

1 Town of Stockton Springs

2 Public Hearing

3 Stockton Springs Elementary School Building Referendum Question

4 May 23, 2019

5 Searsport Elementary School

6 Minutes

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8 Present:

9 Town of Stockton Springs: Peter Curley –Select Board Member, Betsy Bradley –Select Board
10 Member, Tom Fraser, Select Board Member. Courtney O’Donnell – Town Manager, Amber
11 Poulin – Assessor, Mac Smith – Recording Secretary.

12 RSU 20: Chris Downing – RSU 20 Superintendent, Dhyana Blanchard – Business Manager,
13 Russ Flagg – Maintenance Director, Denise Dakin – School Board Member – Stockton, Kris
14 Braga – School Board Member, Stockton.

15 Town of Searsport: James Gillway – Town Manager.

16 Ms. O’Donnell welcomed the audience. She said the Town of Searsport had not achieved a
17 quorum. Mr. Gilway spoke and said the Town of Searsport would reschedule their portion of the
18 Public Hearing.

19 Mr. Curley opened the Public Hearing at 7:03 p.m. Ms. O’Donnell presented a PowerPoint
20 presentation.

21 Ms. O’Donnell said that the question would be voted upon on June 11, 2019 from 8 a.m. to 8
22 p.m., and that absentee ballots would be available.

23 Ms. O’Donnell gave background about the school building. She presented current assessment
24 values of the building and property. She spoke of current structural problems with the building,
25 including extensive mold and a leak in the gymnasium roof.

26 Ms. O’Donnell said that both towns would vote on whether to accept the building. She said the
27 question would be whether to accept the building and land and would not be about any finances.

30 Ms. O'Donnell explained what a "no" vote would mean. She said a no vote would take the
31 Town of Stockton out of the process of the sale.

32 Ms. O'Donnell said that the process is governed by State of Maine statute.

33 Ms. O'Donnell explained what a "yes" vote would mean. She said the Stockton Springs Select
34 Board recommended voting yes.

35 Ms. O'Donnell presented potential options for the building and land if the vote is yes. The
36 options were to fix the building, including mold remediation. She said the minimum bid to
37 perform mold remediation was \$146,000, she said the cost estimate to bring the building back to
38 life was \$225,000; the next option was to demolish the building and retain the land. She
39 explained potential uses for the land. She said there was at least some asbestos in the building
40 but the extent was not known. She said the estimate to demolish the building and take care of the
41 underground storage tanks was \$50,000 to \$80,000; the next option was to demolish part of the
42 building and retain the land. She said this would most likely involve retaining the gymnasium
43 and possibly the kitchen and to demolish the class space, where the mold is very extensive. She
44 said the cost estimate is unknown at this time; the last option was to accept the building and work
45 with investors/developers. She said there was preliminary interest by a developer regarding the
46 school. She said the cost estimate for this option was known. She said all costs she presented
47 were just estimates. She spoke of possible unknown costs associated with a yes vote.

48 Ms. O'Donnell outlined the next steps if the building were accepted by the Town of Stockton.

49 Meg Haskell from Stockton Springs asked about the developer interested in the property. She
50 asked how far the discussion has gone with the developer. Ms. O'Donnell said that the
51 discussion had not gone far and would not until the final disposition of the building is known.

52 Stockton Springs Select Board Member asked if Searsport would have to pay property taxes if
53 Searsport took the building. Ms. O'Donnell said she did not think so.

54 George Skala of Stockton Springs said he would like to see the building kept for a trade school
55 or have other options investigated.

56 Lillian Letourneau from Stockton spoke of a possible farmers' market at the location. She asked
57 about the cost of building a new fire station and demolishing the old one.

58 Dave Clark of Stockton Springs asked if Stockton voted yes, what would happen with
59 Searsport's vote? Ms. O'Donnell said that if both towns voted yes, an agreement would have to
60 be made between the two towns.

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63 Bill Cosmano of Stockton Springs asked how many students are currently attending the Waldo
64 County Technical Center. He spoke highly of the WCTC. Mr. Downing gave the figures, which
65 were in the mid 40's for both morning and afternoon sessions.

66 A resident asked if the Stockton Springs Fire Department was interested in just the land or also
67 the building. Ms. O'Donnell explained the various options that are in the long-term planning.
68 She said any plans for a new fire station were just beginning.

69 Meg Haskell of Stockton Springs said that she felt it was too bad that the mold situation
70 happened under the management of RSU 20. She asked about the Maine Ocean School possibly
71 using the building. Ms. O'Donnell and Mr. Downing said the Maine Ocean School no longer
72 had an interest in using the building.

73 Steven Benjamin of Stockton Springs asked how long it would take to decide what to do with the
74 building if the vote was yes, and who would make the final decision on what to do with the
75 building. Ms. O'Donnell said that there were various factors that governed some of the length of
76 the process. She said next June would be when things might be decided. She said that if the vote
77 was yes, the Select Board would like to nail down some preliminary decisions within a few
78 months of the vote.

79 Stockton Select Board Member Peter Curley asked about the process regarding the interested
80 developer. RSU 20 Business Manager Dhyana Blanchard said the deed would be turned over by
81 July at the latest.

82 Lesley Cosmano of Stockton Springs asked how much money had been put in the article which
83 would voted on regarding the disposition of the building. Ms. O'Donnell said that no money had
84 been put in the budget for the school building at this time.

85 Stockton Springs Select Board Member Betsy Bradley asked about insurance. Ms. O'Donnell
86 said that the insurance payments would come from the insurance account and could be absorbed
87 by the administrative budget.

88 A resident asked how much was being spent on the building by RSU 20 at the current time by
89 Stockton residents.

90 Bill Cosmano of Stockton asked about the Select Board's recommendation of a yes vote and said
91 he was disappointed that no money had been set aside. Ms. O'Donnell said that the expenditure
92 of any money on the building if there was a yes vote would come before a Special Town
93 Meeting.

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96 RSU 20 Board Member and Stockton resident Denise Dakin asked about the town's current solar
97 power being able to power the building. Ms. O'Donnell said it would.

98 Stockton resident Betty Fraser asked Ms. O'Donnell about extra copies of her handout and about
99 putting it on social media. Ms. O'Donnell said she would.

100 Jim Nichols of Stockton Springs asked about how the Town of Orland took over their school
101 building and turned it into a community center. Ms. O'Donnell told of her discussions with the
102 man who manages the Orland community center as well as other Orland officials.

103 Denise Dakin asked about the taxes if the building were no longer tax-exempt. Ms. Poulin said it
104 would be \$10,000.

105 Meg Haskell said that because of the location of the building and land, it should belong to the
106 town. She said she did not like the idea of it being used as a business incubator, especially with
107 open storefronts downtown. She said she would not like to see it compete with current
108 businesses. Ms. O'Donnell said that it might lead to different businesses coming to town
109 because of the ability to adapt the spaces to specific business needs.

110 Monet Brazier of Searsport asked about zoning variances if a developer were to buy the property.
111 She asked if both town vote yes and one town wants to demolish the building and another wants
112 to keep the building, what would happen. Ms. O'Donnell said that things would be settled by the
113 various town attorneys. She said she was not sure what the specific zoning was for that specific
114 location.

115 Bob Hickey of Stockton Springs asked about the value of the land if the building were
116 demonlished and cleared. Ms. O'Donnell said it would be assessed at \$328,000. She said if the
117 vote were yes, the Town of Stockton would have to have an appraiser appraise the building and
118 land.

119 Betsy Bradley asked about the \$225,000 figure. Ms. O'Donnell gave more details.

120 Deborah Crosby of Stockton Springs about the cost to the town to build a new fire station. Ms.
121 O'Donnell said the building of a new fire station would be years down the road. She said the
122 current fire station is adequate for now but would soon be outgrown.

123 Steven Benjamin asked the Select Board Members why they recommended a yes vote. Ms.
124 Bradley said she thought that retaining ownership of the location would help build a sense of
125 community. She spoke of the need for a new fire station. Mr. Curley said he did not think it was
126 worth keeping the building but that the land had value, especially for a new fire station. Mr.
127 Fraser said he would like to see the Town of Stockton retain the control over the location.

128

130 Bill Cosmano asked if the mold needed to be removed if the building were to be torn down. The
131 answer was no. Mr. Cosmano asked about more firm figures for demolition.

132 Charlie Cross of Stockton asked about equipment in the building. RSU 20 Maintenance Director
133 Russ Flagg said there was some equipment that could be cleaned and then sold but it would have
134 to be determined if it was worth the cost.

135 Denise Dakin gave figures regarding cleaning the building versus tearing down the building.
136 Ms. O'Donnell said that her figures for demolition were different than Mr. Flagg's figure. She
137 said there would be no final figure until bids were asked for.

138 Mr. Fraser asked Mr. Flagg if they had checked behind the walls. Mr. Flagg said they had not.

139 George Skala asked about what the cost would be to build a building of the current size of the
140 Stockton Springs Elementary School. He discussed possibly forming a committee to find the
141 perfect developer.

142 Jim Nickols spoke about a Community Development Block Grant.

143 Beth Smith of Stockton Springs said it would be forward-thinking to keep the property.

144 Mr. Curley closed the public hearing at 8:10 p.m.

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