

Minutes for TGS&A Special Meeting
October 26, 2015 7:00 p.m.
Room 119 Town Hall
10 of 13 members present

Present were: Eugene F. Coyle, Marlene (Marli) Hayes, Patrick M. Keane, Frank B. Kemp, M. Caroline Luz, Harry D. McLachlin, Joseph D. Miceli, S. Lloyd Plehaty, Clara C. Sartori, Bert H. von Stuelpnagel.

Absent were: Christopher Camuti, Kenneth A. Fiveson, Jr., and Celia Mundt

Guests: Wayne Fox, Jeremy Ginsberg, Ed Schmidt, Sarah Seelye, Jayme Stevenson

This was a special meeting called to discuss the charge to TGS&A concerning an anti-blight ordinance. The first item on the agenda was to approve the minutes of the special meeting of October 5, 2015. The minutes were approved unanimously. After an introduction from Frank Kemp, Patrick Keane walked attendees through a list of questions addressing why the Selectmen feel there is a need for an anti-blight ordinance. The discussion among the Committee and the guests brought out the following key points:

- First Selectwoman Stevenson described the blight issue in Darien as “not pervasive, but persistent.” She said the issue comes up repeatedly, with 10-20 unresolved cases over the past six years. While nothing specific triggered the request for an ordinance, the issue falls under the category of unfinished business.
- There is no central logging or tracking system for calls that come in regarding blight. Most calls involve several town bodies, including Planning and Zoning, Human Services, the Board of Health, Police, Fire Department, the Building Department, the Board of Selectmen and others.
- The town does not currently have the tools to resolve blight problems – Darien cannot take advantage of the state statute authorizing certain anti-blight actions (including levying fines) because it does not have an ordinance.
- Ms. Stevenson, Mr. Ginsberg and others feel an ordinance would give the town the tools to force action by property owners and would also give property owners a forum for appeals. Mr. Ginsberg does not anticipate naming a dedicated blight officer, as the problem is not that extensive. The blight officer would be a town employee who would coordinate response among several departments.
- Liability for accidents, etc. rests with the property owners, not the town.
- Ms. Stevenson urged TGS&A members to speak with neighbors when considering this resolution.

Note: While several members of TGS&A are not convinced that the town needs an ordinance to address these issues, it was reiterated that the Committee has in fact been asked to outline such an ordinance, to be drafted by Town Counsel. The matter will be taken up again at the next regular meeting of the TGS&A Committee, following the organizational meeting for the RTM of 2015-2016.

Respectfully submitted by Caroline Luz, Clerk, TGS&A