

SELECTBOARD SPECIAL MEETING and
PUBLIC FORUM on No.10 POND
Approved Minutes

July 31, 2017

7:00pm Calais Town Hall

Attending: Denise Wheeler, John Brabant, Rose Pelchuck, Sharon Fannon, Rob Richert, Judith Robert, Jan Ohlsson, Cathy Silk, Dorothy Naylor, Margaret Bowen, James Barlow, Esq., Matthew Mitchell, Cindy Gardner-Morse, Dick Rouelle, Dorothy Singleton, Heather Johnson, Jamie Moorby, Terrill Brumback, Millie Brumback, Robert Mitchell, Rachel Seelig, Stephanie Smith, Lisa McCarthy, Heather Scandale, Rhonda Grace, Rowan Jacobson, Stephanie Kaplan, Walt Ames, Gail Graham, Debbey Haskins , Andrew Nemethy, Cynthia Johnson, Tom McArdle and others.

Actions:

Denise Wheeler called the meeting and public forum to order at 7:07 pm. Denise read an Opening Statement thanking those in attendance, outlining the process to speak noting all questions and comments need to be addressed to the Selectboard. Last Friday the Selectboard received a list of questions from a group of concerned residents, some of which will be answered this evening. Judith Robert and Jan Ohlsson will be writing your questions on flip charts for future reference by the Selectboard. Denise Wheeler recognized the three representatives from the Women's Relief Corp, Cathy Silk, President, Margaret (Peg) Bowen, Treasurer and Building Caretaker, and Dorothy Naylor and offered them time to provide some history and background on Memorial Hall and the Women's Relief Corp (WRC).

Margaret Bowen read history of the property by referencing the various ownership deeds over the years of the property and Memorial Hall. Margaret stated the Grand Army of the Republic consists of five organizations, one of which is the Women's Relief Corp.

Denise Wheeler began to answer some questions put forth earlier as noted above.

Who owns GAR Road? Historically the Town has considered GAR Road to be a Class 4 town highway and it has been maintained as such by the Town. The Town believes that the Women's Relief Corp owns the land underlying the Town highway R-O-W. Nothing has recently come to the Town's attention that would change that perspective. The Town believes that the Town's R-O-W for GAR Road includes the traveled portion of the road plus a few feet on either side to perform needed maintenance. Margaret Bowen stated a differing position and went on to say that in 1990, the WRC had a problem with swimmers parking on GAR Road. The WRC asked the Calais Selectboard to have an ordinance instituted to prohibit parking on GAR Road and such ordinance was approved by the Selectboard. Margaret said they are ready to go to court to prove they own GAR Road.

Who owns the swim area on No. 10 Pond? The Town believes the swim area is owned by the WRC. Cathy Silk stated it was never promoted as a swim area, especially not as a public one; it just happened over the years. Margaret Bowen said the only "no trespassing" sign was put up last year on "the point" due to the naked man.

What process was used to acquire the swim area at Curtis Pond? Denise Wheeler responded that she did not know and it would have to be researched. Cindy Gardner-Morse reported that in the 1990's the Calais Swim Committee along with the Vermont Land Trust worked together on acquiring that land for use as a public swim area.

Will the Town take action to repeal the tax exempt status of Memorial Hall? The Town has not decided at this time to take any action. We would like to see Memorial Hall preserved and would be happy to cooperate with any efforts to that end. Margaret Bowen stated the tax exempt status goes

back to 1888 and was an act of the legislature granting it to the organization that runs Memorial Hall, in this case WRC. Peg went on to describe the deterioration of the supports under the first floor. After evaluation by an engineer, the WRC was told steel support beams were needed along with replacing the first floor of the hall. Cost was estimated then at \$295,000.00 and the hall was closed for use due to the structural issues.

What is the status of public access to the war memorial? Denise Wheeler asked the WRC to respond. Cathy Silk said there is public access to the monument, that's why they left the cut-out in the hedges specifically so people can see the monument. One would need to park at the triangle or in the little pull-off area near the hedges. Cathy Silk went on to say that "they would not be considered trespassing" if they went to look at the monument. One can distinguish between looking at the monument and going swimming off the point or wandering around the property; it's about trusting people Cathy noted.

At 7:40 pm, Denise Wheeler opened the forum for the public to speak. The following people made statements and/or asked questions:

Dorothy Singleton	Heather Johnson	Jamie Moorby	Terrill Brumbeck
Millie Brumbeck	Rob Mitchell	Rachel Seelig	Stephanie Smith
Lisa McCarthy	Heather Scandale	Rowan Jacobson	Stephanie Kaplan
Walt Ames	Gail Graham	Debbey Haskins	Andrew Nemethy
Cynthia Johnson	Tom McArdle		

Closing remarks from the WRC began with Dorothy Naylor. "We're getting old," Dot Naylor said. "If a non-profit could get together a plan in one or two months, contact us and we'll be glad to meet with you." Margaret Bowen stated the WRC is the only group on the eastern seaboard, one would have to join the National Group of Grand Army of the Republic. Margaret urged interested parties to put a proposition together. Margaret Bowen said she was asked many years ago by an elderly member to take care of the building and that is what she's been doing ever since.

Denise Wheeler thanked everyone for coming tonight with hope things can move forward in a positive direction. The meeting ended at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rose Pelchuck
Selectboard Member