

Town of Newington, NH
Eversource Public Hearing Minutes
Saturday, March 2, 2019 Town Hall

Present: Chair Ted Connors; Selectman Mike Marconi; Selectman Ken Latchaw; Denis Hebert, via phone; Susan Geiger; Atty. John Ratigan, various Newington Residents and Martha Roy, Town Administrator.

T. Connors opened the public hearing.

The Selectmen received a letter from Peggy Lamson in support of negotiations with Eversource. A copy of the letter was read and entered into the record.

Denis Hebert was present at the meeting via phone.

John Ratigan discussed the history and the process and the settlement offer.

Susan Geiger explained that the Supreme Court does not have to take an appeal. It is discretionary. It has to evaluate if serious errors were made.

John Ratigan added that at the hearing last week, we had support for a rehearing and support for exploring a settlement. The Board of Selectmen wanted to seek reimbursement for legal costs and concern about doing some wetland mitigation. The funds are not guaranteed by the DES for wetlands mitigation. The SEC has not identified a laydown yard for trucks, materials and cabling. The Board of Selectmen is concerned with where this laydown yard would be. Sites that are being considered are behind the Old town Hall, the Stoen School, town garage and transfer station. Eversource has suggested a 3-year lease for \$396,000 for a laydown area on the Town's property.

Jamie Belanger asked about how the summer camp would be affected. M. Roy stated that the summer camp could be moved to the Town Hall or the school. J. Belanger wanted to know if there would be extra charges for this. T. Connors responded that there would be no extra fees.

The settlement included the agreement that is Newington is not awarded \$120,000 for wetland mitigation through the DES ARM grant program, then Eversource will give \$120,000 to the Town for a wetland's mitigation project.

Jim Vrotacoe asked why the Town isn't asking that the 3-year lease plan be shorten up. John Ratigan stated that he expects the actual time period when the laydown yard is in use will be 12-18 months, not the 3 years that Eversource proposed.

Jessica Morgan voiced concern about the trucks traveling down Nimble Hill Road constantly. John Ratigan explained that most trucks will stay on site, however some trucks, such as cement trucks will come in and out. J. Morgan also expressed that she didn't like the idea of the summer camp at the school. The children have been in the school all year and need a different place to have camp. The camp is currently in a very special part of town.

Jim Vrotacoe had health concerns with the lines going across his property. Susan Geiger explained that this issue was already litigated before the Site Evaluation Committee. John Ratigan pointed out that this was the first project in NH that has had this much line burial underground. Denis Hebert worked very hard for five years trying to get them to put the entire project underground.

Jim Vrotacoe wanted to know what the towers would look like. John Ratigan said they were very large poles.

Heather Belanger thought that it was a terrible idea to have the summer camp at the school. The grove is shaded and is close to the library. If the camp was at the school, they would have to be bused to the library.

Nin Dell Isola questioned if the town was just going to lay down and roll over. She stated: "This is your legacy."

Melissa Vierda thought that significant funds would be needed to restore the land to its original condition after the process. Is the town requiring Eversource to completely restore the land to its original condition? J. Ratigan stated that the town has a memorandum of understanding in place to insure that the land is restored.

Meg Wyass explained that the lines are 199 feet from her house. If the town is getting a significant amount of money from Eversource, how come we can't get the lines buried. She is rejoicing for her neighbors, but what about her. John Ratigan explained that there has been five years of fighting for all the lines to be buried. During this process, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent. The amount of social and political energy has been remarkable. The NH site committee said it would cost \$8 million per mile to bury the lines.

Jennifer Kent Weiner wanted to have the residents who wanted the lines above ground to say why?

Lulu Pickering responded by saying that Eversource never approached us about burying the lines across our property, never asked us for an easement and told

us several times that lines would be above ground across Judy, Curtis and Will/My properties. We were never asked about giving them underground rights. Lulu also stated that we are not responsible for keeping the lines above ground. Eversource did not care what Judy, Curtis, Will or I thought. They only worried about the financial cost of burying more of the lines underground.

Jennifer Kent Weiner thought that there are risks that are greater. We need to look at the greater good and the health risks.

Steve Bush wanted to know who was going to pay if the roads are damaged? John Ratigan said that in the agreement it will state that all roads will be restored to the preexisting condition. The town engineers will record the condition of the roads, borings will be taken and Eversource will be required to post a \$500,000 bond to cover any damage that may be done.

Emily Savinelli didn't know that we were going to hear about negotiations. She spoke in favor of keeping summer camp at the Old Town Hall.

Ted Connors explained the time frame. In early February the SEC published their decision. The town had 30 days to work this out.

E. Savinelli expressed concern about the renters at Old Town Hall during the summer. Ted Connors explained that there are no renters during the summer camp months at the Old Town Hall. She is interested in the school comments about having the summer camp at the school.

Jack O'Reilly thought that the school wasn't a good idea because the maintenance crew needs the summer to work on bigger projects that can't be done during the school year. There won't be space. This is a revaluation year, it could be affected with ugly towers passing thru town. He was hoping the town could get a waiver to complete the revaluation next year? Has the town approached the state?

Jamie Belanger thanked the Board of Selectmen for everything they have done. There have been some decisions that have concerned him. The amount of pressure and the negotiations. Are we giving up our principles for \$396,000?

John Ratigan explained that we don't have any authority. Puts lots of pressure on Newington, but the Board of Selectmen and Denis Hebert have been fighting for 5 years.

Jamie Belanger stated that the town should be settling for a lot more. He stated that there was a zero missing here on \$396,000. #.

Samara Robertson wished that these things had been advertised. More transparent. She had no idea. Why no breakdown?

Laura Stone does not want the summer camp to be moved. She was in favor of the laydown site at the Town garage.

Ted Connors explained that the Board is looking at many sites.

Abby Hood asked if there were other options besides the Old Town Hall, Fox Point and the Stone School? Ted Connors said that the Transfer Station is also being considered.

H. Belanger thought that the Town Garage was another option. She gave her list of priorities as First, the Stone School and Town Garage, Second-Recycling, Third-South Field, Fox Point and Fourth-Old Town Hall.

J. Morgan thought that the Old Town Hall option was the worst option and suggested the old drive in site. T. Connors explained that the old drive in is not town property and thus the town would not get the lease revenue for it.

Ken Latchaw stated that any information that is being discussed today was not known at the first public hearing. He explained that if the town loses this challenge Newington will lose all control including the proposed agreement.

E. Savinelli wanted to know what the Town's goals were and an explanation of why we are looking at locations in town for the laydown area. John Ratigan stated if the laydown area isn't in town then Eversource will look at privately owned land and Newington will have no control over this. A landowner in town could lease their land to Eversource. The State would make the decisions.

Abby Hood's first choice would be to appeal, but then she would like the laydown area at the Stone School with an option of restoring the Stone School when the process is over.

Ken Ernstoff thought that the Town had voted that Fox Point was to be only used for recreation. A laydown area would not be allowed there. John Ratigan explained that the vote at Town Meeting was a non-binding vote. Also, he elaborated that there has been an order by the Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) which states that people who believe they have been harmed by the Seacoast Reliability Project can apply to an independent arbitrator for compensation. An example can be rock wall repair or a real estate sale offer substantially lower

value due to 2 offers over 3 years. The Board of Selectmen will send out a notice explaining this.

J. Belanger wanted to know if the actions taken by Newington would affect Durham's appeal. John Ratigan said that Durham is independent of any action Newington takes.

Rick Hamelin was concerned about the traffic mitigation, the engineering designs and specs. He would like the Town to post a link on the website when they are digging. The Town should meet with the state code enforcement. Everything should be inspected, the plans reviewed, and the work reviewed by the town engineer.

John Frink thought a laydown area at the end of Nimble Hill Road made sense and was a good idea.

Lulu Pickering wanted the Board of Selectmen to file an appeal and go all the way to the Supreme Court.

T. Connors asked for any more comments. There were none and the public hearing was closed.

Respectfully submitted,
Martha S. Roy
Town Administrator