

## **LONG BEACH PUBLIC FORUM**

August 15, 2013

### ***In Anticipation of the End of the Year Long Beach Lease Expirations***

7:12 p.m. Meeting Called to Order

Chairperson Battistelli introduced the members of the Board of Selectmen and gave a brief statement. She stated that the Long Beach leases are expiring on 12/31/13; decisions need to be made. The Board of Selectmen would like to explore all alternatives before making a decision.

Selectperson Murphy gave a brief history of Long Beach.

Selectperson Lucas gave a brief statement, she said she wants to listen to everyone about the future of Long Beach; Long Beach is special for all of us.

#### Public Input Facilitation

The Town Administrator is acting as the facilitator for the forum and inquired about more points of view and began reviewing the potential scenarios that have been brought forward.

#### **Sell the property to one buyer:**

- Jan Duffy, 50 Long Beach, stated she has been on Long Beach for 61 Years. Not in favor of this scenario; can't imagine anyone being in favor of this.
- Martha Grimaldi, 142 Long Beach, said this option doesn't protect the Cottage Owners at all.
- Chairperson Battistelli said pursuing this would not be simple; there would be processes, regulations, and financial obligations, not viable option. There could be legal challenges by the cottage owners.
- Selectperson Sheedy questioned if we should eliminate this option.

#### **Sell the lots to the Cottage owners instead of leasing them:**

- Frederick Tarr, 154 Main, spoke about the liability of maintaining the seawall. If the seawall isn't repaired there won't be any cottages to be sold.
- Linda Sanders and Selectperson Murphy pointed out that the town would still be responsible for the seawall repairs.
- Richard Sullivan, has been on Long Beach for over 60 years; owns #97 and is buying #79, he stated that all the guests that they bring into town, year round, increases the revenue for the town (hotels and restaurants). He questions what method brings in more revenue.

- Cantrell, 4R Long Beach, stated that this is a bad idea. He said that he would love to own the piece of land but questioned where the lot lines are. He's been there his whole life, 57 years. He said the Town would lose revenue; fences would begin going up.
- Karin Flynn, 12 Old County, said the cottage has been in the family for 80 years. It is as if they own the land, she said the cottage is worth \$36,000, this is an exorbitant amount of taxes including the land. She said their children never went to the school; she doesn't like this option. The cottage owners would lose a huge amount of money; we never cost the town a lot of money.
- Cheryl Petras, 14 Old County Road, has owned the cottage since 1995 and began coming here in 1956. She questions the advantage of owning the lot. She stated the Long Beach residents are in Rockport for one half of the year and with the conservation restrictions it wouldn't benefit us.
- Dan Heffernan, 124 Long Beach, has been here for 3 years. Everyone is in different financial situation.
- Pam Gnerre 19 Long Beach, can't afford to buy the lot, been here since the late since 50's.
- Bob Grimaldi, 142 Long Beach, you would need to give residents the options to purchase or lease.
- John Hazelton, 52 Long Beach, if the town sells the lots, the owners would be entitled to stay year round; this would create sewage problems, etc.
- Chairperson Battistelli said this option is a lengthy process, there would be legal costs for both parties, land use and zoning changes would be required as well.

**Continue Leasing to the Cottage Owners:**

- Richard Carbone, 29 Long Beach, President of the Long Beach Association; he thanked the Board of Selectmen for this forum. He stated that it has been 115 years since the cottages have been leased. The beach is enjoyed by thousands of people that are not only residents. The owners keep the beach in top shape while they're there. He stated that the town has earned \$311,000 in rent and \$920,000 in real estate taxes, \$1.2M this year (from 2006 and 2013, the town has received \$7.9M of revenue). Seeking conventional mortgage financing, this is fair to the town and the owners.
- Pam Hartnett, 18 Long Beach, said her mom and dad own 28 Old County. If her parents were forced to purchase the land, they'd have to leave. They prefer to lease it; it's more affordable. The lot line issue is tough.

- Linda Sanders questioned what people's views would be if it was more affordable to purchase it.
- J. Hazelton, 52 Long Beach, 15 years, supports what R. Carbone has said.
- Richard Sullivan: He said that Long Beach is a cash cow; the Board of Selectmen controls our destiny.
- Steve Sheehan, 12 Long Beach, member of LBIA. He said he can't get a mortgage. It was affordable in the 50's. Isn't it more important to have this family colony with 154 families? He said he couldn't afford this option. He is appreciative for the forum.
- Wally Hess: 117 Granite Street, not a Long Beach tenant. Leases are coming to an end. The town has an asset worth something in excess of \$60M. He said the town must make a rational decision, for it to make sense to the other taxpayers of the town, the rates must be adjusted. Lease rates for similar land runs between 4-6% of the value of the land. If we use an average of \$500,000, the lease rates should be \$25,000 in addition to the taxes. He said the town doesn't need to get there by 1/1/14, but the leases need to reflect market rates.
- Heather Carbone, 29 Long Beach. Stated that she feels that they've already paid the value of the land; in 2008 they purchased the cottage, it was deplorable; it was a shack, it was cute and quaint. Paid \$350,000 for the cottage. The 4-6% would hurt a lot of people. If we are forced out because inability to pay, Long Beach will turn into a "city" with obnoxious people.
- Carol Suleski, 106 Long Beach, has been here since the 70's. Those communities that lease property are there year round.
- Richard Vierstra, 152 Long Beach, the town is looking for a way of generating revenue. It has been historically a revenue generator for the town.
- L. Sanders said this isn't all about the revenue - you're here tonight because the #1 priority for the town is about its citizens.
- Chairperson Battistelli said it's about governance as well; there's more to it.
- Richard Sullivan, wanted to commend the DPW for their Transfer Station. L. Sanders announced that the three DPW Commissioners and DPW staff are present tonight.
- Selectperson Wilkinson said she'd like to correct the comment, she said this is their transfer station, she said what the Board of Selectmen is trying to do here is what is best for the whole town, we all go to Long Beach.
- Susan McKelliget, 57 Long Beach, affording buying the land. Said she owned the cottage for 11 years, no matter how reasonable the cost,

she couldn't afford to purchase it. She would have to walk away with absolutely nothing.

- Mary Jane Long, 25 Long, used to be Cottage #76, said they've been there since 1940; she's a long timer. Thought "those in charge" were going to throw us out. That was the history of the past, that's why you're hearing this.
- Chairperson Battistelli said this option clearly stays on the list. We went to Town Meeting last year to change the 10-year lease limitation. That opens up other possibilities. This option holds the least amount of ramifications (legal, zoning, etc.)
- Selectperson Murphy stated that the LBIA has been good to deal with. He continued that the opinions of the Long Beach residents are valued.
- Selectperson Sheedy stated that she was glad that everyone came tonight. She stated that she is surprised that more individuals don't want to buy the lots.
- Selectperson Lucas said she mirrored Selectperson Sheedy's comments.
- Norm Stavis, 96 Long Beach, said it was nice to meet the landlords, and thanked the Board of Selectmen for having the forum. He stated that it hasn't always been harmonious. We can talk about good and bad tenants and what costs are. He said that he is in favor of leasing, it's about preserving something; the fabric of the town as well as the cost. This is a neighborhood.
- Cheryl Petras, 14 Old County, if you consider the selling of the land, please talk to a realtor to learn market value.
- Cantrell, 4 Old County Road, questioned why this is being discussed this year. We've been renewed every 10 years, continually.
- Chairperson Battistelli, stated that we are ending a 10 lease period so we do need to make decision, same time frame the Long Beach Association has suggested some changes to the leases, and people have different ideas.
- Selectperson Wilkinson said the Board of Selectmen has the potential to change every year. When she first came on the board, a meeting like this wouldn't have been possible.

**Let it go back into the ocean:**

- Frederick Tarr, 154 Main, not in favor, that seawall will have to be repaired. Wouldn't want to see people forced out by sudden assessment or that the town should share (cost to repair seawall). It's working out very well the way it's been going. We should look at who will pay what for the seawall repairs.

- Louise Vierstra, 148 Long Beach, family has been on Long Beach since 1909. There were no cars and no parking.
- Chairperson Battistelli said that this may be one scenario because they're looking at future costs (seawall, etc.). There would be costs to demolish the seawall, they think this option is a free lunch, but it's not.

**Make it a public park:**

- Selectperson Lucas said she doesn't support this scenario because we have a lot of great spaces.

**Lease it to a commercial developer:**

- Bad idea

Selectmen Deliberation & Summary

- Chairperson Battistelli stated that this is on agenda for next Tuesday's Board of Selectmen's meeting.
- Selectperson Murphy, moved to eliminate the scenario of leasing it to a Commercial Developer, seconded by Selectperson Sheedy, Vote: 5-0
- Selectperson Murphy, moved to eliminate the scenarios of making it into a public park, seconded by Selectperson Wilkinson, Vote: 5-0.
- Selectperson Murphy, move to eliminate going back to the ocean, seconded by Selectperson Wilkinson, Vote: 5-0.
- Selectperson Wilkinson, moved to eliminate the scenario of selling to one buyer, seconded by Selectperson Murphy Vote: 5-0.

The Town Administrator stated that we have eliminated all but two scenarios, and they both keep the Long Beach residents there.

DPW Commission Chairman J. Gardner questioned, since the scenario of letting it go back to the ocean has been eliminated, is this a commitment to repairing or replacing the seawall?

Chairperson Battistelli said it's a commitment to protect the asset.

Selectperson Sheedy said we need to get the results of the sediment transport study; it will be 2014 until we learn the extent of the seawall repairs.

Heather Carbone would like more information on the sediment transport study.

Jim Devine, 6 Long Beach, said he has been involved in local government outside of Rockport; appreciates this forum.

8:35 meeting adjourns