

Village of Aurora Board of Trustees September 5, 2019 Special Meeting Minutes

The meeting was held at the Aurora Firehouse meeting room at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Bonnie Bennett, Trustees Grace Bates, Janet Murphy and Kit Van Orman

Absent: Matt Bianconi

Others Present: Village Clerk Ann Balloni, Inns of Aurora Chief Operating Officer Sue Edinger, Local Resident Dr. Margaret Flowers and ZBA Member Laura Holland

Call to Order: Mayor Bennett called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and all rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Visitor Welcome: Dr. Margaret Flowers submitted a letter (attached) adding to her research on the effect that intense firework displays may have on animals/livestock. Dr. Flowers lost several prized sheep following a firework display in October which led to the Village adopting a 9-month moratorium on firework displays within the Village.

Dr. Flowers spoke with two firework vendors who were also veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. In conversation with the vendors on the demise of her sheep, the vendors noted that the sheep displayed the same signs as soldiers who sustained concussive injuries in the war from proximity to explosive devices.

Dr. flowers reiterated her request to the Village Board to regulate firework displays away from livestock and limit the size/diameter/sound.

Village of Aurora/Inns of Aurora Memorandum of Understanding

Mayor Bennett explained the sequence of events that led to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed in April 2019. The Village amended the zoning law to include conference centers in the residential zone providing that the Inns of Aurora complete a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) of all their properties in and surrounding the Village.

In July 2019, the Inns of Aurora requested that the Village consider amending the MOU to allow the Taylor House conference center application to move forward and submit a different application to trigger the GEIS. The Inns of Aurora are anxious to renovate Taylor House and are unhappy with the Planning Board's timeline to complete the GEIS process, tentatively set for October of 2020.

Initially, the Village was unreceptive to the Inns request but then a negotiation process began between the Village Attorney, Tom Blair and the Inns of Aurora Attorney, Wendy Marsh. The Inns of Aurora agreed to transfer their Right of First Refusal on several of Wells College properties that are attractive to the Village due to A. their proximity to the lake and B. potential for development.

Mr. Blair also requested a firm price from the Inns for the 2 ½ acres that surround the Village Hall/Firehouse and the Village has an option to purchase, per the MOU signed in April. Trustee Bates questioned why that was necessary and Mayor Bennett responded that the Village needs to know the amount when applying for grant funding.

Mayor Bennett expressed support for amending the MOU, seeing the Right of First Refusal option as a unique opportunity for the Village. Mayor Bennett asked the trustees if they saw any negatives to amending the MOU.

Trustee Van Orman expressed discomfort with making a quick decision to amend the MOU, signed only a few months ago, and is concerned that more amendment requests from the Inns of Aurora will be forthcoming. Trustee Van Orman also commented that the Village Board should be working on Village interests, not for the Inns of Aurora.

Trustee Murphy noted that having the Inns of Aurora work with the Village on development does benefit the Village and Mayor Bennett added that converting Taylor House to a conference center, which the Village Board was unanimously in favor of, increases the Village tax base and that the Planning Board and CPP are both in favor of separating Taylor House from the MOU.

Trustee Bates and Van Orman questioned how the GEIS relates to updating the Village Comprehensive Plan. Mayor Bennett explained that the GEIS is a benefit to the Village because it will provide a clear picture of the Inns of Aurora's Master Plan for development. Once the GEIS is complete the Village will have a realistic vision of how to move forward. Mayor Bennett also reminded the trustees that the Village had tried unsuccessfully for over twelve years to compel the Inns of Aurora to complete a GEIS due to the overall benefit to the Village, not to the Inns of Aurora. Viewing the GEIS as benefitting the Inns of Aurora is inaccurate and should be perceived as a gift from them to the Village as they bear the financial cost.

Mayor Bennett addressed the concerns that Trustee Bianconi emailed regarding maps of the properties included in the Right of First Refusal. The list of properties and survey maps will be assigned by Cayuga County Real Property as part of the deed when the transfer is filed. Mayor Bennett also noted that the tax map numbers for the properties are included in the MOU (attached) and can be referenced on the Cayuga County Real Property website.

On motion by Mayor Bennett, seconded by Trustee Murphy, the Village Board voted to amend the MOU with the Inns of Aurora. The amendment allows the Inns of Aurora to move forward with the Taylor House application, institutes a deadline of October 31, 2019 to submit another application to trigger the GEIS, institutes a deadline of October 31, 2019 for the Inns of Aurora to set a firm price on the land surrounding the Village Hall/Firehouse that the Village has an option to purchase, and transfers Right of First Refusal on certain Wells College properties from the Inns of Aurora to the Village of Aurora.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Murphy and Van Orman

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Trustee Van Orman asked that the minutes reflect that, despite her vote in favor of amending the MOU, she is uncomfortable with allowing the Inns of Aurora to modify an agreement just enacted in April.

On motion by Trustee Murphy, seconded by Mayor Bennett, the Village Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

AYES: Bennett, Bates, Murphy and Van Orman

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.