



Town of Griswold

Board of Selectman Informational Meeting Blight Ordinance and Uncas Health District

June 15, 2010

6:00 pm

Town Hall Meeting Room

MINUTES



1. **Call to Order/Roll Call:** P. Anthony called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Members Present:

Philip Anthony, First Selectman
Steve Mikutel, Second Selectman
Theresa Madonna, Third Selectwoman

Also present:

Dwight Johnson, Town Attorney
Pamela Kilbey-Fox, MPH Branch Chief, State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health
Barbara Richardson Crouch, Finance Director
26 Interested Persons and 2 Members of the Press

2. **Shall the Town of Griswold adopt an ordinance as recommended by the Board of Selectmen to prohibit and provide for the abatement of blight on certain properties in the Town?**

- a. D. Johnson provided an overview of the proposed Blight Ordinance.

- i. Joseph Foyer asked if the State will enforce the Town's Blight Ordinance in the event that the Selectmen and the Blight Enforcement Officer will not. D. Johnson stated that the State does not enforce local ordinances.
- ii. John Woodcock stated he wished the blight ordinance was stronger.
- iii. Norm Higgins asked if property zoned commercial but had a residence on it would qualify. D. Johnson stated that the ordinance would cover the structure. N. Higgins stated that the Town should remove obstacles from the site line of sidewalks before it requested residents to maintain their property.
- iv. Vince Yanovich (sic) asked if the blight officer would be a new hire. The Building Official would be the blight officer.
- v. Gail Rooke-Norman stated that she was in favor of a blight ordinance but not the one proposed. G. Rooke-Norman stated issues with sections 1.7(a); 1.3(A) (ii-iii); 1.3(H); 1.6; 1.7(A).
- vi. Dan Webster asked what happens during an appeal and what happens if the violator does not pay the fine. D. Johnson stated that the appeal stops the process and that the State Statutes clearly define how to collect fines.
- vii. Brian Baker stated that the hearing officers should be an odd number or more than one person. He also stated that there was no notice of the informational meeting and no place where the public could read and digest the ordinance. S. Mikutel stated that a legal notice was published on June 9, 2010, and that the Board of Selectmen had discussed the ordinance at least 4 times when there was a public forum on the agenda.
- viii. Norm Sylvestre stated that he was the catalyst for the ordinance and there is

an illegal junk yard within sight of Town Hall.

- ix.** Jessica Morgan asked if unregistered vehicles are covered by the ordinance. D. Johnson stated that there is an existing State Statute that covers unregistered and junk vehicles.
- x.** Gail Woodcock asked how complaints would be filed. Complaints are filed with the Blight Officer or with the Office of the First Selectman.
- xi.** J. Foyer asked about enforcement. D. Johnson stated that the Selectmen have the enforcement authority
- xii.** N. Higgins stated the person who is fined should pay the legal fees associated with enforcement. D. Johnson stated that the State has statutes that dictate and govern when legal fees can be charged. N. Higgins asked why not the Town adopted the Borough's (Jewett City) Ordinance.
- xiii.** B. Baker asked if the Selectmen had compared the ordinance to the Borough's (Jewett City) and who is the blight officer for the Borough. S. Mikutel stated that they looked at numerous ordinances and chose items from each that fit Griswold. The Building Official for the Town of Griswold enforces the Borough's Blight Ordinance.

3. Shall the Town of Griswold join the Uncas Regional Health District as recommended by the Board of Selectmen?

- a.** Pam Kilbey-Fox and Barbara Crouch made brief presentations on the role of a Health District and the financial costs to Griswold related to Health Districts.
 - i.** N. Higgins stated that Uncas Health District was defeated in the Town Meeting and if something bad happens the State or the Federal Government would step in. P. Kilbey-Fox stated the State nor the Federal Government has the resources and the State uses the regional districts to coordinate any disaster plans.
 - ii.** Glen Webster asked if Uncas Health District had to respond to Griswold in emergencies. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that Uncas is not mandated by the State to help during emergencies.
 - iii.** J. Foyer asked if Uncas was a State agency and who owns it. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that Uncas is a private not-for-profit that is governed by the Board of Directors that sets policy and that the State funds Districts at a higher per capita level than stand alone agencies.
 - iv.** Terry Gregory asked about duplication of services specifically related to the Smiles across Southeastern CT and that most of the children are on HUSKY. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that many of the programs are outreach and are for everyone regardless of income level. The Smiles program addresses lack of access (parents may work multiple jobs and cannot get their children to appointments).
 - v.** Tina Falck asked if Uncas would help with grants, etc. to address other specific needs of the community. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that Uncas has access to grants that will fund specific activities that the Town would address.
 - vi.** Dan Webster asked about the income that would be generated and if the sanitarian would be made part-time because Lisbon and Voluntown went to Uncas. P. Anthony stated that Sanitarian Al Gosselin would not stay on with Griswold if his position was made part-time.
 - vii.** G. Rooke-Norman stated that bringing the Uncas Health District to referendum was a difficult decision but the right one.
 - viii.** Dan B. (could not hear last name) stated that a larger pool should drive down costs for Uncas and would we have a say in the second year contract costs and how would complaints be handled. P. Anthony stated that if Griswold joined Uncas we

would have one Board member and the Borough would have one Board member on Uncas. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that there is an administrative process for the State to review complaints related to regional health districts.

- ix.** Judith Merrill asked if the Town would have to pay additional costs for extra services. P. Kilbey-Fox stated that Regional Health Districts provide services needed by the community and do not have a cookie-cutter approach. She added that Uncas could apply for grants on behalf of Griswold that Griswold currently is not eligible.
- x.** Steve Merchant stated that he voted against joining Uncas at the Town Meeting because of lack of information. He further stated that this meeting answered his questions.
- xi.** B. Baker asked about the procedure to include the \$57,000 needed to fully fund the health district. B. Crouch stated that because it is more than \$50,000 the Board of Selectmen, The Finance Board and a referendum would be needed to add the money to the budget.
- xii.** V. Yanovich (sic) asked if Uncas funded abortions. P. Kilbey-Fox stated it did not.
- xiii.** Laurie Sorder stated that she did not know before the meeting that basically we paid \$73,000 for a part-time director of and we would get full-time services for only \$4,000 more.
- xiv.** P. Dorff stated that the current secretary should be maintained to act as an intermediary between Griswold and Uncas Health District and to have a local place to ask questions. P. Anthony stated that there will be a local office – co-located with UCFS on Main Street- that will house the Sanitarian Al Gosselin. The records will be copied and maintained at Griswold Main Street site.
- xv.** N. Higgins stated that the secretary would be needed to help residents with their questions.

4. Adjournment: P. Anthony adjourned the meeting at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Barbara Richardson Crouch, Finance Director
Acting Recording Secretary**