

MINUTES

LAND PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Special Meeting of February 10, 2004

7:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

1) Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Frederick Augur at 7:05 p.m.

Members Present: Frederick Augur, Edmund Pantani, Al Rose and Tom Smith

Members Absent: Donald Fucci, and Vincent Candelora

Also Present: Town Manager Karl Kilduff, Town Planner Carol Zebb, Town Council Member Joanne Wentworth, Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Brian Lynch, Parks and Recreation Commission Member Mary Caruso, President of the North Branford Soccer Club Bill Wollman, North Branford Midget Football Coach Brian Vanacore, and residents Bob Gregan, Janet Gregan, and Richard Kolakowski.

2) Open Public Hearing

Chairman Fred Augur opened the Public Hearing at 7:06 p.m. and read the published legal notice of the Notice of Public Hearing which was published in *The Sound* and *The Totoket Times*.

Town Manager Karl Kilduff read the purpose of the ordinance. The Hyland property fits two important criteria: it is agricultural land, and it is land having recreational value. Mr. Kilduff gave a synopsis of the Town's negotiations with the real estate agent and the Hyland Family members from the beginning to the present. He referred to two maps which highlighted, among other properties, the Hyland property. This property was identified in a 1996 Open Space Plan as being desirable. The Town Council has approved the purchase, and the Planning and Zoning feels the acquisition is beneficial. He reported that the Town has negotiated a bargain sale with the owners wherein they donate a portion of the land to the Town and receive a tax benefit. They are also entitled to "naming rights" (ie., the "Hyland Field"). The negotiations are moving forward toward a closing. A previous study performed for the Parks and Recreation Department

has shown that the Town's fields are overused and over-stressed, and this parcel will allow for more fields. He advised of the means of the finance of the purchase of the property.

Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Brian Lynch spoke on behalf of Commission Member Mary Caruso and the Commission itself, encouraging the purchase to include active recreational use. Eight years ago, they issued a letter of intent in a request to purchase the property. The proximity to the high school provides convenience of practice fields, which would allow the current fields to rest, and to be used for games and not practice. New and upcoming sports cannot be accommodated currently. This property has drive-by appeal, and an ease of development (flat, minimal trees, easy to grow grass on). There is a definite shortage of fields at present, we can't accommodate all the sports presently. He feels the property will satisfy the current and future needs of programs as well.

Richard Kolakowski questioned whether there is a water problem/wetness. Mr. Kilduff said that the piece is considered to be wetland; but Town Planner Carol Zebb feels the ability remains for recreational use. If any regulatory permission is needed, the Inland-Wetland Committee would evaluate an application. If minor regrading is needed, that would not be a major issue. Mr. Kilduff stated that if the land were sold privately, a developer could potentially put 11 houses up.

Janet Gregan stated she is in favor of the Town's acquisition of the land; however, she hopes the recreational facilities don't destroy the view.

Bill Wollman, President of the North Branford Soccer Club, advised the Committee that there are currently 400 children registered in their programs which provide instructional development and training each spring. They have an enormous amount of field usage, and one field is shared with baseball and football. It appears this purchase would make sense by allowing sports programs to have usage for recreation.

Brian Vanacore, a football coach in North Branford, spoke next, and he stated that as a taxpayer, he feels the acquisition is worth it. He feels it's a benefit in that once the Town purchases the property, they will have it forever. The population is growing, and the purchase would benefit the Town. He recommends the purchase.

Bob Gregan was recognized. He is highly in favor of the acquisition. In 1997, former Town Manager Frank Connolly asked him to do a feasibility study of the parcel. He was asked to design the following to fit in: soccer fields, girl's softball field, baseball field, football field, field hockey and a track; and also, a gazebo, and 100 parking spaces. He is glad that the Town is moving forward and ahead with the purchase.

Richard Kolakowski then asked Mr. Kilduff what the purchase price will be, and he reported that it is a little over \$1.1 million. This is less than the fair market value, due to the donation of the portion of land.

Lastly, Bob Gregan again reiterated the tremendous need for recreational fields.

3) Close Public Hearing

Chairman Fred Augur closed the Public Hearing at 7:33 p.m.

4) Adoption of Minutes of Meeting of August 13, 2003 and January 13, 2004

Tom Smith moved that Minutes of the August 13, 2003 meeting be approved. Fred Augur seconded the motion. Edmund Pantani and Al Rose abstained. The motion was passed.

Al Rose made a motion that the Minutes of the January 13, 2004 meeting be approved. Fred Augur seconded the motion. Tom Smith abstained. Edmund Pantani was in favor, and the motion passed.

5) Conservation Easement of Panko Property

Karl Kilduff stated that he has advised the Town Council on the standing of this easement. There has been a delay in the processing in Hartford. The Town was to sign an Affidavit from the Attorney General; however, there was some uncertainty on how to complete the form. The DEP and the Attorney General's Office was unable to provide information on how it should be completed, and the Attorney General's Office advised and suggested that the Town revise the form, which Mr. Kilduff and Carol Zebb did. It was sent to Attorney General Richard Blumenthal two weeks ago, with the revisions to the Affidavit, and the Town is awaiting a response.

6) Discussion and Action re: New Property Owners

There was nothing to report on at this meeting.

7) Discussion and Action on Possible Land Acquisition of Hyland Family Property

Fred Augur said that everyone in attendance has expressed that the Town should acquire the property. Al Rose stated that although the property is in the right location, he is unsure that it is the best possible sales price. But since it is the only piece of level land close to the schools that is usable, he supports the purchase. He questions whether a developer would pay that much money this year (but perhaps next year?). He is in favor of the purchase. Tom Smith stated that he is favor of the purchase as well. Edmund Pantani also is in favor of the purchase, although he has reservations about the payment method. He also has concerns about the Regional Water Authority easement which may put restrictions on the property for recreational use. Karl Kilduff reported that it can be financed without that RWA easement. This Committee would like the Town Council to "proceed with caution" in accepting a RWA easement, as the members do not want their hands tied to restrictions.

Fred Augur then moved that the payment of the following expenditure be recommended to the Town Council to be taken from the Town of North Branford's Open Space Trust Fund: \$286,150 for the Town acquisition of 15.26 acres of the Hyland property, now or formerly owned by Marjorie H. Luttig Trust and the Estate of Clarence D. Hyland, Joint Tenancy, for open space/recreation use, located at 88 Forest Road, Northford, Assessor Map 36 Lot 15, at the northwest corner of Mill Road and Forest Road. Al Rose seconded said Motion; all were in favor and none were opposed. The Motion passed.

8) Adjourn to Executive Session re: Real Estate, Pursuant to CGS §1-200(6)(D)

There was no adjournment to Executive Session at this meeting.

9) Adjournment

A motion was made by Tom Smith to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Al Rose seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed. The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on March 9, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. "Discussion and Action re: Hyland Property Acquisition" will be removed from the Agenda. "Other Business" will be added to it.

Respectfully Submitted by

Jeanette M. Marshall, Clerk