
OFFICE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

TO: NORWICH SELECTBOARD
FROM: PETE WEBSTER, TOWN MANAGER
SUBJECT: TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT
DATE: 12/5/2008

The past week and a half, since my last memo to you, was a short one due to holidays. I have continued my meetings with various organizations and their representatives, including responding to the various calls and usual Town concerns of other residents. I've had a number of informal meetings with residents to learn more about the bandstand issue, and the best way to move forward on implementing your Board's Oct. 22nd decision to build a new one. I'll have more on that later.

We had our second budget session on Nov. 24th, which I think went well, and the third session just last evening with the voted appropriation organizations that the Town supports, making their presentations. I also think that went well. Between special budget meetings and your regular Board meetings the Norwich Selectboard has certainly been working overtime! We had another regular meeting on the 25th, and your next regular meeting will be Wed. the 10th, followed by a special meeting on the 17th.

I have tentatively scheduled a staff meeting for Dec. 16th at 10 a.m. to discuss possible changes in health insurance. Our Member Relations rep from the VLCT, Tanya Chambers, will be here for about a 90 minute explanation of the benefits for some of our employees to at least consider switching to the H.S.A. 1500 plan, which is a high deductible Health Savings Account. I would encourage any of you to attend to hear this explanation of the plan. You may remember Neil suggested we explore the possibilities of a different plan, or having our employees start contributing towards a portion of the premium of our current plan, which is the VLCT HP 10/20 C plan, a very generous health insurance plan. I have been researching this, and will be making a recommendation to you next Wednesday that I think is fair and equitable to both employer and employees, and should be well received by our taxpayers. I won't get into all the specifics in this report, but there is an opportunity for significant savings to the Town if our employees can start sharing some of the cost burden for this increasingly expensive benefit.

As for the bandstand, I am moving forward on plans to remove the existing bandstand, which will clearly have to occur before the new design is constructed on the green. Some in Town have suggested that whatever salvageable components of the existing bandstand might be saved and incorporated into a rebuilt exact replica of the existing structure, on another, appropriate location, funded by private donations. I feel this is a good alternative to simply demolishing the entire existing structure; I have been researching the cost of separating the roof from the vertical supports, preserving the roof over the winter, and removing the base. I've had conversations with Peter French who feels there is no value in attempting to preserve the base, and this view is borne out in the Feb. 18, 2008 report by Keefe & Wesner. I have met with Steve Usle, a Norwich resident, from Trumbull Nelson to explore the cost of unbolting the roof and gently lifting and preserving it right

next to the bandstand. I am hoping this cost will not be great, and could/would come from the current fund that has accrued over this past year. Clearly there will be costs in demolishing the existing structure, and I feel this expense is warranted from that fund which is for the new construction. Two days ago I had the power disconnected, and have discussed with Jay Van Arman from the Lions Club about how this will impact their holiday tree. We've discussed an alternate location on the green a bit further east towards the skating rink, as no one wants to lose the lighted tree during the holiday season.

On Monday this week I met with Linda Kelley from the Marion Cross School, and Jonathan Brush, facilities manager for the Dresden School District, to explore the exact location of the B-2 design and see how it might work. Phil Dechert has done a good deal of research on the property line separating school from Town property, and has laid out the location on paper reflecting the appropriate side and front setbacks. We walked this off and both Linda and Jonathan felt relocating the new B-2 design would not impact any school recreational activities. The new bandstand would be entirely on school property, meeting all our setback regs, and I've discussed this issue with Frank Olmstead. This would not be a complicated agreement between the Town and school according to Attorney Olmstead, and would cover all insurance, liability, and maintenance issues. This document would obviously have to be agreed to by both your Board and the school board, but I feel this bandstand is an asset used and appreciated by both school and Town and the location would work well. I will have it flagged off this afternoon so you can easily visualize the new outline and location of the larger B-2 design.

Implicit in your Oct. 22nd vote was the removal of the bandstand, and Gerard has left that up to me to pursue. I realize whatever I do will not please everyone, but it is important I move this project forward so the Town and your Board can focus on other issues. I am aware that Suzanne is very concerned about my efforts in this regard, but I believe this to be the best course of action for the Town. I understand she abstained from that vote, so did not support or oppose the B-2 design. If the current structure (or whatever portion has historic and structural value) can be relocated, that is my goal, rather than just carting the entire structure to a landfill. I believe the most appropriate location for a relocation would be Foley Park. In that regard, I have met with Jodie Carter and Matt Stevens of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, David Deen of the Ct. River Watershed Council, Jill Kearney and Andy Hodgdon, and a number of mostly enthusiastic residents (Norman Miller, Don McCabe, Bill Aldridge from the NHS, Karen Ward representing the Women's Club) and others about this possible relocation. As you probably know, Foley Park was the location of the first log cabin in Norwich, and this site would serve a number of uses. Norman Miller has proposed educational kiosks with historic photographs and the history of this point, a possible small boat landing for kayaks and canoes, and the great uses the A/T hikers would be able to put the bandstand to—a waypoint, a rest stop, a possible mail drop, a rendezvous point, etc. But this would all be a future phase. All of this would be privately funded, privately maintained, on Town property. I think this is the best effort to preserve and maintain part(s) of the old bandstand, which I think most people would support, given the Board's decision to build the B-2 design.

That's pretty much it. I continue to thoroughly enjoy this job and the many challenges that come with the territory.

Sincerely,

Pete Webster

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