

**MINUTES OF FRANKLIN LAND STUDY MEETING
MONDAY, JULY 27, 2009, AT 7:00 P. M.
FELCO ROOM FRANKLIN HOMESTEAD**

PRESENT: Polly Gadbois, Johanna Godin, Hugh Gates, Kim Gates-Maynard, Mark Racine, Burt Maynard, Connie Burns and Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director of Northwest Regional Planning.

Polly called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and welcomed Catherine and Connie to the meeting. Polly provided those present with copies of the Municipal Facilities Needs Assessment study relative to Grand Isle.

Catherine Dimitruk addressed the members. She advised that Franklin's situation is similar to that of South Hero and Grand Isle a few years ago. Both those towns were looking into development potential of parcels of land they hoped to purchase. She briefly outlined the studies done there - South Hero received a Municipal Planning Grant for their study and Grand Isle was unable to obtain a grant. Instead, they had a very active building committee with people who were willing "to do the leg work" the results of which were compiled with the help of Northwest Regional Planning. Kim asked the cost for the assistance from Northwest Regional Planning and Mrs. Dimitruk responded it was done at no cost since they provide member towns with 40 hours of free help each year. She did note that neither the South Hero nor Grand Isle projects included possible recreational uses.

Johanna Godin questioned what types of grant/monies are out there and Mrs. Dimitruk responded that it depends on what Franklin wants to do with the property. It was noted that Franklin is not eligible (because of median household income) for federal enhancement grant programs. She did note that in the back of the Grand Isle report there is a list of several sources of grants. Someone asked how the median household income is determined and it was noted it is done through State income tax records. Johanna questioned whether more than one grant source can be applied for/used for the same project and Mrs. Dimitruk responded that it could.

Kim noted that not all possible uses have been discussed/explored. A light industry, industrial park, or municipal use might all be potential uses. It was noted that to date, recreational use seems to be the most discussed. It was further noted that an industrial park would require water, sewer, electricity and roads.

Discussion was held on funding to have an engineer look at the property to determine development potential. Johanna stated she feels that before we even consider potential uses, a basic assessment of the property needs to be done. Burt agreed stating he feels we should do perc tests in different spots to see what soils are there. Such tests would give us an idea of what type of building/activity the property would support and enable us to come up with a plan to submit with the grant application.

Polly noted that two weeks ago, a walk about on the property was done with representatives from ANR. Some wetlands are present and they discussed the need for setbacks if development is near those areas and will provide help should it be needed. Polly noted that Brenda Wright and Sam Ruggiano have offered to do perc tests/evaluation at no cost to the town.

Burt noted that the ANR walk was very vague and the property has not been fertilized in years. The town has the hay cut once a year, but nothing else has been done.

Catherine pointed out that it is a dual situation - you don't want to put a lot of money into the property until you know whether or not it can be developed.

Polly pointed out that wet spots on a parcel of land are not what determines whether it is designated a wetland, but rather the type of vegetation that grows on the property (flora and fauna). Kim noted that the north side is not even mowed.

Connie Burns spoke about the Town of Alburgh. They needed municipal office space, but because of the expense taxpayers would not approve the funding. They brought it to a vote two times and both times, they were turned down. Finally, their Fire Department offered to apply for a \$50,000 USDA rural development grant and the rest of the funds through a loan. They built a new Fire/Rescue Building with municipal offices in the front. They lease that municipal space to the town. It was noted they had a community meeting at which they had a good turn out and the community had input into the project. Mrs. Burns noted they have a beautiful building which meets the needs of the town and the town owes nothing, except for the lease agreement.

It was noted that at the last meeting, this committee discussed drawing up a survey which could be sent out in the tax bills. Johanna suggested some type of prize be attached to the survey project which might encourage more people to complete and return a survey. Everyone returning the completed survey would be entered into the drawing. It was also suggested that a calling tree could be used to call people to encourage them to complete and return the survey. Kim suggested the survey be handed out at parent's night at school.

It was pointed out by our guests that food is always an enticement to get a group of people together. They suggested a meal followed by a discussion would be a good way to get the community involved. They suggested that after the meal, participants be broken up into groups and each group come up with suggestions which would be combined into one list which could then be broken down into the best options. Kim noted it would have to be a pot luck type of meal because of the expense involved in doing a meal.

Hugh questioned if any sample surveys would be available which we could use as a basis to draw up our own survey. Mrs. Dimitruk stated that she does have some samples at her office. Hugh noted that he ran across the survey they used when they started the Homestead and he felt they did a pretty decent job on it and it was effective. It was also noted that the Planning Commission did a good job on a survey they did. Connie Burns stated you need to have the

community behind you in such a project. She explained about an attempted project in Enosburg which never came about as they could not get the community behind it. Hugh responded that the community must be behind this project as they voted to buy the land. It was further pointed out that the Selectboard must be behind the project also or you cannot expect the town to be behind it. It was noted that Franklin's piece of property is 25 acres more or less of rolling land and wetlands. In response to a question about the reasons the Enosburg project never came about, Mrs. Burns stated there were two main reasons - the first being they just could not get the community behind the project and the second was that some members of the committee wanted to see it done, but had little interest in doing the things needed to be done to move the project forward.

Hugh quoted a section from the Franklin Town Plan which suggested that the land might be used for a sand/salt shed, recycling center, wastewater treatment facility, light industry, a municipal complex, or just plain walking paths. He noted that at town meeting when it was voted to buy the land, it was promised the public would be involved. He noted that in the Town Plan, it states that the determination of what would be done with the land would be with the Selectboard and not the voters. Hugh stated that interestingly, the article in the warning did specifically state what the land would be used for was up to the Selectboard. Hugh further noted that he, personally, has a dispute with the Selectboard as he feels the Selectboard has a tendency to have "a great deal of autocratic authority". Connie Burns asked if the committee had considered going to the Selectboard to discuss exactly what they expect from this committee. Someone expressed the opinion that the Selectboard had not really given a firm idea of what they expect of this committee while others felt the Selectboard wants this committee to do the "leg work" and come up with land use suggestions and possible sources of funding. Catherine stated that it's important that the public gets a voice and the survey is one way to ensuring they do.

Discussion was held on the need for a salt/sand shed. It was noted that we have a salt shed, but there has been a rumor for at least four years that the State will require both sand and salt to be under cover. Hugh questioned whether the State even has a means of tracking pollution from either of these means and Mark responded that a couple of years ago, he met a young lady through a friend who was involved in checking the brook here in Franklin. Hugh asked if Mark could track this woman down as he would be interested in her findings and Mark said he would try to locate her through his friend.

Johanna asked about funds out there and Catherine advised that Franklin would be eligible to apply for up to \$15,000 through a Municipal Planning Grant. In fact, the Planning Commission received such a grant two or three years ago which was used to revise the Town Plan. She noted that applications would be due the end of September with grants awarded in December and monies available in January. Barbara asked if there are any "stimulus funds" available and was told there are none. Catherine stated that the grant application has to be completed online and it is not terribly complicated, however, the town would need to have a definite plan in order to apply. Barbara asked if a dual purpose grant could be applied for (for example, part to be used

for the land and part for updating the zoning regulations) and was told it could not be done. Catherine further noted that only a grant application for a wastewater facility would have additional requirements. She also noted that there has been a marked decrease in the number of grants available.

It was suggested that this committee needs to do three things - first, communicate with the Selectboard regarding expectations; second, plan a public meeting; and, third put in the grant application. It was suggested that the public meeting include a meal and that it last for about three hours - say 6 to 9 p.m. Following the meal, the participants can be broken down into smaller groups that can come up with suggestions. Catherine and Connie each stated they would be willing to be facilitators and they suggested that Tim Smith might also be willing to assist. The final group suggestions can then be listed and "whittled" down to the final recommendations. It was recommended by Connie that the "community calendar" be checked to ensure that the selected date does not conflict with any other event. Kim suggested that we might want to hold the meeting at the school where the cafeteria can be used for the meal. It was suggested that an "invitation" be issued to the community with a RSVP request so attendance can be estimated.

They suggested someone meet with the Selectboard. Johanna pointed out that Polly Gadbois is the committee chair. It was also suggested that the public meeting be held the first part of September so that the information obtained from it can be used for the grant application. Connie asked how the community will be invited and it was noted that a notice can be sent out with tax bills. It was noted that Franklin has a lot of "seasonal" people and putting the notice in tax bills would ensure they are notified. A notice with telephone bills was also suggested. Another suggestion was calling people listed in the Franklin telephone book. Someone suggested the survey be prepared prior to the meeting, but it was noted that with a public meeting for community input, a survey may not be necessary. Hugh suggested if a survey is ready, it could be used as a basis for discussion at the public meeting. Catherine stated that Northwest Regional Planning has easel boards which can be used at the public meeting. It was noted that the next Selectboard Meeting is the second Monday of August, therefore, Polly should be able to get on the agenda.

The Board thanked Catherine and Connie and they exited the meeting which was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

July 31, 2009

Barbara M. Varin