



Can Citizens Change the Selectmen's Decision on 70 Rangers Dr?

April 6, 2018



Staff photo by Len Lathrop Selectmen watch for the cable broadcast to start.



Staff photo by Len Lathrop Waiting for the meeting to start were many Hudson citizens.



Staff photo by Len Lathrop A photo collage was displayed for Selectmen.

by Len Lathrop

The decision is carved in stone was not something that the nearly 100 people heard – not in those exact words – Tuesday night at the special Hudson selectmen's meeting, where anyone who wanted to speak was granted that opportunity.

When the public input section of the selectmen's meeting could not proceed on Tuesday the 27th due to the seating capacity of the selectmen's room at town hall and a failure by Comcast to keep the meeting broadcasted to other parts of the town complex so people could see and hear, the selectmen rescheduled the public input to the Hills Memorial Library meeting room and listened to 17 people speak.

Opening the input was Brent Gagnon who, as all speakers who followed him, thanked the selectmen for their time and for offering them the opportunity to express their concerns. Gagnon expressed his passion for open space, that being one of the reasons he became a member of the Conservation Committee, but speaking as a citizen outlined how Hudson was the lowest of the area towns with only 6 percent open space. Nashua, for example, has 12 percent. Gagnon also presented information from the New Hampshire Trust for Public Land that for every dollar raised by taxation the cost is 56 cents, while every dollar from developed property costs a municipality \$1.12. Gagnon closed by saying that tonight's meeting is about how you look at open space in Hudson.

Prior to the input from citizens, Chairman Coutu laid down guidelines from Selectmen meeting guidelines and also provided some facts about the property: that it is 29.159 acres which the town acquired in 1993 for unpaid taxes. Coutu presented that it was never conservation land. He had researched it and the selectmen have never been asked for a conservation easement on it. Coutu continued that selectmen had decided to look at town properties that the town owned to see if selling them would put them back on the tax roll, and the revenue from the sales would be used to reduce taxes. 70 Ranger Dr. was on the list.

Gail Boutin of David Drive spoke about the wildlife on the property and how it is a spot for kids to sled, ride bikes, and play. She stated how Hudson doesn't have much green space and asked the selectmen what they were going to do and hoped they [selectmen] could hear what folks have to say.

From 3 Rangers Dr., speaking third, was Ted Trost who has become the appointed leader of this grass roots group, even as he struggles to be just one of the members. Trost spoke about the tax burden that development puts on the town not only relative to services that are paid for but some that are not direct costs like traffic, and did mention that residential units cost more than they pay. He hoped that this sale was not a done deal and reminded selectmen that this is not just about Rangers Drive but about Hudson.

Mike Drouin of Coll St. told the board he was a small goat farmer, a lifelong resident and enough is enough; the land is all broken up, so what is the plan. He closed by saying, "Don't expect us to go away."

Prior to that Anna Hanks talked about Hudson being her home and how the sounds and smells of woods have been shown to help with mental health, a key factor with depression. She was followed by John Parkhurst who spoke about protecting the future of Hudson, then spoke about waste treatment and Hudson's relationship with the Nashua waste water plant; in his role as a treatment plant superintendent in Massachusetts he had a conversation with the Nashua superintendent and noted that Hudson doesn't have a lot of excess capacity – and what every residential unit produces – Hudson could exceed that allotment while Nashua has no plans of providing any more to the town. He felt that it was more important to have the capacity to bring commercial business into town.

Residents spoke about the space and open space in our town. Gary Gasdia told the selectmen that their job is to keep taxes down and increase property values and keeping this property has a long-term benefit to the town; the decision should be for the town of Hudson.

After everyone had spoken and made their point, Selectmen Coutu spoke about the process and that the selectmen would discuss it in their Tuesday meeting. He continued and mentioned an idea to use conservation funds to buy the land from the town.

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