

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REUSE OF CAMP GABRIELS
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY**

January 26, 2011

Page 1 of 5

A Public Hearing for discussing Camp Gabriels Reuse was held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the Paul Smiths-Gabriels Fire House, 68 State Route 86 in Paul Smiths, NY, with the following:

CALL TO ORDER:

The Public Hearing was Called to Order by Supervisor John Quenell at 7:10 p.m.

ROLL CALL OF TOWN OFFICERS

PRESENT: Supervisor John Quenell, Council Members: Peter Shrope and Lydia Wright

ABSENT: Council Members Jeffrey Leavitt and Steve Tucker

OTHERS PRESENT: Elaine Sater - Town Clerk

RESIDENTS: Several residents were present

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING: Notice of this public hearing was published in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise on Tuesday, January 11 and Thursday, January 20, 2011. The notice was also posted on the Town Clerk's Sign Board and at three post offices and businesses in the Town on January 11, 2011.

Supervisor John Quenell made a few remarks about the purpose of the public hearing to discuss ideas of what to do with the Camp Gabriels property. He introduced Bob Eckert, a resident, who volunteered to facilitate this discussion.

Councilman Peter Shrope and Lydia Wright introduced themselves and said they were interested in hearing what the people had to say about using the Camp Gabriels property.

Bob Eckert explained that he was there to help facilitate "creative thinking". He is the owner of "New and Improved" a company that does this for large corporations. He explained how he did this with large corporations to come up with ideas for the company. He was not interested in the "typical public hearing" where people spoke in order at a microphone. He wanted to get people to do some creative thinking. First he would ask for facts or background information on Camp Gabriels. Then he would ask for ideas about what might be done with Camp Gabriels. He then would have everyone write up concepts of ideas and make "mini proposals". He didn't want to hear "they should just..."

Discussion was held by several people on how a public hearing is held.

Brian McDonnell, representative from the Town of Brighton's Citizens Redevelopment Committee, asked what has been going on to date at Camp Gabriels. The town's people are not in "investment" mode but are in "hang on to your shorts" mode. If there is not a tenant waiting to get in to the buildings then the Town cannot afford to use tax payer's money to take over the property. People have expressed an interest in the property but the Town cannot pick up the burden from the state.

Supervisor John Quenell said there is no plan yet for the property.

Sheila Delarm said she thought the purpose of this meeting was to come up with creative ideas for using Camp Gabriels. She wanted to hear all the possibilities not to hear people criticize other people's ideas.

The floor was opened to the public for comments.

Amber McKernan, Tax Collector, said the Camp Gabriels property consists of 91.70 acres of tax exempt property; the full market value is \$2,558,140.00. The assessed value of the land is \$200,000. There is an equalization rate of 86%.

Tom McKernan asked questions about the property, has an evaluation of the buildings been completed, what is the cost to repair or restore, has the dump been addressed, is the wastewater treatment plant up to code, is the chapel an

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REUSE OF CAMP GABRIELS
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY**

January 26, 2011

Page 2 of 5

historic building? On August 17 the Adirondack Daily Enterprise published an article written by the Supervisor who said the buildings were not restorable.

Keith Smith, a former Camp Gabriels employee, said the waste water treatment plant is not up to code. There is technically no "dump" area.

Brian McDonnell asked if the survey of the buildings was completed by OGS (current property owner). An inventory of the buildings was supposed to be completed.

He said he received a letter (from the Town Supervisor). He understood it to say the Town was interested in taking over the property for a dollar and he was invited to come and discuss ideas of what could be done with the property.

(A copy to the letter was requested by the Town Clerk and is attached to these minutes)

Tracy Santagate said she was concerned over the idea of manufacturing needs for the property. The Town did not have a need for the property in the past so why does it now. The cart is way before the horse. If people want something to happen with the property they should invest their own money, not the Town's taxpayers.

Chris Woodward came in response to a letter from Mr. Quenell. In the letter he said this was his own private undertaking and he had engaged Mr. Eckert to run the meeting. The letter said to please have only positive ideas; this is not whether or not to take over the property. His time has been wasted because it has taken an hour to decide how to run the meeting. The Town needs to decide if the Town wants to purchase the property or not. If they don't purchase it then they should decide who to market it to. The Town should not be going into business and trying to run a complex that the State couldn't run.

Liz Bennett said she needs more data to be able to give any ideas.

Resident #1: Why would the Town take on property they know nothing about, that is not good business.

Resident #2: If the buildings are so run down why would the Town want the property?

Tom McKernan said the property is tax exempt as a correction facility. The Town should get the status changed and have the State start paying tax on the property.

Resident #3 asked who is responsible for the property?

Bob Eckert said the State owns it and is responsible for it now.

Supervisor John Quenell said the property is to be designated as "moderate intensity" when someone takes it over. He received a letter from the Adirondack Park Agency explaining it.

Town Clerk read from a letter from the Adirondack Park Agency, dated January 20, 2011, Page 3:

"Modern Intensity" land use classification, the Camp Gabriels property has enough acreage for 71 principal buildings under the Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan. A "principal building" is, for example, a single-family dwelling or mobile home, a commercial use building, or a non-accessory building over 1,250 square feet in size. The actual number of new principal buildings that could be constructed on the property will depend on the specific reuse of existing buildings and structures.

On "moderate intensity use" lands, subdivisions of less than 14 lots and that do not create substandard-sized lots do not require an Agency permit.'

Cliff Gromer asked how much the Town would get if the State paid taxes on the property.

Amber McKernan said it would depend on the classification and the rate per \$1,000 of assessed value. The

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REUSE OF CAMP GABRIELS
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY**

January 26, 2011

Page 3 of 5

Assessor Doug Tichenor could answer the question.

Chris Woodward said he heard that people walked through the property but no one bid on the property. Were there any reasons given for people not bidding on the property? He has also heard there is asbestos in some of the buildings.

Resident #4: The minimum bid was \$950,000 and no one came up with that amount.

Amber McKernan said someone from Syracuse looked at it and said it would cost a lot to restore the buildings.

Discussion was held on other properties that have been for sale. The APA has many restrictions for using property.

Bruce Sawyer, former employee from Camp Gabriels for over 20 years, said there is a central heating plant that burns 250 gallons of fuel a day in the summer time. The physical plant needs a licensed operator to run it. The electric bill is over \$10,000 a month. The infrastructure is not working and been closed down for 2 years. There has been no heat in the buildings for two winters. Asbestos has been removed from most of the buildings. There is still asbestos in some of the buildings.

Bob White said the Town has to use 100% of the facility for Town purposes according to the statute, where did the 50% use come from mentioned in the letter from the Supervisor.

Supervisor John Quenell said he got the 50% information from Senator Betty Little's office.

Bob Eckert asked about any buildings that are "sweet".

Brian McDonnell started to name a few buildings he thought were "sweet", the gym, dinning hall, old hospital buildings.

Keith Smith said the power house has mold in it; it was one of the better buildings and was sealed. The dinning hall needs work underneath. The steam pipes are cut off at the radiators. The old hospital buildings are stone outside but would have to be totally renovated on the inside. The paint is peeling off the walls and there is mold through out the buildings.

Bruce Sawyer said the gymnasium's roofs leaks. He said it would take about 7 people to keep up with the maintenance on the place.

Pat Willis said the architect of the patient halls was Pope and architect of the chapel was Isaac Perry. She asked if the chapel could be designated as a historical building and restored. It would be a shame to tear down the building. Could rent the building as a historic museum and library to support the property, there is no place for the Town to set up a permanent historical display.

Resident #5 has two questions; it has taken an hour to get an answer to one of them, the value of the land. He has not taken a walk through the property; the second question is that he would like to take one. He spoke about the "White Father's Camp" in Onchiota and how the buildings were demolished when they didn't sell. People bought some buildings like to chapel and maintain it privately.

Amber McKernan said Article 14 says the buildings have to be removed from state land.

Brian McDonnell said that pertains to "Forest Preserve" land and this land is owned by "OGS" and isn't Forest Preserve.

Discussion was held on whether the town's residents could take a walk through of the property to see what is there. There is a security guard on the premises.

Tracy Santagate questioned the enormity of considering taking over the property; the Town would be interrupting the state's process by showing an interest in taking the property before the state has finished its process.

Bob Eckert asked if people thought the Town should or should not take over the property.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REUSE OF CAMP GABRIELS
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY**

January 26, 2011

Page 4 of 5

Discussion was held on the value of the buildings, the ability of the Town to manage the property, the financial responsibility would be prohibitive to the Town.

Chris Leifheit made a point of order that people should state their names if they want to talk.

Tom Seymour said the state will probably just come in with bulldozers and level the buildings. The state has been known to just let the insides of buildings rot and then destroy the buildings.

Bruce Sawyer said any building that is kept will have to have septic and water hooked up to run it. He asked how old a building has to be to be designated "historic".

Neil Supernaut said that an historic designation does not prevent a building owner from destroying it. He cited the store at Paul Smith's College as an example. It was on the historic register and demolished.

Tom McKernan said the Town doesn't have a good track record on maintaining the buildings it already owns.

Cliff Gromer asked for a vote of yes or no for what people want to do.

Discussion was held that a Public Hearing is not a place for a vote; it's just for voicing opinions. The Board can vote at a Board meeting.

Bob Eckert said he has a form for people to fill out and write to the Board to voice their opinions if they don't want to speak.

Keith Smith said he would like to recommend that the Town get the tax designation changed so the State starts paying taxes on the property.

Sheila Delarm wondered if there were any interesting ideas that haven't been voiced yet.

Chris Leifheit said it might be more beneficial to ask why people come tonight. He is frustrated with this process because as Tracy Santagate so eloquently put it "the cart is so far in front of the horse". He did not come to give ideas for using the property but to see if the other residents think as he does that the idea is very presumptuous and premature.

Amber McKernan asked what right the residents have to tell a land owner what to do with their property. The state has the right to do what they want with their property. She asked Brian McDonnell if he knew what the state wants to do with the property.

Brian McDonnell said the state wants to dump the property on someone else. They just want to sell it.

Tracy Santagate said the Town needs to have zoning to control land in the Town. The Town can't do spot zoning.

Addison Bickford said the Town should firmly turn the state down and force the state to sell the property.

Bob White said the chapel seems to be the only building worth anything on the property.

Chris Leifheit said the property is a piece of Adirondack real estate and is a good piece of property. If the state relinquishes control, the buildings become the problem. The town doesn't have the aptitude to maintain the property or for long term commitments. Without the buildings the property is valuable.

Neil Supernaut said he came to this hearing with an open mind and no opinion about the property, after hearing the comments he is opposed to the Town taking over the property, the Town should stay away from the property.

Brian McDonnell said the Town board could set up a tour for the residents in the spring if people are interested.

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR REUSE OF CAMP GABRIELS
TOWN OF BRIGHTON - FRANKLIN COUNTY, NY**

January 26, 2011

Page 5 of 5

Mike Quenell asked what would people really like to see there. There are people out there who might be interested in it.

Chris Woodward said what would a private concern like to see there, not what would the Town like to do with it. If the state levels the buildings then you would have a nice piece of property. Who is going to pay to restore the chapel if that building is kept?

Bob Eckert would like to know what value the Town could get out of the property. He would like to hear ideas about what people think.

Cliff Gromer said the state should level the buildings, make the property presentable and put it up for auction.

Frank Appleton said people should come to the Town Board meetings.

There were no further comments from the floor. Bob Eckert closed the discussion at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elaine Sater
Brighton Town Clerk