

**TOWN OF COLUMBIA**  
**SPECIAL TOWN MEETING MINUTES**  
**September 20, 2016 - 7 pm**  
**Yeomans Hall**  
**323 Route 87, Columbia, CT**

A Town Meeting of the electors and citizens qualified to vote in the Town Meeting of the Town of Columbia, Connecticut was held in Yeomans Hall on Tuesday, September 20, 2016 at 7 pm.

**Present:** First Selectman Carmen Vance; Deputy Selectman Steven Everett; Selectman William O'Brien; Selectman Robert Hellstrom; and Selectman Robert Bogue.

**Also Present:** Town Administrator Mark Walter; Public Works Director George Murphy; Finance Director Bev Ciurylo; Town Attorney Henry Beck.

**Moderator:** Mark Vining

**Clerk:** Kimberly A. Bona

**Citizens:** William and Donna Ainsworth, Paul and Carol Kubala, Ann Dunnack, Gary Littlefield, Nancy Hammarstrom, Laurie Rogers, Amy Raffa, Mike Lester, Gail McGrath, Ingrid Wood, Earnest Sharpe, Judy Ortiz, Tom Currier, Andrea Stannard, E. Jay Starkel, Don Schofield and others.

The meeting was called to order by C. Vance at 7 pm.

The meeting was then turned over to the Moderator who read the legal advertisement printed in the Chronicle which included the following CLAUSES:

**CLAUSE 1** – To approve the purchase of land by the Town from William A. and Donna L. Ainsworth for use in conjunction with adjoining Town land occupied by the Town's Department of Public Works and Transfer Station consisting of approximately 3.5 acres of land and comprising the westerly portion of 15 Hop River Road, Columbia, Connecticut for a total price of \$25,000 per acre based upon an accurate survey to be obtained by the Town and to approve the transfer of \$90,000 from the Town's General Fund to the Capital Fund for the purpose of providing adequate funding for use of such purchase.

**CLAUSE 2** - To accept any and all easements associated with the Squier Subdivision as approved by the Columbia Planning and Zoning Commission including acceptance of a *Conservation Easement and Access Easement Agreement* and to grant a driveway easement across the unimproved portion of Wickford Road.

C. Vance MOVED to approve the purchase of land by the Town from William A. and Donna L. Ainsworth for use in conjunction with adjoining Town land occupied by the Town's Department of Public Works and Transfer Station consisting of approximately 3.5 acres of land and comprising the westerly portion of 15 Hop River Road, Columbia, Connecticut for a total price of \$25,000 per acre based upon an accurate survey to be obtained by the Town and to approve the transfer of \$90,000 from the Town's General Fund to the Capital Fund for the purpose of providing adequate funding for use of such purchase. S. Everett SECONDED the MOTION.

C. Vance spoke of the importance of the town purchasing this land. She explained that it is directly behind the Public Works Garage and Transfer Station. Over the course of the next few years, it will be necessary to expand the garage. She discussed the need for a new salt shed, vehicle storage and the fact that the state is mandating rules that govern trash disposal and recycling. C. Vance stated that this particular property consists of a gravel resource that the town is very interested in. In addition, it contains other resources beneficial to developmental projects related to recreation, the school, etc.

S. Everett of 534 Route 87 stated that as a member of the BOS, he takes very seriously how tax dollars are spent. He explained that the BOS scrutinizes property prior to approving it for purchase, and many times, properties are denied approval. However, in this case the BOS has moved forward due to all of the valuable resources on this property that the town will use. He explained that if the town has to expand the Transfer Station, it will cost a lot of money. Purchasing this property will help with this cost. He urges the

town's people to vote in favor of acquiring this land.

Paul Kubala of Lake Road asked whether a survey has been done to find out how much gravel is used. G. Murphy stated the property adjacent to the transfer station is currently used for gravel. The gravel on the property has been calculated to be about 10 feet deep, which is equivalent to approximately 56,000 yards of gravel. P. Kubala asked if this area will be able to be used to dispose of bulky waste. G. Murphy stated that it can be used for clean fill such as asphalt, concrete, etc. G. Murphy pointed out that the focus on recycling is growing, and is going to continue to grow. He stated that the garage will indeed require expansion, and a new salt shed is a necessity.

Tony Elsie of Oakwood Lane asked if this property was for sale. G. Murphy explained that it was not for sale. The town approached the owner and expressed interest to acquire it.

Nancy Hammarstrom of Oakwood Lane asked if an appraisal was done on the property. If so, who did the appraisal and what was the cost? G. Murphy answered no. N. Hammarstrom asked what the negotiations were based on. G. Murphy stated the need for garage expansion, Public Works vehicle storage, etc.

Judy Ortiz of Columbia Landing asked if there will be an appraisal. G. Murphy said no.

Tom Currier of Columbia Landing asked if not getting an appraisal is proper procedure. C. Vance stated that there is no rule stating an appraisal is required. T. Currier asked if a follow up will be done once the land is sold. G. Murphy stated that a follow up is not likely.

Paul Kubala stated he feels that this is "bad business" and is concerned about the fact that an appraisal wasn't done.

Bob Bogue stated that several years ago the town purchased land and did not have an appraisal done.

Tom Currier asked what the property is assessed at. C. Vance stated the property was assessed at \$178,000 for the entire parcel. G. Murphy stated property is currently classified as commercial with residential use. If the town purchases it, it will be strictly commercial. The Moderator re-read the MOTION. MOTION PASSED by majority voice vote.

C. Vance MOVED to accept any and all easements associated with the Squier Subdivision as approved by the Columbia Planning and Zoning Commission including acceptance of a **Conservation Easement and Access Easement Agreement** and to grant a driveway easement across the unimproved portion of Wickford Road. A. Dunnack SECONDED the MOTION. C. Vance yielded the floor to the Town Administrator. M. Walter reviewed a memo from the Town Planner with the audience. He explained that these easements are from the subdivision application of June Squier that was approved by Columbia's Planning and Zoning Commission in August 2015. The 3-lot subdivision is approximately 16 acres that separates the existing house lot on Route 66, created a new lot on Wickford Road and a rear lot with access off the 'road stub' at the end of Wickford Road. The 'road stub' was created by a 2002 subdivision for the purpose of accessing this abutting property at the time of future development.

Because the 'road stub' is owned by the Town, an easement must be granted to allow the property owners of the newly created rear lot the ability to put in a driveway to access their property. The subdivision plan indicates the location of the driveway, and the driveway would need a zoning permit to ensure it meets regulations.

Columbia's subdivision regulations require open space be considered for any subdivision in excess of 15 acres. Based on the recommendations of the Columbia Conservation Commission, the Planning and Zoning Commission approved a portion of the rear lot (Lot 3) be conserved as an open space easement. The Lot 3 property owner will continue to own the land.

The approval included a trail connection from Wickford Road to property owned by Eversource that allows public trail access. The Town has a long-range plan for an interconnected trail system, including connecting the town center and Rec Park with trails; this trail is a key connection for that plan. The Town will plan for and build the trail within the open space and along the 'road stub' in the near future.

A. Dunnack of Lake Road, urged everyone to accept this Open Space. She stated that this is an opportunity to provide safety for kids and adults to walk and ride bicycles to the rec area. A. Dunnack explained that for many years, the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) has proposed connecting the hiking trails. Laurie Rogers of Hennequin Road asked if there will be people in the woods protecting the kids. If not, she doesn't feel that this is a reason to justify the approval. She is not against the approval, but doesn't feel that it will help provide safety for children. G. Murphy stated that we are currently in review of a Road Safety Audit which will include safe bike routes and walkways for pedestrians. That area may be looked into in the future. The Moderator re-read the MOTION. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Town Meeting ADJOURNED at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Kimberly A. Bona