

East Lyme Board of Selectmen
Public Informational Meeting
September 19, 2012

Present: First Selectman Paul Formica
Holly Cheeseman
Kevin Seery
Rose Ann Hardy
Mark Nickerson

FILED Sept 24, 2012
AT 1:30 P.M.
Lorley A. Blais
TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Matthew Fleisher
Attorney Ed O'Connell
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Schutt
Barbara Johnston
Janet Carlson
Wilbur Beckwith
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wilson
Michael Schultz
Richard Waterman
Bill Sheer
Gary Goeschel
Betty Murphy
Madeline Kowalewski
Art Carlson
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Ramsay
Luane Lange
Merrill McClain
Mary Wassung
Mr. and Mrs. Ben Bullock
Sandy Winslow
Norm Peck
Karen Rak
John Drabik

Mr. Formica called the Public Informational Meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was observed.

1. Potential Purchase of Samuel Smith Property, 82 Plants Dam Road, Assessor's Map 19, Lot 36. Mr. Formica stated this property has been discussed for 1 ½ years. The two parcels being considered for purchase are three acres with a home and 14 ½ acres surrounding it.

The Board of Selectmen authorized Mr. Formica to develop an option to purchase the property from the Hubers' for \$425,000. He had discussions with the Sportsman Club and asked if they would be interested in purchasing part of the property. It benefited them to have ownership of land adjacent to their club and it would be a buffer

for them. The Town would have an opportunity to reduce the price and it still could be a Museum. A committed group wanted the Town to purchase it. The Board of Directors of the Sportsman's Club approved the purchase of the 9.5 acres at a cost of \$125,000, pending approval by the Town boards and residents. The deed would note no buildings would be built on the property. It would be deeded as open space. The Sportsman's Club also agreed to allow the Friends of the Samuel Smith House to have activities on the property. The Sportsman's Club has no desire to build on the property. The Sportsman's Club membership approved the purchase of the 9.5 acres at a cost of \$125,000.

On Monday evening Mr. Formica met with residents who are interested in purchasing this property. Two of these individuals expressed concerns about the acquisition and offered an alternative. They suggested adding 3.4 acres that the Town would purchase and reducing the amount of property that the Sportsman's Club would be asked to purchase. They felt this would allow the full enjoyment of the property.

He met with the President of the Sportsman's Club and presented this option. The Sportsman's Club would then purchase the reduced land for \$85,000. The Town would then pay \$340,000 and if a grant was received in the amount of \$170,000 the net out of pocket for the Town would be \$170,000. This would have to be discussed at a Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen for their consideration and forwarded to the Board of Finance. It would then be brought to a Town Meeting.

Mr. Formica feels this can be paid for from the CNR Fund, which has \$1 millions in it. \$700,000 is earmarked for special items. If it is approved on October 3 the grant writer would begin working on a grant which is due on October 28.

Mike Schultz, of Lovers Lane, East Lyme, supports this going forward under the conditions Mr. Formica stated. He asked what is the loss of tax revenue from this property. Mr. Formica replied at the present time \$4,000. The Sportsman's Club portion would be taxable.

Barbara Johnston, of 35 Seacrest Avenue, supports this purchase. She felt the taxes are very low. This property is defined as pasture land.

Matthew Fleisher, President of the Sportsman's Club, who lives at 38 White Birch Circle, stated we are looking for open space. He felt open space is not readily available, and we need to take advantage of it.

Frank Wilson, of 211 North Bridebrook Road, feels this is wonderful use of this property. The group working to bring this forward should be commended. He thanked the Friends of the Samuel Smith House for their hard work and the Sportsman's Club for its agreement with them.

Marvin Schutt, 29 Edgewood Road North, thanked the Sportsman's Club for their kind help with this purchase.

Karen Rak, 27 Black Point Road asked as far as maintenance of this property would the Sportsman's Club help the Friends of the Samuel Smith House? Mr. Formica replied the relationship would be similar to the Historical Society with the Lee House.

Ms. Rak asked would the Town mow the property? Mr. Formica did not know. Ms. Rak stated we now have crews taking care of the Smith-Harris House and the Lee House.

Frank Wilson, of 211 North Bridebrook Road, and a member of the Historical Society and an individual who oversees the Lee House stated the Town has picked up loose gravel. Prisoners have been used to take care of some of the work. He did not see an expense to the Town for mowing the lawn. Mr. Formica stated it would be treated the same as the Lee House.

Matthew Fleisher, President of the Sportsman's Club, stated we pay taxes to the Town and uses none of its services.

Dick Waterman of Niantic, stated the Samuel Smith House is a few of the remaining houses that represent the early history of the Town. Considering that we are at the beginning of the development of the U.S. We are aware that the Lee House is the oldest wooden structure in Connecticut. It was a chicken coop before it was preserved. A group of ladies were able to save it. A small group of citizens believe the Samuel Smith House is also worth saving. Since the Colonial period our Town has grown and is continuing to grow and as residents we should support the heritage of our Town. I urge citizens to support the purchase of the Samuel Smith House. History is important.

Mary Wassung, of 83 Dean Road, stated we came to East Lyme ten years ago and loved it. When she first visited the Samuel Smith House she was thrilled. She felt this is a remarkable opportunity for the Town.

Marvin Schutt reported we are well on our way to being organized to maintain this property. We have volunteer carpenters, public relations individuals, and a Treasurer. We have Bylaws drafted, a management plan for consideration and are working on a 5013c.

John Drabik, of 18 Drabik Road, stated he had no objection to the Town owning the property. He asked twenty years into the future what happens if this organization comes apart and cannot take care of the property?

Matthew Fleisher stated if something happens, the Sportsman's Club will purchase it from the Town. We want the right of first refusal. The Sportsman's Club has been in existence for fifty years.

Norm Peck stated if the Thomas Lee House became insolvent, it's in the deed that the Connecticut Historical Trust would take over the property. Perhaps it might be a good idea to preserve it as a historical site.

John Drabik stated the Smith-Harris House was asked to be self sustaining. We are spending approximately \$10,000 a year for it. I do not want this to be the same way.

Holly Cheeseman stated her concerns are that a structural survey was done, and she was concerned with his findings. There could be significant costs involved that the Friends of the Samuel Smith House would not be able to support financially.

We have been assured that there are grants from the state. The state is in poor financial shape. If we did not receive a grant \$325,000 would be bore by the Town.

She was pleased with the Sportsman's Club help but is concerned that to date the Friends of the Samuel Smith House are not a 5013c. She would like some assurance that this will happen and that the building will be maintained.

The Public Information Meeting was adjourned and will reconvene to allow the 7 p.m. Town Meeting.

The Public Information Meeting reconvened at 7:15 p.m.

Present: First Selectman Paul Formica
Holly Cheeseman
Kevin Seery
Rose Ann Hardy
Mark Nickerson
Rob Wilson

Ms. Lange, Chairlady of the Friends of the Samuel Smith House, informed those present we have worked through the State Department on the grant. She will discuss the process with the First Selectman. She is not concerned about receiving the grant. There is every indication that it's a worthwhile project. There are not many houses of this age.

The Historical Society, after checking with its attorney, approved setting up a separate checking account for the Samuel Smith House. Donations have been received.

She feels monies are available. The Samuel Smith House was built in 1685. We have Bylaws in place.

Karen Rak, of 27 Black Point Road, asked how much is in that checking account?

She read an internal memo stating some of the repairs that are needed. What if the Friends of the Samuel Smith House do not have the money to take care of these repairs.

Bob Ramsay of 3 Stoneywood Drive reported he is a carpenter and has gone through the report from the structural engineer. Some of these items happened over 300

years ago. Two issues he sees are bulging of the foundation. It appears it has been stable for thirty years and evidence it probably has not moved in 60-70 years. As far as what it would take for the foundation, we propose to get equipment to dig out the outside of that foundation to examine what is out there and stabilize it. He felt it could be stabilized at a cost of \$100.

The only other issue was the deteriorating flooring. During the non visitor season the floor boards could be removed and a new subfloor put in. Then the existing flooring would be installed. He felt the flooring would be all volunteer labor and the plywood needed would cost approximately \$200.

The floor beams for the upstairs are a concern, because this house was built with individual ceiling beams that don't go across and as the roof load increases the beams pull out. In some areas these cross beams are out of the slots. He would like to carefully remove the trim and jack the wall into position. This would be a six month project with all volunteer labor.

There are trees that need to be taken down to protect the property. We would like to drop the power lines underground. Volunteers could dig a ditch.

Down the road siding and window sills and trim and gutters need to be replaced. Materials are not expensive.

John Drabik asked if Mr. Ramsay died who would finish the work. How will we handle insurance for these volunteers. If they can maintain a bank account maybe the Town should require them to maintain a minimum. It might be better if the Town owned the property and leased it to them.

Marvin Schutt reported we have approximately eight people ready to work on these repairs. We need to look into insurance.

Mr. Formica stated the Lee House has a similar arrangement. We don't require a minimum in their checking account. When the 5013c is in place we will be able to address this.

Matthew Fleisher of 38 White Birch Circle stated the Sportsman's Club membership agreed to purchasing 9.5 acres for \$125,000. If something happens, we will step in.

Mike Schultz of Lovers Lane, East Lyme stated when he built his home they didn't require insurance.

John Drabik stated he is 100% in favor if the Friends of the Samuel Smith House can quantify when the project is going to happen. If after three years no significant progress when will you decide its time for the Sportsman's Club will step in.

Ms. Lange stated assuming that there will be some funds from the State Historical Commission there is an easement that they have oversight. If they were to finance \$220,000 there is a twenty year oversight easement. There are certain regulations as to how it is done. Funds are available to be used for restoration of historical buildings.

Mark Nickerson felt 5013c is formed to raise funds that money is not coming from the Town.

Ms. Lange stated some are timelier than others. The existing checking account was for simple fees. The Friends of the Samuel Smith House paid for a structural engineer. They have not gone into fundraising mode yet.

Ms. Cheeseman asked do you have a Plan B if the Town decides not to go forward on this? Ms. Lange replied the Friends of the Samuel Smith House would have to discuss it. The grant can only be done through a 5013c. To be a 5013c and to apply for an Acquisition Grant you have to be in existence three years.

Ms. Cheeseman do you have other sources of funding except taxpayers funds? Ms. Lange replied we do not.

Karen Rak stated the Friends of the Samuel Smith House has to be in existence for three years. The Historical Society is a 5013c and allowed them to have a checking account.

The Public Information Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary