

Village of Canton
Joint Town/Village Board Meeting
Thursday, March 23, 2023
In Person and Video Conferencing
Minutes

TOWN MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mary Ann Ashley	----	Town Supervisor
Jim Smith	----	Council Member
Bob Santamoor	----	Council Member
John Taillon	----	Council Member
Randy Brown	----	Council Member

VILLAGE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mike Dalton	----	Mayor
Anna Sorenson	----	Trustee
Barbara Beekman	----	Trustee

Also Present:

Heidi L. Smith Town Clerk, Sally Noble Village Clerk, Economic Developer Leigh Rodriguez,

Absent: Village Trustee Klaus Proem, Village Trustee Beth Larrabee

Mayor Mike Dalton called the Joint Town/Village meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

A. Special Presentation

1. Bernier, Carr and Associates Municipal Building Presentation

Mayor Dalton stated that the Village/Town have been working with BCA since 2019 looking at possibilities for the building and where it might be in the future. The Town/Village contracted with BCA on a building study and needs assessment. Tied into this is the purchase of 64 Main Street for parking and possible site for a new building.

Supervisor Ashley added there is a strong need for a new municipal building. Ashley thanked BCA for all their work. The Town/Village are moving forward by purchasing 64 Main Street, but we are not there yet.

A presentation was given by Bryan Cowell and Ariel Snyder from BCA. The proposed plan was shown on the projector and handouts given to both boards. The proposed building plan would be at the 64 Main Street site. Bryan stated that the current building is undersized, especially for the Police Department and Court. Bryan went over the layout of the proposed plan. The proposed building plan is three stories. Bryan stated this plan improves technology, security, and is handicap accessible. The current building is roughly 13,000 sq ft and the proposed building is roughly 35,000 sq ft. Bryan also went over the exterior and parking changes.

Public comment:

Canton resident, Kathy Shradly asked has there been any thought to energy conservation?

Mayor Dalton responded we have been talking about it and the possibilities, but we are not at that stage.

Economic Developer Leigh Rodriguez asked about having a parking lot on the corner of an intersection. In current planning the recommendation is not to do that.

Mayor Dalton responded that there is not any other place to do that on this site. The idea is that area would be for construction, once that was done it would be parking. We liked the idea that it opens the corner and the view.

Council Member John Taillon stated that they made sure in the new plan that there was not an exit or entrance from Main Street. You would enter from Miner Street and enter in the back that is now an alley.

Canton resident, Toby Irven is curious if you might go back to the drawing board and look at how this would interface with the plaza area, potentially and or solve the problem getting into the parking lot off from Miner Street. Many times, during the day it is difficult to get in with the alleyway congestion on Miner Street.

Mayor Dalton responded that will not be an alley way anymore and it will open up substantially. The area outback where the plaza is will be developed by a developer and decisions will have to be made and how it will affect traffic. For our purpose right now, this property is the Village and Town, and it extends all the way to the post office. There will be a lot of configurations with parking.

Council Member Bob Santamoor asked if there would be any issues with the DOT in terms of parking.

Bryan stated they are trying to stay away from the intersection. That is why it made more sense to come off the backside than the side road.

Supervisor Ashley added that when the process was started in 2019 there was a lot of discussion on the location of a new building and the census from the public was to keep it downtown.

Mayor Dalton added that we are a ways from this, but this is the best design and wanted input from the boards.

Supervisor Ashley added that the cost of this project would be approximately \$25,000,000. Ashley's opinion is that a new building is necessary for the health of the staff and the ability to serve the public.

Mayor Dalton added that the financials include the demolition of sites, and factors for

inflation, contingency and incidentals.

Toby Irven asked is there State funding available for court requirements?

Mayor Dalton responded we have asked these questions and are waiting for answers. Dalton stated we would like to think the court has funding available because they are driving a tremendous amount of this expense which is due to the requirements needed when doing a new court.

Mayor Dalton added this is the latest and wanted to make sure the boards and the public got a chance to see where we are at. There are no votes taking place tonight to approve this. There are a lot of issues with the current building, it isn't handicap accessible. We recognize there are a lot of issues, and we are trying to address them.

Supervisor Ashley added that she wants the board members to review this and give feedback. This is a shared municipal building and will require a lot of joint meetings.

B. New Business

1. Discuss Rights of the River Request

Council Member Jim Smith asked if there was a request to table this discussion from Kathy Shradly from Right of the River.

Supervisor Ashley stated there was a request to table this discussion so the boards could better educate themselves on the matter.

Kathy Shradly responded that the request to table this discussion is because the Rights of the River Attorney Thomas Lindsay, had written a letter to the Attorneys and boards that was either sent today or yesterday. The concern is that the Attorneys and board members didn't get a chance to read this letter and understand it. There will also be a lot of events coming up in the fall to further educate people and wanted the boards to get a chance to see how the public responds.

Supervisor Ashley stated that the original request was that the Town/Village pass this resolution and is the position of Rights of the River that this is a non-binding resolution. Ashley stated the language in the resolution does bind the Town if they pass. Ashley read from the resolution "*The Town of Canton pledges to work towards adopting a Local Law that recognizes, secures, and provides an avenue for enforcing those rights. This resolution shall take effect immediately.*" Ashley stated that if the Town pledges to work towards adopting a law we are saying we will adopt a law. Ashley stated it is her opinion that this is binding language. Ashley is concerned about this resolution and does not support it.

Steven White asked Supervisor Ashley why she doesn't support this law.

Supervisor Ashley responded she does not support this resolution because there are State Agencies that regulate our waters. If there are issues with someone violating a river there are State Agencies that taxpayers already pay that address the issue. There is the Department of Health and DEC. If there are issues it is their responsibility to address them. Supervisor Ashley added that she is one voting board member, but she does not support committing the Town to adopting a law that is not enforceable.

Council Member Bob Santamoor stated he agrees with Ashley and does not support this law. There is also the EPA that has strict laws regarding river and water ways throughout the State.

Kathy Shrady stated that the DEC, DOH, EPA laws are not adequate in protecting our water ways. If they were we wouldn't have these problems and pollution issues. This is an example of the education process and to see where we fall short.

Council Member Santamoor asked wouldn't it make sense to educate DEC, DOH, EPA then have a Town develop a law. Santamoor also agrees with Supervisor Ashley that the wording in the resolution binds the Town.

A Madrid resident spoke in favor of the Rights of the River. Stating that looking towards the future, things in the North Country will change. The rivers are beautiful now but in the past they were not. We are looking into the future where that could be threatened again. We are looking to protect the North Country and Canton. The EPA, DEC and DOH is a bigger and heavier lift to make happen. As a region we need to work together to protect all North Country residents. Drafting a law would allow Canton and the residents to have a say.

Council Member Brown asked wouldn't it make more sense to have the County pass this law instead of individual municipalities that may or may not buy into it.

The Madrid resident responded yes, that would be very affective. Except different people have different authority over their jurisdiction. The Canton residents would have more say to the board then they would to a county representative.

Kathy stated that if there was a law it could allow an individual, not the Town to address an issue that has happened upstream that would affect Canton.

Council Member Brown has concerns this would cause potential trivial lawsuits.

Council Member Santamoor responded that it is his understanding that the way the law is written the law is only effective to businesses and industries not to individuals on whom you can sue.

Mayor Dalton stated that the problem he sees is who you can sue and who can sue on behalf of the river? In the proposed document it says we can exempt the Village of Canton. If it's good for them, why not me. The Village has storm drains that run into the river. What if someone does not like what is going down them? Dalton stated if we exempt the Village from any lawsuits, is that right?

Kathy responded we would love to have the broadest possible protection but realistically it is better to have something rather than nothing. If we get to the process of discussing a law, then that is when this detailed discussion will come up. If the Village is worried that if some point in the future something like that would happen. It is more important to be worried about the big players. It is important to have that type of protection level and will exempt out the Village if that means we can pass a law. Kathy added that we are not there yet, we haven't passed a resolution yet but that is how the process would work.

Mayor Dalton stated he would like to see what the law would look like before passing a resolution. Dalton agrees there are a lot of State regulations out there that can be used for protection. The Village is looked at very carefully by the Health Department on a regular basis. There is a lot of testing that must be done.

A Madrid resident asked that the boards take their time to make a decision.

Supervisor Ashley stated that during her time as Supervisor the State Agencies have always served the Town and addressed the Towns issues when they came up.

Council Member Taillon stated the way the resolution is written it states the Town and Village are not getting a bullet to fight things it is giving individuals in the community the bullet to fight things.

Village Trustee Sorenson thanked Rights of the River for bringing this issue to the board, for their work to education us and their passion. We can all agree the river is important and we want it to thrive for the future. Sorenson stated that this resolution does bind us in ways that she is not comfortable with but also stated that specificity when writing laws is very important. Sorenson is open to learning more and understand. If the river is not adequately being protected by all the State agencies, we need to find out where the problem is. Then write laws that address the specific problem rather than putting out blank law that may not have the affect we are hoping at the time.

A motion was made by Village Trustee Anna Sorenson and seconded by Village Trustee Barbra Beekman to table Right of the River resolution for the Village.
All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Town Council Member Bob Santamoor and seconded by Town

Council Member Jim Smith to withdraw the Rights of the River resolution for the Town.
All in favor. Motion carried.

2. Discuss MOA between Village and Town for Comprehensive Plan Update

Mayor Dalton stated a MOU between the Village and Town for the Comprehensive Plan Update was given to boards prior to the meeting. It states that the Town and Village will be doing an update to the Comprehensive Plan and the Town and Village will be sharing the cost equally. The Town will provide the financing upfront and bill the Village. The total cost is \$8,900.00 contracted with MJ Engineering

Village Trustee Sorenson added that a goal would be to have assistance on implementation and oversight.

A motion was made by Village Trustee Anna Sorenson and seconded by Village Trustee Barbara Beekman to approve the MOU between the Village and Town for Comprehensive Plan Update.

All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Town Council Member Bob Santamoor and seconded by Town Council Member Jim Smith to approve the MOU between the Village and Town for Comprehensive Plan Update.

All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Village Trustee Barbara Beekman and seconded by Village Trustee Anna Sorenson to adjourn the Joint Town/Village meeting on the Village side at 7:16 PM

All in favor. Motion carried.

A motion was made by Town Supervisor Mary Ann Ashley and seconded by Town Council Member John Taillon to adjourn the Joint Town/Village meeting on the Town side at 7:16 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sally Noble
Village Clerk