

Town Meeting  
February 17, 2016

The meeting was called to order by Selectman Jeffrey Haney at 7:02PM. Town Clerk Margaret West read the call and return of posting. Joann Pelton moved to nominate Augie Palmer as moderator, seconded. There being no other nominations the Moderator called for a vote.

Nomination Carried: Unanimous

The moderator read the eligibility to vote at a town meeting. Selectman Haney asked those in attendance to make sure when they speak to address the Moderator and state your name and address.

**Herman Schuler moved Item 1, seconded:**

**ITEM 1** Shall the Town of Oxford approve the additional \$403,531.00 for the Aggie Park Fields Project with the provision that any expenditure from the contingency, in the amount of 76,400.00, must be approved by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance prior expenditure; as approved by the Board of Selectmen on 1/20/16 and 2/3/16 and the Board of Finance on 1/25/16?

Discussion:

Edward Hellauer 83 Bowers Hill Rd explained that he is a property abutter to this project and Agnes Tetlak Son in Law; there are other family members here tonight. He thanked Moderator Palmer because it was during his administration that this property transferred to the town as open space. He said he was not opposed to the project but he sees 2 flaws. First the contractor has a bad reputation and does not have the knowledge or equipment to do this kind of job. This job is environmentally sensitive with wetlands as well. This company had issues in Milford and did not make good on the contract there. Second flaw was where the parking lot is situated is to far off the road and there already has been security issues on this property

First Selectman George Temple commented that he appreciated Mr. Hellauer comments. He further explained that there will be a qualified contractor and no contract has been awarded. The Board of Selectmen will review and award the contract.

Steven Brown 8 Bonnie Lane explained that he is in support of this project as everyone knows he is a liberal spender. This project is in a rush to get done. He has concerns about the project primarily because it is being rush. He stated an article recently in the Waterbury Republican paper Saturday 2/13/2016 quoting the First Selectman relative to the upcoming budgets in the next few months. He proceeded to read from the article.

The Moderator interrupted and explained that this has to be germane to the Item on the meeting notice. Mr. Brown continued that the article says budgets will be flat or less than flat because the tax agreement with power plant didn't pass. He further commented that if this is a fact should we be spending this kind of money. He continued commenting on spending money that we may not have because of the up and coming budget. He further commented that this should be voted on at the budget referendum. People should have an opportunity to vote and decide at the referendum.

He further commented that he was concerned about taking a vote tonight because emails were sent out by Town Officials which violated the law. Emails were sent to select persons related to this project, (Sports teams Ext) and that there were 2 violations of CGS 9-369. This referendum has been pending since February 9<sup>th</sup> and you can not use town funds. As he continued on the Statue 9-369 FSGT clarified that this is not a referendum. Mr. Brown argued that this statue covers Referendum and town Meeting. This is just like a referendum. There are 2 violations because it was sent by town officials and not everyone got it. Town Officials were also looking for a yes vote.

They can not advocate for an item when a referendum is pending. He stated he would be making a FOI request to Town Officials. As a member of the Board of Education we were read the riot act as what we were allowed to do and not do as far as 9-369 is concerned. The moderator and Mr. Brown's discussion ensued regarding complaints to the FOI. Moderator Palmer explained that you are here right now to vote, this is in your hands. The people here have a right by law to vote tonight.

Ken Maher 10 Knorr Rd commented that you will never stop the selling or using of drugs anywhere. He further commented that we are getting a \$500,000 in grant for this project and we need more projects like this because more people are moving into town. He explains he was on Parks & Recreation and he experienced people begging for more fields and work to be done. My idea is you put a kid on a field, you teach them how to play on a team it builds character. He continued his comments on sports. If these projects could save on kids it worth it.

Herman Schuler commented that he supported Ken's comment. I use to work for the town as EDC director and Deb Gatto Parks and Recreation Director came to him and said if you could find us more fields it would be so appreciated. He further commented to Mr. Brown that this is not a referendum; this is the governing body of the town, right here and right now. The moderator explained that Mr. Schuler needed to address the Moderator. He agreed that was correct and further commented to the Moderator this is the governing body right here, right now. Oxford needs to be civilized and needs to provide these types of things for the people in our town. Its one thing to buy Tetlak and another to make it useful. Rock House hill is another example where trails were put in (Tom Adamski) and now I can take my Grand Children for a hike.

FSGT commented he heard a lot tonight. First he would like to say this is not a rush to vote. This project I inherited 4 years ago and its time to get something done. He further commented he realized there were political considerations here but as low as you can do is to try and make political hay on the backs of little girls and that is what this is about. Our Girls in this town getting a little parody with the boys and the boys will follow. This will give us 5 fields, with 2 softball fields. If you go up to the High School our girls are making quite a reputation for them selves and for our town. I am proud of them and always have been proud of them. We have this money, there is no borrowing, money though recent sales that we have available to us, lets put it to good use and take care of the kids.

Selectwoman Johnson commented I just heard political hay brought up, I am not in favor of this project. Not for political reasons, I moved it forward during the Selectmen's meeting because I don't like depriving children of anything either. Matter of fact I didn't deprive children of a high school I did my best to get it passed. I attended the Board of Finance meeting and I heard the hard questions There is rock there, what if we have to blast, wells need to be drilled and now the builder is in question. I know First Selectman Temple said he would fix that, we are voting to approve this project tonight. There are still a lot of questions on the table as well as voting on this project tonight. I just heard FSGT play politics with our kids, I am going to vote no on this project and I will take the heat from all of you out there. I am voting no for this and I am not going to spend another dime until I see this budget.

Moderator asked to have something clarified: Are we voting on a contract to hire a contractor tonight.

FSGT answered no, the next step is to have the committee come to the Board of Selectmen with their contractor recommendations. This is when these questions will be raised.

The moderator asked if the committee was already selected. FSGT answered yes. Discussion ensued between Selectman Johnson and the Moderator regarding him already knowing the answers to these questions. Moderator Palmer assured that he didn't know and wanted clarification. Discussion ensued between the Moderator and Selectman Johnson.

Steve Brown called a point of order, discussion ensued between him and the moderator regarding point of order. The moderator ruled that it is not a Point of Order, it is a point of personal privilege, you are member of the Board of Education, the Moderator allowed the point of privilege.

Steve Brown commented that he didn't know anything that the Moderator just said, and wanted to clarify this being political. Is it political for me as a Democrat to ask a Republican Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance if we should spend money before we know what our bills are? To spend this money now with out knowing what the budgets are? He continued that he is a member of the Board Education but was not

speaking for them. He further commented that he was present during the Board of Education budget process, I know what is in that budget, I also sit before the BOF every year and watch them cut our budget and they cut it because there is no money. Now we are being asked to spend this money after the First Selectman said we don't have money for a budget this year, budgets will be flat or less.

He continued saying that we are talking about possibly cutting AP Science for the high school. He continued.... The moderator then asked him to stay on the subject. Another thing is there was talk about girls vs. boys, I have a girl and I voted for every sport project even though she doesn't play sports, I have also seen the music program that she loves cut. I haven't run to the BOE or BOS and demand that arts get equity in this town. He said this is about providing equity to girls, do we need a good education for our kids, do we need to take care of our roads, and do we have good equipment first before we go to a field project. The steep grant could be used for lots of other purposes in town. If we were to postpone this vote to the referendum or to a time when we know what the budget is, I would be much more inclined to vote yes, I want to vote yes but do we vote yes not knowing what our bills are. I am sorry the town administration chose to do business this way; it is not a good way to do business.

Paula Gillett 175 Good Hill Rd. These fields are what we need, bottom line, are kids need these fields and that is what we are suppose to be talking about. Anyone who thinks this is not political, it is political. One thing I am against is our kids being used as pawns in the political game. George has done a lot of work getting fields, taking care of our kids in this town for sports, recreation and education "big time".

I am also a member of the Board of Education and "no" AP Science is not going to be cut because we have a field; it is ridiculous and absurd for it to be even said. I am familiar with the FOI act and this is not a referendum. This is how we do business in this town and it is perfectly in line with our charter. If someone wants to take it up with FOI knock yourself out there is a process. I am in support of these fields, they need to be done, and we have a \$500,000 grant do we want to throw that out too.

Kathy O'Neil grant writer explained that she writes grants for the town. It is not an either or we have to make decisions and I am proud of this administration. We write grants for roads, education and equipment; we are getting a grant for equipment, open space was under Augie's administration so these grants cover a lot of the town's responsibility. This grant is very special for our children. If you drive through a neighbor hood it is hard to see children outside, they are doing the video games. This gives our school system and our volunteers a place to play. I came out to support the park and hopefully it will pass.

The moderator asked if a steep grant could be used for anything. The grant writer answered not for capital kind of things.

Joanne Briganti 20 Middlefield road commented that she has a nine year old that just started Soft ball, I am here as a soft ball mom. We have a championship team at the high school level.

As I have been going to these games it is sort of embarrassing for the kids. The kids are so into it and we look at our fields and we are sitting on a rock to watch the game. I go to surrounding towns and see their fields. The girls are so into it, just to give them these fields to embrace their sport will keep them active, it is something our town needs.

The moderator then explained we had to recess this meeting and open the BOS meeting then recess that and come back to this.


Paula Gillette moved the question, seconded.

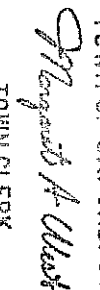
Move the question Vote: motion passed  
1 nay

Moderator called for a vote on Item 1: Motion carried: few nays

Herman Schuler moved to adjourn, seconded:

Meeting adjourned at 7:32PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
  
Margaret A West  
Town Clerk

16 FEB 25 PM 3:57  
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT  
  
TOWN CLERK