

BEACH STIPEND COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Sept. 23, 2014, 5:00 PM

OL TOWN HALL MEETING HALL

In attendance: BJ Bernblum, Keith Coakley; Rich Dakin; Wendy Gavin, and First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder.

1. Approval of Minutes: Chairman Keith Coakley asked if there were any addition or changes to minutes from the September 4, 2014 meeting. A motion was made to approve the minutes. BJ Bernblum seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

2. Keith Coakley began the meeting by asking if any information needed to be shared before we begin the agenda of the meeting. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder shared she had a conversation with our town attorney about the ordinance that was discussed in a previous meeting. Scott Boulanger came to us and said there is an ordinance that the town is not following that there are certain nuisances that the town is not policing. The attorney clarified that the ordinance says that the town acknowledges that certain things within beach associations are considered nuisances and the police can issue a fine. In order to issue a fine there has to be an ordinance that states such things are against the law. The ordinance was not one that says that we have to make sure these things didn't happen, but that we acknowledge that we can issue a fine if these certain nuisances are happening. The fine would not hold up in court otherwise.

Wendy Gavin then shared the September 16, 2014 minutes from the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting. In the minutes, Miami Beach homeowners, Scott and Kathleen Boulanger asked for a variance to allow public parking on a private lot. The minutes explain that there has been a reduction in the number of parking areas for the beach, and there is a need for more parking. This is significant because in our committee minutes from Aug. 21st a Miami Beach representative stated that there was too many parking spaces in the beach area which is one of the reasons Miami Beach has overflow from Sound View. This was one of the reasons given for the need of the stipend. Wendy stated that we have gotten much information, but that it seems that the people speaking to us have a self-interest agenda. The parking is an example of this. Is there too much parking or not enough. It seems to depend on the interest of the individual person presenting. She stated that this is understandable as each person will be directly affected by the outcome of our decision, but at the same time our job is about thinking about all of the people of Old Lyme. The parking example highlights that we do not have all the facts and trying to understand the facts depends on who is speaking. She stated that she does not believe we should have beach stipends per say. She went on to say that policing should happen. Old Lyme police department should be doing the policing. It is our responsibility as a town to make sure that we pay for law and order and public safety. It is not our responsibility to pay a private beach association to do that. She continued with that being said, there may be some associations that should get money from the town. For example, Roger's Lake Community Center serves as a possible respite site for the town. Maybe the town should give some money for the upkeep of that. White Sands Beach Association contains the town beach, maybe we should be paying our fair share, but it seems like it should be a different line item in the budget. She stated that she did not think that there should necessarily be this \$100,000 Beach Stipend budget. BJ Bernblum stated that this is in essence what happens every year. The beach associations

come before the Board of Finance and request money for security or beach cleanup, although it seems that the reasons might be a bit vague. He believes the committee should be deciding if these are reasonable requests and that the town should be giving them this money. He stated that we should answer the question, "What items if any should the town consider affirmatively?"; and then if anything is a yes, we have to determine how much." The conversation continued with discussion about not having enough information to tell us how much more policing would be needed if the beaches did not have security. There was not evidence to quantify a policing impact on security.

Keith Coakley commented that we can't say that the security at the beach saves the town any money. He said that he did not think Officer Heinssen would disagree and further more, should it be our responsibility? Should or should not the town be relinquishing this to a third party?

BJ Bernblum believes that this is a legitimate question. His understanding of the facts or Tom's opinion that it was clear to him that the presence of the private security guards at the beaches reduced the numbers of calls the police would have to respond to. He could not estimate the cost of that. He stated that as a necessary consequence of the beach association having security, the town benefits in policing. It was agreed that the beaches would probably not get rid of their private security. Because the security is there, they also respond to claims and complaints that the police would have to respond to. It was again brought up that private security does not deal with policing issues. BJ Bernblum gave the example of teenagers coming on to the beaches and having a bonfire on the beach. The security is able to chase these teenagers away, and otherwise there would be a call to police or it could become a bigger problem. He went on to say that as a consequence of the private security the town saves money, but how to quantify that let alone monetize that in dollars is difficult to say. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder wanted to make the point that by supplementing a security cost to an association that does not mean the town is handing off its responsibilities. She stated that it was very important to state that and that we are not saying hire the security instead of relying on us. The town does take on its responsibility to fight crime. She also said that there are times when the private security deters crime totally, and we cannot quantify this. You are not even going to have the people getting onto the beaches to start the bonfires because it is well known that there is security there. What is the value to the town of the security? And should we supplement this because it helps us? There was then discussion on the idea that if there was no stipend presently, would the Board of Finance entertain the request for a grant for security? The answer was yes. Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that it would not be out of the question for a town that was having a problem with break-ins or crime to give a rebate to homeowners for a security system or camera to help combat the problem. It was asked if we could ignore the precedent of the stipend giving that has been going on for all of these years. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder stated that you could ignore that. She consulted the insurance company and the attorney and was told there is no legal liability to us. BJ Bernblum said that it might be important to consider in terms of precedent though, why were these stipends approved in the past? And asked, "Is there any learning to gain from that history?" People in the past thought it was a fair thing to do. He asked if there was a moral obligation or fairness to consider? The associations incur the town benefits, and expenses. Keith Coakley asked, "Is there any way we could get an estimate to what it saves the town of Old Lyme?" When we heard from Officer Heinssen it was discussed that

the only solution was for the town to hire a full time police officer. It was agreed that this seemed like a little much. First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder suggested that we could determine how much we would have to pay part-time people to do the job. It was then suggested that we continue to the next item on our agenda to discuss this point.



3. Determine which of the Following Beach Association Expenditures that are Appropriate to Subsidize

Policing: We decided to table this conversation until the next meeting because it seems complicated and we have differing opinions. The committee decided to move onto other areas we might consider subsidizing that may be easier to decide, so we moved on.

Beach or Street Maintenance at White Sand Beach: The town owns the beach, so we are responsible for the cleanup, but we have spill over onto the private beach, so our residence do impact the private beach. We should consider a stipend for this.

Beach or Street Maintenance at Miami Beach: We should consider a stipend for beach cleanup. The roads should be a different consideration. The maintenance of Pond Road should maybe be taken on by the town, however this does not fall to this committee.

Club House Subsidy at Rogers Lake: We should consider a stipend for this.

Other:

Security was brought up again. Keith Coakley asked, "Might we get a letter from the police department that states if security was not happening at the beaches, this is what would be added to the town police budget?"

First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder responded that that might be difficult depending on who you ask, state troopers vs. town police. She said we might have to come up with some determination that states that on 30% of the days in the summer, we could use some extra police. We have plenty of officers on duty on a cloudy or rainy day. On a sunny weekend day, we could use more. Bonnie could look at what a typical summer looks like and confer with Officer Heinszen to get information. Keith Coakley felt as though we should get some experienced opinion to help us decide what we need in terms of policing. Next meeting we will try and quantify what these things are worth to the town.

4. Communication: None

5. Schedule future meetings: Next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2014 at 6:30 PM.

6. Public Comment: None

7. Adjournment: Keith Coakley adjourns meeting.

