



Tuesday, December 2, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Jay Melley, Chuck Drake, Terry Langevin, Lon Pelton, Bill Schoner, April Vines, Debby Silliman, Ann Allen, Carol MacMullen, Linda Alexander, Michael Novak, Nancy Taylor, Chris Alford, Mickey Mattei, Kate Lange, Dawn Morgan, Ford Parker

Guests: Paul Norris, Director of Rec. & Leisure Services
Al Neumann, Building Director

Regrets: Vivian Cicero, Florence Barlow, Randy Lee, Kate Morrell, Al Boehm

Absent: Tim Curtis, Dick Dolliver, Lauren Grimshaw, Heidi Lindberg,

The Special meeting began at 7:03pm at the Nature Center.

Jay began the meeting by stating that the next meeting will be January 13th. So, now is a good time to initiate a serious discussion in furthering our agenda and following up on the need for Northwest Park to replace the heating/cooling system in the Nature Center, potentially with a sustainable geothermal system.

As a follow up to the annual meeting, Ford and Jay had conversations to see if an opportunity exists to get concrete information and involvement from the Town to support the geothermal project and to obtain acknowledgement by us to assist with the project. One aspect is to have a system up and running to support the needs of the Nature Center and the other is to complete a display /education program as an example of sustainability.

Thanks were extended to Paul Norris and Al Neumann for joining us this evening..

Chuck set a motion into place: "To propose that due to the magnitude of this expenditure we have a general meeting of the Friends to present the complete details of the project before committing funding to the geothermal heating/cooling system for the Nature Center." Linda Alexander seconded the motion.

Jay ruled that the motion was out of order and there would be no discussion on it until the guests were heard.

Paul Norris began by saying that Northwest Park has put together a CIP (Capital Improvement Proposal) to complete facilities work at the Park. This work includes the Mule Barn, Warming Shed, and the addressing of the aging, expensive heating/cooling systems of the Nature Center.

The Staff established that the upgrading of the existing systems held exorbitant costs so alternatives needed to be examined. A geothermal system was put on the table as a possible solution for which the Town Council provided funds up to \$10,000 for a feasibility study as well as possibly \$60,000 for a geothermal system if that ended up being the suggested solution for the building. The Town wanted to take this opportunity to present the effort to the Friends to see if the Friends are willing to be a partner in these decisions and implementation. This is totally an open information sharing forum.

Ford spoke next and said this is a great opportunity to be a model for sustainability right here at the Park. To date, he has looked at two different firms to begin the evaluations as to what is best for the building. First, he is looking at the costs to install, the long term costs and fund recover time, and the environmental impact. One proposal is approximately \$90,000 for everything but the exhibit/educational portion.

Debby asked if there were systems locally and Chris said residential ones on Blue Hills/Tunxis houses and commercially, the Westminster School put in a system in a newly constructed building.

Al Neumann spoke next saying for Poquonock School, he contacted Turner LLC out of Maine, where geothermal is well established and accepted. The proposal for \$1.2-\$4 million will become public next Tuesday. The Nature Center has been chosen as a perfect place since the public building commission has been looking for projects where better energy can be used and the Nature center is open 7 days a week and has various components that lends itself to stages of implementation. Furthermore, the building code states we need a supply of fresh air and in this building we have old wood, live animals, stuffed animals which require a better air flow. Tightening up the building to save energy is not an option. If we do nothing to any of our building we will be sorry 10-15 years from now. The CT Clean air energy Fund will not fund anything unless it needs developing and geothermal is beyond that and basically works. Al is budgeting to make a system that was supposed to last 20 years, last more at the Nature Center. Bill asked about the life expectancy of the building and Al answered another good 100 years.

Linda wanted to know what can be done to reduce energy expenditure instead of just this geothermal project. Al said he is looking at all Town buildings and is weighing all the options.

Jay asked Al to make a recommendation. He stated emphatically that the Nature Center Building needs to be looked at. It's an easy building to look at and will cost only a few thousand dollars to complete studies. They will be looking at shallow wells, deep well, closed loops, open loops and other alternatives. Al stated what's important to know is the future use of the building as well which will also be part of the study. In 45 days, if this study should be ready, we will meet again for further discussion.

Chuck commented he had done his own research and it seems that we should consult experts. Al confirmed that the feasibility study will address that issue.

Jay asked Al to put together a time table for this building. He said the study should be completed 45 days from submittal of the RFP. If the proposal exceeds \$86,000, it becomes a Public Commission Building Project, discussed by them. The next step would be to present the study results to Council no later than the second March meeting.

Linda was really upset that her tax dollars are being spent at \$10,000 for a study. Mike said it is only 100 engineering hours and things are just that expensive if you want a competent study. She was also reminded that it is up to \$10,000 for the study and Paul stated they usually go with the lowest bidder.

Al also stated that, in the spring, the underground oil tank has to be pulled and what is done to replace it depends on the solution to the Nature Center heating/cooling system.

It is currently a Council Directive to look at the Geothermal System for which they have committed the \$60,000 if the Study says that is the answer.

Chuck brought up Methane use from the Landfill to be closed around 2011. Al said the quality has not been tested and that the current thought is that if we go anywhere with that, it will be with energy on the site. Chuck said we have 5 buildings. Ford stated that Brian Funk sent him a correspondence that they are still evaluating this but nothing would be done until the Landfill was closed.

The next discussion on this matter was suggested to be at the February 10th meeting.

A motion was made: "The Friends are willing to keep an open mind for further discussion and partnership with the Town in regard to listening to and helping with the proposal for the Nature Center heating/cooling system resulting from the RFP currently authorized for up to \$10,000 by Council." The motion passed unanimously.

The first motion made by Chuck and seconded by Linda was withdrawn.

The special meeting adjourned at 8pm.