

FINAL

Minutes of the Public Meeting Tuesday February 21, 2017, 7:00 PM Sherman School Harvest New England/ Fire Training Center

Attendees: First Selectman Mike Tetreau, DPW Director Joe Michelangelo, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Fire LT Scott Bisson, DPW Superintendent Scott Bartlett, SW&R Director Mike Zembruski, Tree Warden Jeff Minder, Harvest New England VP Chris Field and Sight Manager Ryan Kelly, RTM Members Bill Perugini, Dru Georgianis, Ken Lee and members of the public.

Introduction: First Selectman **Mike Tetreau** welcomed all in attendance. Tonight we will discuss the Fire Training Center and the Harvest New England site, then allow for questions and answers at the end of each session.

HARVEST NEW ENGLAND SITE

Joe Michelangelo began the presentation with the Purpose and Objective of the Town Yard Waste Facility. We are here to address the smoldering fire at the Yard on January 7, 2017.

Fire Chief Denis McCarthy stated there will be zero tolerance for fires at this site. We will be finding every solution to bring that occurrence down to zero if properly managed. There is an after action review for each incident. We need to partner with Harvest New England to see what we can do better. When the piles get too big, water doesn't put them out. The piles need to be broken into smaller piles and extinguished.

A Code Red was sent to residents in the area. Harvest committed round the clock staff from Friday until the pile was extinguished on Tuesday. This nagging, persistent fire was unacceptable.

When the piles are not moved for long periods of time they get stagnant and heat up due to lack of air movement. The piles should not be greater than 20 feet.

The mulch temperatures probed 2 times a week to make sure they are kept under 140 degrees –if the pile were to reach 160 degrees, this would create an emergency action. See Report

Director **Joe Michelangelo** explained there will be zero tolerance.

The Harvest New England contract expires June 30, 2017. We are looking to limit the amount of contractor waste, reduce the square footage from 6 acres to 4 acres to cut down on the size of the operation.

Mr. Michelangelo addressed the proposed landscaping plan presented by Peter Minutti of UCONN at a previous meeting showing a cross section of how the planting will be incorporated.

Q&A

HOW MUCH MATERIAL IS COMING FROM OUTSIDE OF FAIRFIELD?

Very hard to say, many contractors that work in Fairfield aren't Fairfield based businesses.

HNE Rep Mr. Field: Everyone that comes in has to have a permit to dump. There is one known company, a mattress deconstruction company from Bridgeport.

DO YOU HAVE TO BE A RESIDENT TO GET A PERMIT?

SW&R Mr. Zembruski: No, you can get a non resident pass.

HAS THE SIZE OF THE PILE GROWN OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS?

Mr. Field : No

WHAT KIND OF GASES ARE PRODUCED? IS IT METHANE?

Mr. Field: No, It is biological activity, a function of heat.

WHAT TEMPERATURE IS REQUIRED TO SMOLDER ?

Mr. Field : We have to take action at 150 degrees. It won't smolder at 160, at that time you will see heat come off the pile.

HOW HIGH IS THE PILE?

Joe: The pile is fluid, the market time is the spring.

Mr. Field: The peak is now, it will go down as of Friday -it is a football field long but there will be no pile in June.

Joe: Operationally, there are 6 piles on site, each have a different function.

HOW TALL IS THE TALLEST?

Joe: Each pile shouldn't be more than 20 feet high.

The process going forward –We need to determine if that material is suitable for use for the Berm, then the permitting process will begin.

We hope to reduce the size from 6 acres to 4 acres. The Berm will benefit all here.

P. Wizwell: I commend the Chief & HNE for extinguishing the fire. This was not a smoldering fire but flames 5-6 feet high. This was quite a large fire over quite a large area. I can't believe it took so long to address. I called 911 Friday –it was 3-4 hours before anyone came. I saw a garden hose on top of the pile. I think you could have been here sooner.

Chief McCarthy- The challenge with a mulch fire is there is no flame when broken apart. It went to an open flame because the pile was not broken apart. We added water to reduce the temperature of the piles but it doesn't put the fire out. Our approach is to reduce the aging pile and height of pile before this happens again. We can not be too pro active.

Mr. VanderBlu: I commend HNE. They do an excellent job with the Berm. I worry about the cost to the Town.

Chief McCarthy – We have to find better ways to co exist.

P. Wiswell: I would prefer they (HNE) not be there at all. The smell of that decomposing mulch when the breeze comes off the marsh is not going to go away. Let's not sugar coat it – we've got a problem.

RTM Ken Lee No one is buying mulch in Dec, Jan , Feb. why can't the site be closed from Nov until April ? The last five years the budget has been underfunded by 2 million dollars. There is no money to do non essential work. It is hard to find extra money.

Chief McCarthy said we do not have a budget projection as of yet. We are mindful of the cost and mindful of the impact.

Mike Zembruski : If we were to cut permits issued to contractors who work in Town, our revenue would be cut by 1.2 - 1.4 million.

Selectman Tetreau – If I've learned anything, if we make it too restrictive they will dump elsewhere in Fairfield in un monitored spots.

P. Wiswell: I will stop if I am told growth is done, no more Fire Training Center, no more Julian piles, nothing more.

K. Soderlund: We asked for a 5 year plan in the summer.

Selectman Tetreau: We need to build foundations from the feedback from the Town. I can't make that commitment now, we owe you an answer.

Chief McCarthy: we are monitoring the monitors. We do not want to be caught by misrepresentation –we are making sure HNE is doing what they are contracted to do.

IF THERE IS ANOTHER INCIDENT IS THERE A WAY TO CONTACT THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

Chief McCarthy : We will use Code Red and communicate thru the neighborhood groups. We will set up the website – If you do not have Code Red, please get it. We need to be able to get you if it is a time sensitive issue.

FIRE TRAINING CENTER - REGIONAL FIRE SCHOOL

We will be screening the DPW Yard to identify some of the challenges of the Fire School. There will be adjustments.

When we started most homes were at elevation 8.5. New homes have been raised another 5 feet, and your average 3 floor home is now sharing each others' view.

Chief McCarthy: We have made several important design changes as a result of conversations with the public. We have relocated the Flood Control Berm to prevent flooding from infiltrating the property line.

The planting bed will rise from 8.5 ft to 13.0 ft with 14 ft trees to hide the views.

The smoke produced was on the property line so it was moved to the 285 ft back stretch of the property to block the view from the peninsula.

Joe Michelangelo: In 2005, a 2.5 million dollar microgrid project was done at the Police Dept which was 100% state funded. Our WWTP is due for an upgrade soon. The earthen berm behind the Fire Training Center has a wooden sound barrier to be built to elevation 29', our space is limited, but this design would enable us to build the wall.

Tree Warden Jeff Minder: There are 3 views from Fairfield Beach Road. Initially, we will be using 14' trees Eastern White Pines which could max out at 60' with a 15' width over 20 year period. These trees are salt, wind tolerant deer resistant. It is a species that will lend well to the beach area. We will not be planting as dense as initially proposed. They can live 100 years – with an average life of 60-80 years.

Asst Chief Scott Bisson –You fight the way you train. We have done live fire training, taken car donations, created very smoky conditions but are now using wood pallets, paper, hay and natural gas fires.

HOW MUCH MORE TRAINING WILL THERE BE?

In 2013 we were 1of 2 operations in the State of CT everyone was coming to Fairfield, now other Towns are opening up to reduce the load here. We now have multiple burn rooms.

We create theatrical smoke for training depending on weather conditions.

We use old cars that are brought in and picked up.

The buildings are much more efficient and environmentally friendly. We will be posting the Training Schedule for smoke and noise on the website with 95% accuracy. We have replaced diesel, rubber, plastic with propane –a very clean burn. We are monitoring the lights and adapting changes

RTM Member Bill Perugini : Not all the trees survived Sandy.

Jeff Minder: These trees have the most versatility and tolerate vast variety of problems.

IS THIS A PUBLIC BUILDING?

Chief McCarthy stated this has been a State Project, it is public but it is a State building. All funds for this project have been expended, we have spent every dime. This represents a team effort- we have a material interest in solving this problem. We can minimize its impact on you.

Chief McCarthy commented, I expect a call when it doesn't go as planned. We understand we inherited it but need to be sensitive to a dynamic in the neighborhood. We see improvement, you see expansion.

Greg Sargent: A berm 13' above with trees at 60' high will be a huge liability in the future.

Tree warden **Jeff Minder** stated, in ideal planting conditions the potential of 60ft growth is there however with the wind conditions and salt spray is there. They may not get to 60 ft with the salt spray and wind conditions but we can control the growth with proper pruning.

Chief McCarthy added, we have the money to do it, we have already identified the funds – we are giving up \$50,000 of funds for the Fire Training Center to get the money for the trees.

First Selectman Tetreau thanked everyone for coming. He also thanked Chief McCarthy for his creative financing for tracking down these funds.

Mr. Soderlund: What about the \$100,000.00 for artwork?

Chief McCarthy: This is a state statute. In 1978, 1% of all state construction costs are to be donated to artwork, This has to be dedicated to artwork specifically noted not to be used for architectural landscaping.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kyle Fournier