

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE - TOWNSHIP OF MENDHAM
SPECIAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 20, 2014

Mayor Thomas called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., Township Hall, Brookside, New Jersey.

ROLL CALL:	Mr. Baumann	Present
	Mr. Cioppettini	Present
	Mr. Strobel	Present
	Mr. Tolley	Present
	Mayor Thomas	Present

Also Present:	John M. Mills, III, Esq., Township Attorney
	Amev Upchurch, Township Administrator
	Kathleen Potter, Township Clerk

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

ADEQUATE NOTICE: Adequate notice of this meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Mendham was given as required by the Open Public Meetings Act as follows: Notice was given to the Daily Record, Observer Tribune and the Star Ledger on October 20, 2015. Notice was posted on the Bulletin Board in the Township Offices and Notice was filed with the Township Clerk.

PITNEY FINANCIALS – Russ McCabe on behalf of the Finance Committee

Mr. McCabe gave a recap of the annual debt service and the property maintenance expenditures. The Finance Committee met with developers to discuss how to bring the property to current safety standards. They also explored two approaches: repairing the entire main house, which cost about \$1.75 million, or restoring only the historic element of the main house, which costs about \$1.5 million. Both options fell within the current zoning restrictions. Mr. McCabe noted that the original house was very small.

Mr. McCabe presented possible options to consider if the house cannot be saved and the Township no longer wished to retain the property. He reviewed estimated land values and taxes for houses, townhomes and independent living.

Mr. McCabe stated that the Committee should consider the following:

- Under the current scenario there is no tax revenue. Property maintenance costs are \$4,800 per month
- Further repairs to stop deterioration are anticipated
- Repurposing the existing main building for public use will require extensive upgrades
- Re-zoning offers optimum flexibility in potential use
- Sale of the property would give one-time revenue and ongoing tax revenue
- If sold, the projected savings for the next five years in \$3,294,408.00.

Mr. Tolley noted that the true tax savings to the town would be smaller since the municipal portion is only a part of the full tax bill. When asked about the net value on sales Mr. McCabe clarified that the values were based on selling the property as-is.

It was verified for Mr. Baumann that the main house would need to be updated to meet code standards to be were rented as a one-family house. Mr. Cioppettini added that the meetings held at Pitney were in violation of the law by using a single-family house for a public purpose. There are many upgrades that need to be completed in order for a facility to be public purpose, such as handicap accessibility and doors opening out. Complying with all the codes would be a tremendous amount of work.

It was verified for Mr. Strobel that the \$206K in debt was exclusive of the open space.

The meeting was open to hearing persons present.

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John Donato, 48 Ironia Road

Mr. Donato stated that the tax savings would be an economic benefit to the town.

Jim Freemyer, 9 Ballentine Road

Mr. Freemyer asked if the presented scenarios required the main house to be demolished. Mr. McCabe stated that the property would be sold in entirety to a developer and assumed the buildings would be demolished. There was discussion regarding land value. Mr. Freemyer asked if other options were being considered. Mayor Thomas stated that the meeting is an informational session and the Township Committee is hearing the presentations for the first time. Mr. McCabe clarified that the Finance Committee did not consider repairing and selling the house as an historical home. Mr. Cioppettini stated that updating the house would be a considerable project for the average citizen to undertake.

Russ Buchanan, Mendham Borough

It was noted that septic and sewer was not discussed yet.

Brian Boden, 41 Walsingham Road

Mr. Boden stated that many historic homes are used only for tours and visitations, which would not require bringing the house up to code. He added that the outside of the house contributes to the visual setting of the property and provides historic value. Mr. McCabe stated that restoration of the outside of the house still has high costs. He believed keeping the original house would devalue the property. Since no home inspection was completed when the property was purchased Mr. McCabe assumed there was never intention to preserve the buildings.

Mr. Cioppettini stated that the Committee originally bought the property with no intention of saving the buildings because of the poor conditions. The purchase was for the land with the intention to build a place for the community. Negotiations were clear that they were not interested in saving the buildings.

Sue Browse, 13 Cooper Road

Ms. Browse questioned if the intention of selling the property is to pay off the debt. Mr.

McCabe stated that the debt would not be entirely paid off since the Township must retain the open space. He added that the property must be rezoned for any use other than a single family dwelling. Mr. Tolley added that zoning is also a public process that allows public input.

Greg Ryan, 11 Glen Gary Drive

Mr. Ryan urged the Committee to remember the vision when purchased and not be hasty to sell. The property can be held for years without incremental costs until the Township decides how to utilize the property. Mr. Tolley stated that the extra buildings are a nuisance and can't be ignored.

Anastasio Konidaris, 6 Ballentine Road

Mr. Konidaris stated that residents should not lose sight of the open space that is already preserved. Saving \$3.2 million will create both direct and indirect economic benefits in the Township.

There being no further comment hearing persons present was closed.

PITNEY FUNDRAISING — Omie Ryan, Peter Dumovic and Rick Blood on behalf of the
Pitney Farm Public Purpose Study Committee

Rick Blood reviewed the Committee's task and their recommendation for a multi-use building to meet the demands of the community. He reviewed the sources of funding for each stage of the project, including historic structure analysis, preservation plan, constructions plans and construction. It was estimated that an average of \$25,000.00 per year could be raised through individual donors.

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The recommendations going forward were as follows:

- Seek funding for an Historic Structure Analysis to determine structures that can be preserved and funded by non-municipal sources
- Task the Friends of Pitney Farm with responsibility to seek funds
- Identify individuals willing to organize a Capital Campaign
- Access to any funds requires a choice on the long-term use of Pitney property

Peter Dumovic stated that the property affords an opportunity to create something unique for generations to come. Omie Ryan stated that residents have expressed interest in the project; however, the uncertainty causes them to find other commitments.

There was discussion on applying for grants as a private entity rather than a public municipality. Mr. Cioppetini questioned the caveats of receiving the grant money. Mr. Blood stated that utilizing funds does not require the Township to move to the next step.

Pat Maynard, 65 Oak Knoll Road

Ms. Maynard stated that approximately \$1 million was raised for the Cider Mill and the County was eager to help. She recommended researching the New Jersey Historical Grant, which is for the bricks and mortar of a project. She urged the Committee to quickly determine a use for the property so fundraising can begin. Ms. Maynard stated that she would happily pay more taxes to save the property.

Receiving funds as a 501c3 was discussed. When asked for a timetable Mr. Blood stated that it is difficult to determine timing without a clear direction. Mr. Tolley noted that much of the grant money is for historic preservation; however, the large portion of the proposal calls for a new facility. Mr. Blood stated that plans must be determined so fundraising can begin, adding that a capital campaign will determine available money.

Mayor Thomas noted that most grants require a 20% match and Ms. Ryan stated it would be the obligation of the Friends of Pitney Farm to provide the funds for the match. A professional grant writer would be hired through fundraising. Ms. Ryan noted that an historic structure report will identify what, if any, parts of the house are deemed historic.

The meeting was open to hearing persons present.

Robert Hennelly, 2 Robert Road

Mr. Hennelly recommended conducting an architectural dig due to the property's long history.

Anastasio Konidaris, 6 Ballentine Road

Mrs. Konidaris questioned if a study completed in 2004 still provided an accurate estimate for possible individual donations.

Diana Orban Brown, Ironia Road

Mrs. Orban Brown suggested completing an historic analysis using funds previously raised by the Friends of Pitney Farm. It was noted that the analysis requires permission from the property owner to proceed. Mr. Tolley supported the analysis, but noted that the Township Committee must supply clear directions regarding the parameters and intention. There was discussion regarding the historic registry. Ms. Ryan supported starting the analysis.

When asked about fundraising for the Library of the Mendhams, Mr. Blood stated that approximately \$1.2 million, including a guarantee of land donation, was raised.

Pat Maynard, 65 Oak Knoll Road

Mrs. Maynard recommended that Ray Change at the County Department of Planning be contacted regarding the project.

Russ McCabe, 16 Carriage Hill

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Mr. McCabe supported the analysis in order to find the true value of the dwellings and move forward.

Anastasio Konidaris, 6 Ballentine Road
Mr. Konidaris emphasized that seven acres of the Pitney Farm is already preserved. He believed other areas of the Township would suffer if more money is put into the property.

Brian Boden, 41 Walsingham Road
Mr. Boden agreed that the Township lacked expertise to decide what part of the house is valuable. He announced that David Bailin supports the preservation of Pitney and plans to donate \$200 to the Friends of Pitney Farm.

ADJOURN

Upon a motion made and seconded the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Kathleen Potter, Township Clerk