A Neighborhood Outreach Meeting with the Board of Selectmen was held on Monday March 25, 2019, 7pm, at the Endicott Estate, 656 East Street, Dedham, MA

Present were:

Michael L. Butler - BOS

Dr. Dennis Teehan, Jr. – BOS

Dennis Guilfoyle - BOS

Mike D’Entremont – Police Chief

William Spillane – Fire Chief

John Sisson – Economic Development Director

Joe Flanagan – DPW Director

Ken Cimeno – Building Commissioner

Nancy Baker – Assistant Town Manager

Leontia Flanagan – Director, Health Departments

John Bethony – Chairman - Planning Board

Jim Kern – Town Manager

Carmen DelloIacono – Chair BPCC

Meeting started at 7:03am.

Mr. Butler made a few opening statements and then opened the floor to questions.

Alex O’Connell, Precinct 1, running for a seat on the Parks and Recreation Departments. Ms. O’Connell asked if there was any movement to try and minimize the revolving funds that are not watched over by the taxpayers as there is a number of them.

Ms. Baker asked Ms. O’Connell if she was talking about the funds that are approved every year by Town Meeting.

Ms. O’Connell answered yes.

Ms. Baker informed all that those funds are governed by the State Departments of Revenue. With Town Meeting’s approval these are funds that the Town is allowed to have four receipts that come in from the various Departments and then are repurposed those receipts are approved by the statement in the Article. For example, the Parks and Recreation takes a significant amount of receipts for their program offerings, pool memberships and fees to repurpose those funds for things related to programming, etc. Ms. Baker went on to further explain how this money is repurposed.

Ms. O’Connell stated that it is difficult to find out what money is coming in and what money is going out these funds.

Ms. Baker answered it is a matter of Public Record and if you’re interested in seeing those records, you can make a request to the Finance Departments and they will be happy to provide the information for you.

Mr. Butler added that if you are interested in seeing the Towns “Checkbook”, the information is online under the Finance Departments section.

Kathleen McDonald asked where she could find meeting minutes, as she has searched extensively. Ms. McDonald stated that there are no Board of Selectmen meeting minutes on the website.

Mr. Sisson stated that a lot of minutes do exist. Mr. Sisson added that if you go to the specific Departments you’re looking for on the webpage.

Resident, Martha, stated that the last Board of Selectmen meeting minutes are from November 15, 2018.

A resident, Martha, asked in what ways is the Board trying to get information to residents.

Mr. Kern stated that Mr. Butler was a driving force behind creating an Annual Report on the state of finances for the Town of Dedham. Mr. Kern added that has written a number of letters to both Town Meeting members and also to the community at large, about individual issues that the Town is dealing with. Mr. Kern continued, saying that he and Mr. Sisson have talked about making an effort to do more community engagement with better communication. Mr. Kern informed all that his model was to have individual Departments update their information on the website. Mr. Kern stated that the Police Departments does a good job of communicating through their social media sites.

Mr. Butler stated that people’s expectations of being able to access information has escalated. Mr. Butler added that there are 8500 Twitter followers of the Dedham Police; the Dedham times has a circulation of 2500 to 3000 households; different Departments have different Facebook pages; Mr. Butler continued, saying that on the Town’s website you can sign up to receive emails regarding news items and alerts.

Mr. Sisson stated that anyone in the Town can subscribe to different mailing lists and meeting notices, so when the meeting is posted the resident will get a notice.

Mr. Butler pointed out that the Superintendent of Schools writes a 30 day update, which goes to the school committee. Mr. Butler stated that they do recognize the need to do a better job of communication and they will going forward.

Rose Favre, Manor Neighborhood Association, asked if anyone had spoken to the developer in Boston to see what they’re going to do about parking and traffic.

Mr. Guilfoyle informed all that the developer basically ignores representatives from Dedham.

Dr. Teehan informed all that the developer did come to a Board of Selectmen meeting a few months ago to give us and update. The Developer gave a preliminary presentation as to what they think they want to build and it was left that they would come back to another meeting when they had something more concrete. Dr. Teehan added that he suggested making the left turn coming in and out of the development illegal. Dr. Teehan stressed the importance of looking at other options to see what they could do.

Annette Eddy – Greenlodge, Cynthia Road

Ms. Eddy stated that between 3:30pm and 6:30pm it is almost impossible to get on to Greenlodge St. because of the cut through traffic. If the proposed development is approved, the traffic will be a nightmare.

Mr. Guilfoyle stated that there is really nothing they can do about this. He has been to many meetings on this topic is brought up and the majority of people are against this development. Mr. Guilfoyle added that he sits on the Traffic Advisory Committee with John Bethany, Chairman of the TAC and they have done their own studies and the main problem is the number of cars traveling the roadways.

Mr. Butler reminded everybody of the topics that have been covered so far:

* Communications
* Town financial books
* Traffic
* Development

Mr. Butler continued, saying that these are the main topics that residents speak about the most.

Antonietta O’Shea– 285 Milton Street

Ms. O’Shea stated her concern about traffic and wondered when we’re going to worry about the traffic and Projects in Dedham that are wreaking havoc.

Mr. Flanagan stated that the Walnut St., Bridge MWRA Project from the Dedham Line and Dedham Parkway, is completed up to Jefferson Street. Mr. Flanagan informed all that the two sections left are the Walnut St., Bridge and the Sawmill Ln., Bridge. Mr. Flanagan continued, saying that the Walnut St., Bridge Project will take at least another 3 to 4 weeks and the bridge will be closed during the day. Mr. Flanagan added that the detour does go down Whiting Avenue to River Street. Mr. Flanagan went into detail about the tasks that need to be finished before the Project is complete. Mr. Flanagan informed all that the third section of that Project will begin this week on Rustcraft Road. Mr. Flanagan stated that this Project will deal with erosion control, tree protection and some removal,

Mr. Butler stated that the Walnut Street Bridge Project will wrap up during the second half of April most likely.

Susan DiBenedetto stated that she is switching from oil to gas and Eversource wants to dig up a section of Paul Street to install the gas line. Ms. DiBenedetto added that there is a five-year moratorium and she falls under four years. Ms. DiBenedetto continued, saying that she emailed Mr. Flanagan numerous times between January 2018 and March 2019 asking that he either waive the fee for digging up the street or give me a price. Ms. DiBenedetto informed all that she is not received a response.

Mr. Butler explained what a moratorium is. After part of the street has been dug up for whatever reason, the same area cannot be dug up for a period of five years, unless there’s an emergency.

Bob Schortmann – 277 Walnut Street

Mr. Schortmann asked if there were other methods to learn about the progress of the Ames Building Project and when the Project will be finished.

Mr. Butler stated that the Town is having disagreements with the Contractor that spilled over into the legal system. Mr. Butler added that the Contractor should gear up again in mid-January and they have been working since then with a number of people on site every day.

Mr. Kern stated at the beginning of the Project there was good progress being made

but it was never made clear as to why they couldn’t continue the progress and finish the job. Mr. Kern added that it was true that the Project was going really well until it wasn’t. At that point the building was about 80% completed and for reasons that may never be clear to us the General Contractor had a hard time staffing the building. Mr. Kern continued, saying that there are not a lot of things that a Public Entity, a Town, can do. The Contractor is required to have a bond, a Surety/Insurance Company, to ensure that they will finish the job. Mr. Kern stated that they communicated with the Surety Company regarding the Town’s concern about the schedule. Shortly after that the pace picked up again but then it slowed down shortly thereafter. At that point the Board of Selectmen, in April 2018, took the vote to terminate the Contractor. Once that happened, there are some legal disputes that came up, the General Contractor did not agree that under the law it reasonable for us to terminate them. Mr. Kern stated that now they are working under a completion agreement and it took about six months to come to that agreement.

Mr. Kern stated that in terms of the budget, the cost of construction and the soft costs is:

* Architecture fees
* Owners Project Manager’s fee
* Total of $17.6 million

Mr. Kern explained that the construction itself was $14.5 million.

Mr. Kern reminded all that we went back to Town Meeting last fall and asked for $900,000. Mr. Kern added that all of that money is going to the Architect and the Owner’s Project Manager, because of the extension in time for the Project. Mr. Kern continued, saying that this is been a problem Project. Mr. Kern explained that when a General Contractor is chosen, it is done by low bid, low responsible bid.

Dr. Teehan stated that the Ames Schoolhouse Project was going very well until the summer of 2017. Dr. Teehan added that the Board of Selectmen did everything they could to remedy the situation. Dr. Teehan continued, saying that at that time they couldn’t just fire the Contractor as they had to go through this whole process of invoking the bond, getting the Insurance Company involved, reaching an agreement between the Insurance Company, the Town and the Contractor. Dr. Teehan stated that the Project is now moving forward at a good pace, still not as fast as the Selectmen would like. Dr. Teehan stated that in his opinion Contractor but the Town a very sad situation for reasons we may never understand. Dr. Teehan added that this Board has done absolutely everything it could do to get this project finished.

Mr. Butler informed all that since January, the Contractor has had about 15 people on site, sometimes more, sometimes less.

Dr. Teehan stated that the project will be a success when it’s finished, it is unfortunate it took longer than any of us had ever hoped for.

Resident

Asked if people are required to shovel their own sidewalks.

Mr. Flanagan informed all that there is no requirement in Dedham for residents to shovel their own sidewalks in front of their house.

Ms. Baker informed all that in her almost 30 years as Assistant Town Manager, less than half a dozen attempts to create and pass a required by law and it is failed every time. Ms. Baker added that there is an Article going forward to Spring Town Meeting, to form a Committee to study the requirement for Commercial Properties.

Resident asked Mr. Flanagan what safety measures they are putting in for all the construction projects.

Mr. Flanagan answered that the sidewalks will be closed and barriers will be put up.

Resident informed all that on some Projects last fall pipes were left in the road and the double yellow lines were dug up, so it was hard to navigate. He wondered if this is something to be discussed with the Contractor to keep these areas organized. Will there be a whole new sidewalk?

Mr. Flanagan answered that it will be a whole new road and the sidewalk will be replaced where the Contractor damaged them. Mr. Flanagan informed all that he has a Capital Article and to do new sidewalks along Walnut Street, from Whiting Avenue to Mount Vernon St., Mr. Flanagan added that all sidewalks will be replaced in kind as to what they are now.

Stephanie Radner – Chair Open Space and Recreation Committee, asked if the Town has a comprehensive plan for affordable housing to make sure that the housing numbers stay above 10%.

John Bethany confirmed that the question was how is Dedham going to make sure that our 10% housing stock, considering the amount of development that is going in, remains a 10% or above.

Mr. Bethany stated that many of the mixed-use buildings have an affordable housing component, although it is not required. Mr. Bethany added that in anticipation of this problem, we have an Article which will put a temporary moratorium on mixed-use development, so that we can study and safeguard against the 10% going below 10%. Mr. Bethany stated some ways that there fighting to keep the 10% above 10%.

Resident stated that he is noticing a lot of new single-family homes are humongous and he was under the impression that there were bylaws as far as the structure having to have a certain percent of coverage.

Mr. Cimeno will stated that the Town has single resident A and single resident B zoning districts and General residence, we have 30% lot coverage, maximum. Typically the houses that are being built are within that 30% lot coverage. Mr. Cimeno added that when you look at a 12,500 square-foot lot, that’s a 6250 square-foot building that does not include the garage. Some residents are building as big a house as they could possibly build, to maximize their use of the property. Mr. Cimeno added that if residents want the bylaw changed, he would welcome anybody who wants to look at them and propose any amendments to the zoning bylaws. The changes would be voted at Town Meeting.

Resident stated that there seems to be a lot of leeway as to how big the house can actually be. He asked Mr. Cimeno, when is this going to stop.

Mr. Cimeno informed all that any Town Meeting member can file an Article, at Town Meeting, to change the zoning bylaws.

Mr. Sisson stated that they hope to secure a Town Planner soon as the office has been understaffed for a few years. Mr. Sisson added that one of the things that will be voted on at the May Town Meeting, is a warrant Article for a Master Plan process. Mr. Sisson continued, saying that Towns are looking at different ways of regulating FAR – Floor Area Ratio.

Kathleen Schortmann – Walnut Street, stated that she questions the pre fab house that just went up in three days meets the requirements.

Mr. Cimeno stated the lot is 12,500 ft.², the building is probably less than 6250 ft.²

Ms. O’Connell asked if there is a way to look up variances online.

Mr. Cimeno informed all that the variances of public record and are available at the Planning and Zoning office.

Dr. Teehan stated that it is possible that citizens can propose an Article for Town Meeting as well. You don’t have to be a Town Meeting member to do that but you do have to get a certain number of signatures to go along with the Article.

Mr. Butler stated that if you’re interested in going that route, contact the Assistant Town Manager, Nancy Baker.

Dr. Teehan stated that 25 years ago, a lot of people said that Dedham might go the wrong way and Dedham might not be as nice a place in the future. Dr. Teehan added that the reality is that the complete opposite happened. Most of the topics we discussed tonight are a result of Dedham being coveted as a desirable place to live.

Ms. O’Connell stated that finding this information is so complicated and difficult for residents, is there a way the Board of Selectmen could appoint a committee to do a reevaluation of the zoning.

Mr. Butler asked Mr. Bethany how long he has been on the Planning Board.

Mr. Bethany answered 19 years

Mr. Bethany informed all that Planning Board routinely does zoning reviews and we do these reviews based on the import of the citizenry. If the citizenry is interested in A, B or C, Mr. Bethany added that the Planning Board and takes it upon themselves to hire consultants and/or do outreach to the community to figure out if what they’re asking for is doable and based on input, do we believe that we can get two thirds of Town Meeting to say yes. Mr. Bethany continued, saying that in in order to change any zoning in Dedham, it needs 66% Town Meeting members to approve it. Mr. Bethany stated to get the required amount of votes we do outreach to the community’s, we do planning, and we get consultants to look over the Town. Mr. Bethany stated that it is a good idea to talk about zoning changes but you need a clear and concise plan and you have to have support. Mr. Bethany informed all the variances are appealable by the community. After

a variance is approved by the Zoning Board of appeals, it is not a done deal as there is an appeal period of 20 days.

Mr. Butler made a note of some of the topics covered this evening:

* Development – zoning, neighborhood homes being torn down in larger homes being put in place
* Affordable housing, meeting a threshold
* Mixed-use moratorium
* Sprague St., Reedville area development
* Importance of the Master Plan
* Improved communication
* Ames Building Project
* Traffic - especially Walnut St., Bridge and the Four Corners
* Revolving funds
* Fall Street gas service lines
* Sidewalk safety - one at the Endicott train station
* MWRA Project

Mr. Butler thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for bringing up such important topics.

The Meeting ended at 8:24pm.