

**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE
SELECTBOARD MEETINGS
MARCH 20, 2006**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eleanor Russell, Chairperson; Jenny Cole, Charles Russell, Ed Stone (absent: Frank Thornton).

ADMINISTRATION: Dean Bloch, Selectboard Assistant.

OTHERS: Martha Perkins, Marty Illick, David Miskell, Jim Dickerson, Linda Hamilton, Robin Pierce, Bill Kiendl, Robert Chutter, Patricia Coleman, John Hammer, Robert Mack Jr, Moe Harvey, and others.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Russell called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. THE OLD LANTERN PURCHASE - Discussion

Ms. Russell explained that the Selectboard was seeking public input on the value of purchasing the Old Lantern property, or not.

Jim Dickerson said that the property is listed for \$750,000 for 9.5 acres and structures that included the pool and pool house.

Ms. Russell said that the Old Lantern property connects with several other properties including Barber Hill and the Burns property. The Old Lantern may be useful as a gathering place for the Town. As negatives, the property is expensive and there is concern regarding the condition of the building.

There was discussion regarding the building condition and improvements (Mr. Kiendl explained that the building was painted, a walk-in cooler was rebuilt, and the kitchen renovated); a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Town and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and Preservation Trust of Vermont (PTV); MOA restrictions if the Town owned the property, which would not apply if someone else purchased it (Ms. Russell read Section C of the MOA into the record); and if the property could be subdivided further. Ms. Russell explained that the property could be divided into a five-acre single-family residence and four one-acre commercial lots.

Mr. Miskell asked does the Town have to give back \$120,000 to the Freeman Foundation gave to the Vermont Land Trust. Ms. Perkins said that the VLT and PTV were interested in affordable housing or senior housing and may be they would be willing to amend the MOA. Ms. Illick said that who owns the land makes a difference in options. There is an opportunity for buildout, but any development would need to be fleshed out with numbers, and if it would meet the Town Plan and Town goals. Ms. Russell said that any restrictions are included in Section C of the MOA and that would apply if the Town owned the land. If someone else owns the property then the restrictions do not apply, clarified Ms. Russell.

Moe Harvey reviewed a history of the property and when different portions were sold off.

Heather Manning noted that she was one of the initiators to bring the sale of the Old Lantern before the Town. The parcel is on the open market. A Special Meeting of the Town would be needed for the Selectboard to get guidance. The Town does not have the same timeline as the open market, said Ms. Manning. Linda Hamilton said it was irresponsible not to explore it fully.

Mr. Pierce said that the Town is restricted in a way that a private developer would not be. Bill Kiendl asked if the Town intends to develop it. Ms. Perkins replied that the interest in a purchase would be as a Town asset. Mr. Pierce asked if it is priced as a community resource. Mr. Harvey asked if the Town has an option on the property. Someone could put together estimates for community use.

In response to a question on the age of the building, Mr. Kiendl explained the Old Lantern was originally a barn built in the early 19th century in Jericho. The barn was disassembled and moved to Charlotte in 1962.

Mr. Miskell said he had no interest in having the Town purchase the land based on the management capabilities of the Town for properties it has now. The Town owns the Burns Farm. The Town shouldn't be involved in the sale. Mr. Miskell said he hoped that Patricia gets as much money for the Old lantern as possible. Mr. Russell asked for clarification regarding (Mr. Miskell's) statement of mismanaged Town property. Mr. Miskell declined to elaborate further.

Ms. Illick stated that forming an opinion without more information was difficult. A question was - does the Town need more community space. The Town has spent money to improve the Senior Center, the library and ball fields. Owned assets cost money and there are pros/cons to ownership. We want to see the cost, explained Ms. Illick. Ms. Russell replied that the Town might not need the space now, but what if we need it 50 years from now. Mr. Russell said the Old lantern would be a great community center. The Senior Center is intimidating to young people and is small. Also, the Old Lantern has a history in Town.

Ms. Perkins noted that there is an aquifer in the area and it would be worth checking out.

Mr. Dickerson suggested gathering ideas for future community uses and getting estimates for municipal uses. Mr. Russell said that the Selectboard was looking at a lot of different scenarios.

In response to suggestions that the building was in need of repair, Mr. Kiendl stated that the Old Lantern is up to public standards. Mr. Kiendl asked if the Selectboard received answers to questions related to the condition of the building. Ms. Russell replied that evaluations from the Fire Marshall was needed to see if the building meets the most current safety codes.

Mr. Hammer pointed out that the Town recently saw a twenty percent (property) tax increase and didn't support spending money for something twenty years down the road. There are only 3,500 people in Charlotte and we have the Burns property and the ball fields.

Ms. Perkins suggested that the space could be used to produce income. Mr. Hammer said that the Town shouldn't be in the business of making money and (he) didn't think the school should be involved either.

Ms. Hamilton said that the Selectboard was thinking creatively and long term. A purchase of the Old Lantern would be a long-term capital investment. As gasoline gets more expensive we'll think closer to home for entertainment. We should meet Town needs closer to home. The building is 8,000 square feet and has an 850-person capacity. It is in the mixed-use district, and could have rental or office space for income.

Ms. Illick said that if the Town proceeds with options and due diligence to identify the Town's expectations it would be important to get committee involvement. Ms. Perkins suggested that if the Town exercised its options to pay money to hold the property, then the Town could conduct an examination of the building and research information.

Mr. Miskell asked the Selectboard to schedule important Town meetings at time when more townspeople can attend versus at 4:00 p.m.

Robert Chutter, resident, asked what was the rationale when the Town didn't buy the Old Lantern before. Mr. Dickerson explained that the property was for sale for one million dollars and the Town didn't have the money. The Burns property was a part of the Old Lantern property at one time, commented Mr. Dickerson. Ms. Illick said that the Old Lantern sale at that time was a private deal. Robin Pierce's point regarding the past transaction would be reasonable to think about.

Ms. Russell explained that the Selectboard would discuss property negotiations in Executive Session.

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Russell, to recess the Selectboard meeting and enter Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Real Estate Contract Matters, and to invite the Selectboard Assistant to attend. VOTE: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Selectboard recessed the regular meeting and entered Executive Session at 4:50 p.m.

MOTION by , seconded by , to adjourn Executive Session and reconvene the Selectboard meeting. VOTE: 4 ayes; motion carried.

Executive Session was adjourned and the Selectboard reconvened at p.m.

3. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION by , seconded by , to adjourn the meeting.
VOTE: .**

The meeting was adjourned at p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathlyn Furr, Recording Secretary.

These minutes are subject to correction by the Charlotte Selectboard. Changes, if any, will be recorded in the minutes of the next meeting of the Board.