

SPECIAL MEETING – MANSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL
August 22, 2014

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson called the special meeting of the Mansfield Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber of the Audrey P. Beck Building.

ROLL CALL

Present: Kegler, Marcellino, Moran, Paterson, Ryan, Shapiro, Wassmundt

Excused: Kochenburger, Raymond

Mr. Shapiro moved and Ms. Moran seconded that the Town Council constitute as the Mansfield Water Pollution Control Authority for the purpose of discussing the Four Corners Sanitary Sewer Project. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Presentation: Four Corners Sanitary Sewer Project

Town Manager introduced the project team of Derek Dilaj and Chris Wester of Weston and Sampson, Director of Public Works John Carrington, Director of Planning and Development Linda Painter, Director of Finance Cherie Trahan and Jeff Polhemus of Eastern Highland Health District. Mr. Webster and Mr. Dilaj reviewed the qualifications of Weston and Sampson, the project goals, the planning process, the existing situation and the estimated costs and assessment process.

2. Ratification of 8/22/2014 Public Hearing

Mr. Shapiro moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Water Pollution Control Authority of the Town of Mansfield hereby ratifies and confirms the notice as published on August 6, 2014 of the Authority's public hearing to be held this evening on the Four Corners Sanitary Sewer Project.

The motion passed unanimously.

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY PUBLIC HEARING

3. Four Corners Sanitary Sewer Project

The Town Clerk read the legal notice.

William Paulson, Middle Turnpike, expressed concern regarding the estimated cost of the construction of pipes from the road to his house and asked where the septic materials go after being pumped.

Aline Booth, Wormwood Hill Road and Planning and Zoning Commission and Inland Wetland member for over 33 years, spoke in support of the project. Ms. Booth commented that the Four Corners area has been identified as a commercial area for over 50 years because of the location and surrounding good roads. She urged the Council to add the item to the November ballot.

Michael Taylor, Stonemill Road and owner of more than 10% of the assessed area, believes the project is a great investment in the community and will allow for constructive and conservative growth bringing jobs and an additional tax base to the community.

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George Rawitscher, Codfish Falls Road, discussed the projected increase in rainfall expected as a result of changes in the climate and suggested that all storm sewer systems in the project area be carefully engineered to take the increase into account.

Lon Hultgren, Woodland Road, spoke in support of the project. As the former Director of Public Works who worked extensively on the project he believes it will clean up a blighted area of Town, support development in an area of Town identified by the PZC thereby reducing pressure in other areas, and will provide a net gain in tax revenues to the Town.

Ric Hossack, Middle Turnpike, stated he was initially in favor of the project but is now concerned with the cost. Mr. Hossack does not want his taxes to increase and feels the project is the responsibility of the landowners.

Gene Salorio, Southwood Road, questioned whether the construction administrative cost are included in the estimated cost, whether the possibility of multi-family residential units in the area would affect the assumption of no incremental education costs, whether the \$278,000 payable by the entire tax base is the same total as the amount the assessed property owner would be paying, and whether property owners in the project would be required to connect to the sewer system. Mr. Salorio also expressed confusion concerning the information provided regarding the number of affected properties and feels the project is a subsidy for a few real estate developers.

Kenneth Dardick, Mansfield City Road and part owner of 34 Professional Park, spoke in support of the project. Doctor Dardick who served as the physician for the Town for 10 years and currently as the medical advisor for the Eastern Highland Health District remarked that this area has been a concern from a public health perspective for many years. Doctor Dardick feels this project will benefit the Town and the environment.

Brian Coleman, Centre Street, believes the slide presentation depicting the problem area is misleading and does not believe the taxpayers should pay for the project as it is benefiting just a few. Mr. Coleman does not trust the Town leaders to execute the project responsibly. (Statement attached)

Tamra Coleman, Centre Street, stated she is not in favor of increasing the taxes for the benefit of a few.

Peter Rich, Fern Road, agreed that the area needs sewers if it is going to be developed but commented that the only people who are going to benefit are the property owners. Mr. Rich believes the Town needs a better plan to pay for the project.

Arthur Smith, Mulberry Road, reviewed the rationale presented for the sewer project noting that there is no indication that the Town has not been able to maintain water quality compliance. Mr. Smith outlined four areas in which he believes there is insufficient information including whether the project is to avoid an abatement order or to promote economic development, what costs are included in the eleven million dollar estimate, whether there will be an environmental impact as a result of the project, and whether the financial oversight of the Town is sufficient. Mr. Smith also questioned whether or not once Jensen's Inc. has sewers it will remain a senior facility.

Norval Smith, a Mansfield property owner and resident of Coventry, spoke in favor of sewers. Mr. Smith cautioned against delaying implementing the project as it will only cost more in the future.

Alison Hilding, Southwood Road, believes this project is about commercial development and not about protecting natural resources. Ms. Hilding believes those people who have blighted properties should be responsible for them.

Wilfred Bigl, Hill Pond Drive, attended the information session at Jensen's and in his informal poll found that by far the majority of residents are in favor of the project. Martha Kelly, Bundy Lane and a member of the Board of Education but speaking as a private resident, asked what Plan B is if the referendum fails.

Keith Jensen, Manager of Jensens Inc., stated that his park is an asset to the Town and that it always has been a senior housing facility which provides affordable housing. The company, as well as the majority of residents, is in favor of the project. Jensens Inc. is 30% of the assessed area and will be making a significant investment in their property.

Pat Suprenant, Mansfield Independent News posed a series of questions including who is paying for the 1.9 million dollar difference referred to in tonight's presentations; are there any in-kind services being proposed; if the referendum fails does the Town have the authority to go ahead with the project if funds are available; which properties have been identified for which use as discussed in the assumptions; are the current or new assessment figures being used in the projections; is there an environmental study which supports the project; is Jensens Inc. considered a commercial or residential property. Ms. Suprenant asked the Council to defer the vote.

Mayor Paterson closed the public hearing at 7:59 p.m.

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

4. M. Taylor letter

Mr. Shapiro moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to leave the role of the Water Pollution Control Authority and resume as the Town Council.

The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Moran moved and Mr. Ryan seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

The motion passed unanimously.

Elizabeth C. Paterson, Mayor

Mary Stanton, Town Clerk

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