many years ago. It is essential to maintain the integrity of our local tax system and promote transparency in these matters.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I trust that your decisions will prioritize fairness and consistency in the best interest of the Deep River community.

I ask you to please share this with both Duane and Kathryn and also to enter this letter into the official record of tonight's Special Meeting and read it in its entirety for all members of the Board and all audience members to hear and understand why this is so critically important.

Sincerely,

Bob Ghinder

137 Kirtland Street

2. Continued.

The discussion that followed pointed out that by agreeing to this settlement, the town is ensuring a tax payment for this historically tax-exempt property in the amount of approximately \$785,000.00. It will hopefully motivate the owner to sell the property quickly, which in turn would move the property closer to redevelopment and renovation done by a new owner. This is because if the sale does not occur by July 2025, then the town will be entitled to back interest on the outstanding tax amount.

Jones made a motion to approve the terms and conditions of the proposed stipulated settlement in two (2) tax appeals, Mount Saint John, Inc. v. Town of Deep River (CV20-6062696) and Mount Saint John, Inc. v. Town of Deep River (CV21-6066437). Jones will sign on behalf of the town. Russell seconded; Gates mentioned that while he respects resident Ghinder's letter; he believes that by entering into this agreement, the town is more likely to receive a portion of the bankruptcy settlement as all parties have finally agreed on a figure. Motion passed.

Approved 3-0

3. Tax Refunds totaling \$9370.21 (4 refunds)

Gates made a motion to approve four tax refunds totaling \$9370.21. Jones second. Motion passed

Approved 3-0

4. General Discussion about ARPA projects, *no action to be taken*

Jones will send out a table listing all projects that are requesting funding. She asked all Selectman to rate the projects that they feel should be funded with a weight scale of 1-5, with 1 being the most worthwhile in their opinion. Monetary values should be considered. The discussion of what will be moved forward with a BOS vote will take place at the next BOS meeting.

5. Police matters

Jones suggested forming an Ad Hoc committee to support the DR Police. The BOS will task the Ad Hoc Committee with gathering information that the BOS and BOF are requesting and also to seek designs suitable for the police vehicles. The idea will be to help lessen the clerical burden on the Resident trooper and the constables. Gates made a motion; second by Russell. Motion carried.

Approved 3-0

6. Adjournment.

Jones asked for a motion to adjourn at 6:36 pm. Russell made a motion; Gates second. Motion carried.

Approved 3-0