

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN/LAND USE COMMISSIONS
SPECIAL MEETING
September 21, 2011**

A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held on Wednesday, September 21, 2011 in the Selectmen's Conference Room.

Board of Selectmen members present: First Selectman Frank Chiaramonte, Selectman Christina Emery, and Selectman Michael Criss.

Land Use Chairmen present: Zoning Commission Chairman Ronald Sherlock, ZBA Chairman Tom Rotondo, IWWC Chairman Bruce Burnett, Planning Commission Chairman Michael Orefice, and Economic Development Commission Chairman Tom Schoenemann.

Attendees: Bob Petricone with Litchfield Housing Trust, Jon Truskauskas, and Michele DaSilva, Assessor.

Call to Order

Mr. Chiaramonte called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Mr. Bob Petricone with Litchfield Housing Trust to discuss Affordable Housing:

Mr. Petricone explained that the issue of affordable housing surfaced in Litchfield when it became apparent in the 1980's that a family with a median income could not afford to buy a median priced house. As prices escalated and incomes did not they found that families couldn't afford a house and many could not afford rentals. Young people weren't returning to town after college, which leads to smaller school population, fewer emergency volunteers, etc. Their motivation was to keep young people and families in town, especially those who have relatives in the area or work in Litchfield. The Litchfield Housing Trust was formed in 1989 and has completed 47 units to date. The units they build or renovate are energy efficient with everything in proper working order. In order to ensure the homeowners maintain their property, yearly inspections are done by the Trust. The Trust retains ownership of the land, and the houses have mortgages and taxes paid by the owner. Their board is comprised of 12 volunteers. The Trust is a non-profit, designated as a 501(c)(3). They have a staff of one part-time person averaging 10 hours per week mostly dedicated to rental turnovers. Mr. Petricone noted they were very lucky to have 35 acres donated to them to start with. Of the 35 acres, they developed 4 acres of affordable housing, leaving the rest as open space. Their target group is first time home buyers with a connection to the town and whose incomes are under 80% of the median. They currently are developing 6 to 8 affordable houses on 12.3 acres of land given to the Trust by the town of Litchfield. He recommends looking into the Small Cities and STEAP grants and DECD for funding. He noted the Small Cities grant allows for the purchase of land and renovations but not new construction. Mr. Petricone recommends contacting the following people who have been helpful to the Trust. Dave Burdeau, consultant for Kent Affordable Housing, Leslie Higgins-Biddle with the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) in Hartford, and Pat Spring, (860-563-2943, extension 13) Director of Community Development with the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Board thanked Mr. Petricone for coming to the meeting.

Review Procedures for Zoning Enforcement Officer:

Mr. Chiaramonte explained that when the ZEO began employment with the town she was to be paid \$35 per call and somehow that has been converted into \$35 per hour. Information he obtained from other towns the ZEO works for shows that for the Town of Morris, Ms. Nelson works a maximum of 10 hours per week- 6 hours in the office, the rest for outside calls. She receives \$25 per hour plus mileage. For Colebrook she works 15 hours per week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and receives \$26 per hour. Mr. Sherlock stated he cannot figure out what time she spends on projects from her paperwork. When asked, Mr. Chiaramonte replied that Ms. Nelson does not have a contract with the Town of Harwinton. Though it was agreed that Land Use Coordinator, Polly Redmond, is capable and certified to do the job, Mr. Chiaramonte stated that, when first elected, he approached the Board of Finance about making her position full time but was denied. She currently works 29 ½ hours per week (1/2 hour below full time status). Ms. Redmond would need more hours to handle both jobs. In order to solve the immediate problem of the cost of additional hours, they discussed the possibility of using \$5,000 from the current Zoning and Planning Commissions budgets, allowing for 143 hours or 2.75 hours per week. They also discussed having Christine Neal in Land Use work more hours. All agreed this must be addressed in next years' budget. Mr. Chiaramonte reiterated that a solution is needed quickly.

Town Plan of Conservation and Development:

Mike Orefice noted they have made some changes to Planning Regulations as a result of the Plan of Development. Other boards should review the Plan to see what might affect them. A new law came into effect and they need to address agriculture in the next plan. The Planning Commission has been approached by someone who would like to build next to the Post Office a 5,000 square foot building and match the Post Office façade. When asked, Mr. Orefice stated the town does not have a design regulation and that would need to come from the Zoning Commission and possibly Planning also. Mr. Chiaramonte stated there is another resident who wants to put a large metal building in a residential area and he should not be allowed to do so and the Town needs to look at having design standards. Ms. Emery will research design standards from other small towns.

Assessor Michele DaSilva to discuss open space designation:

Mrs. DaSilva passed out information she obtained to the Board and Commission Chairmen. She stated that open space is a part of public act 490 and needs to be adopted by town ordinance in order to utilize that regulation. It is to preserve open space around public areas such as parks, wetlands, historic areas, etc. She noted that reading through ordinances obtained from other towns it appears that anyone owning land in excess of a building lot is able to apply for open space. The open space designation is for 10 years only. Currently excess land is charged at \$6,200 per acre. If the land designation changes to farm value the price would drop to \$1,200. Mrs. DaSilva stated this would result in a substantial loss to the grand list. She estimates the yearly cost to the town would be approximately \$400,000. The Selectmen had no other questions and all agreed not to pursue the subject any further. The Board thanked Mrs. DaSilva for all her work and research on this topic.

Updates from Land Use Commissions:

Mr. Criss said everyone will be getting a copy shortly of WPCA's new rules and regulations. There was much work involved as the regulations have not been updated since 1983. The new rules were adopted at a public hearing held by WPCA. The only increase was the permit for a connection. The town has the second lowest user rate in the state.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Minutes submitted by:

Melissa Santoro

RECEIVED FOR RECORD AT HARWINTON, CT
ON *9-27-11* AT *9:27 AM*
ATTEST: PATRICIA K. WILLIAMSEN, TOWN CLERK