

**Southfield/Union Point Committee Minutes
Town Hall Council Chambers
January 8, 2024**

Present: John Abbott, Chairperson
Gary MacDougall, Vice-Chairperson
Fred Happel
Arthur Mathews

Absent: Christopher Heffernan

Recording Secretary: Kim McCutcheon

Chair Abbott called the Southfield/Union Point Committee meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Oversight of Redevelopment of Former NAS South Weymouth – MEPA and Notice of Project Change

This meeting is to discuss potential next steps for this committee in light of the recent filing of the Notice of Project Change.

Chair Abbott stated that Councilor Heffernan had a work commitment tonight and is unable to attend.

Chair Abbott noted that this committee has met on five previous occasions to discuss the MEPA Notice of Project Change, including discussion regarding the committee's purpose, impact on town services focusing on Police, Fire, and Schools, the impact reports regarding stormwater, wastewater, sewer, water, and transportation. The Council heard from the Town's Peer Review Consultant on the impact and mitigation reports as well as experts leading the process from the Master Developer. In the most recent meeting on January 3, 2024, the committee discussed submissions for public comment as it pertains to the Notice of Project Change, and the possible extension of time granted for public comment. Councilor Abbott was in contact with the Planning Department and the developers who stated the extension was in process, however, as of 4:30 pm, the extension had not been granted. It is now up to the committee to decide next steps for the committee and the full Council.

Councilor Heffernan had commented at the January 3rd meeting, that it would be appropriate for the committee to attempt to produce a public comment that would be voted out of committee and brought before the Council for full vote prior to the public comment period being closed, as well as submit individual letters. Chair Abbott offered to draft a letter that was provided to each Councilor at tonight's meeting. With no extension granted at this time, the committee needed to determine if it were appropriate to move forward with a Council-wide comment letter or determine there was no point in moving forward if the Council could not reach an agreement on the content of the letter.

Councilor MacDougall stated that there was a discussion between himself and Robert Luongo regarding the request for an additional extension. Councilor MacDougall commented on the size of the document and when it was received. Councilor MacDougall's review took three hours and there is a concern about the lack of public comment with the Notice of Project Change document being so dense. Councilor MacDougall stated that this concerns his district as there is a wide sweeping mitigation area. Two concerns mentioned were the water sources, specifically, wastewater being removed from the site and being used elsewhere, which is a significant change the public probably does not know about. He believes that was part of the original master agreement and legislation. Councilor MacDougall noted that the January 11th deadline was aggressive, and suggested tabling the discussion until the decision regarding the extension had been granted.

Chair Abbott stated that even if an extension were to be granted the committee has no other additional opportunity to have a discussion and refer to Council.

Councilor Happel stated the vote would need to take place at the next Town Council meeting on Tuesday, January 16th because there would not be another Town Council meeting before the public comment deadline.

Chair Abbott stated there would not be an opportunity to meet again before the next Town Council meeting due to the timeframe surrounding Open Meeting Law, regardless of an extension. He also reminded the committee that the extension was not guaranteed and that granting the extension is at the discretion of the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Chair Abbott understood Councilor MacDougall has questions and concerns but does not know the appropriate venue to have those answered in this committee format. Chair Abbott said a decision had to be made at this meeting on what the most appropriate course of action is due to the extension deadline. He further stated the committee had not yet reported out to the full Council and the committee was at a good stopping point to lay out what they had accomplished during the previous meetings. Chair Abbott plans on an agenda item for the committee at the next Town Council meeting.

Councilor Mathews noted his concern from the previous meeting that Robert Luongo stated an extension had been requested but there were no assurances it would be granted, and it would not be posted in the Environmental Monitor. The committee should not put themselves in a position to report to the Council if they wrote a letter for public comment but did not submit it in time for the deadline as it would not look good. Councilor Mathews stated for the record that he thanked Mr. Luongo for trying to obtain an extension and the committee is grateful, but where it had not been granted, the onus is on individual Councilors to submit letters for public comment before the deadline. Councilor Mathews also stated he feels comfortable submitting as an individual Councilor as he has in the past for other Notice of Project changes. Councilor Mathews made two suggestions; one, having the Council office send an email to all Councilors advising them to submit letters for public comment if they so chose, and two, possibly add something to the Town Council website for the public to view so concerned constituents may also make a public comment as the Secretary of Environmental affairs should hear from all constituents, not just the Council.

Chair Abbott agreed with Councilor Mathew's statements and stated the effort to submit comment as a Council was necessary due to the fact an extension had been requested, but with the extension yet to be granted, there is no action for the committee to take with the deadline scheduled to close on January 11th. It is therefore incumbent on any individual Councilor or members of the public to submit public comment. Chair Abbott stated as the district representative he will be submitting a public comment of his own and Councilor Happel is submitting a letter with comments of his own emphasizing Public Safety concerns. Chair Abbott's hope is the Weymouth Town Council is well represented in the public comment and unfortunately, it will not be possible for the Town Council to be able to submit public comment as a unified body. Chair Abbott will continue to follow up on the extension request.

Councilor MacDougall stated that it was disappointing that the Notice of Project Change was received in December of 2023 around the holidays. Councilor MacDougall wanted to be on record stating that as a resident for many years, there have been past mistakes made on agreements and signoffs. The committee is in agreement that the current developer is terrific and there are not many concerns in that respect. Councilor MacDougall stated his disappointments, the size of the document, the timeline for review and response, and the fact the Council just went through an election and committees have not been appointed at this time. Councilor MacDougall noted there was only a short window of time to review and make a decision on what can be considered as one of the largest and most important projects the Town of Weymouth will undertake. Councilor MacDougall does not want to rush through the process without having a level of confidence that the entire Council feels representative of making the right decisions for the town. The idea of each Councilor having to write a letter is great and would also be submitting a letter, but it takes a step back from the whole spirit to have the Council all be in agreement. Councilor MacDougall also wanted to be on record stating that the process is on a fast track which is concerning because it is important to get decisions correct. Councilor MacDougall added it is not that all things need to be slowed down but would appreciate more time for review to make sure the process is handled correctly. There have been project changes and mistakes made in the past that did not work out well. Councilor MacDougall wanted on record that this process has been rushed and put on their plates when it was convenient for the proponent. While Councilor MacDougall understands it is business and money, as a Councilor he is trying to protect the citizens of Weymouth, but also his district which is a big piece of the project that is impacted by all factors, traffic, safety, environmental, not just the residents of Union Point. Councilor MacDougall does not feel as though the committee has done the work and put forth enough effort to review to make sure the Council has the confidence to push forward.

Chair Abbott pointed out, in response to Councilor MacDougall's statement, that in the initial timeline put forward by the developers to the Town at the first public meetings and Ordinance Committee meeting discussing zoning, they have always identified the end of December 2023 as the time they wanted to submit the Notice of Project Change. The developer also reiterated the timeline when they first appeared before the Union Point Committee, so it has been a consistent timeline and has not changed. The developers had identified Weymouth as going first in the zoning and then taking the zoning to the towns of Rockland and Abington, which was done, and then came the Notice of Project Change. There was then a three-hour-long meeting talking about the key components of this Notice of Project Change. Chair Abbott does not see himself as an

expert in any of those areas so going through the documents with a fine-tooth comb does not add much value. Councilor Abbott noted the peer reviewer that the Town was able to hire to review the documents on behalf of the Council and administration is where the value is. The committee had the opportunity to speak with the peer reviewer and experts on the biggest ticket items such as transportation, wastewater, and water and that is where some of the key information came from. If MEPA approves the Notice of Project Change, they will not see immediate action as they would not have water, nor would they have made necessary transportation updates. It would be a fair assessment to say moving forward is a way off. Chair Abbott agreed that the timing is difficult, and it is a missed opportunity that the Council was not able to put together commentary as a unified body, but the Council will be well represented in the public comments as individual Councilors will comment on specific and key areas. Ultimately, the decision is made by the State, and as Weymouth has had a history of being on the wrong side of state oversight decisions, it is also understood public comments may have a limited impact. Chair Abbott stated this committee has done a laudable job in its mission of oversight of the notice of Project Change leading up to this point, and it was important to recognize the work that had been done including discussion on plans regarding Public Safety, Schools, Police, and Fire; which are all very important as to how this is going to impact the town of Weymouth. Those issues would not have been publicly discussed, and more of the complaints that we often hear in town, of major decisions happening behind closed doors would continue, whereas we had the opportunity to have public hearings to discuss some of those key issues and the impacts on the town. To make sure that people are aware that there is a plan both from the developer's point of view and from the administration's point of view. This will not conclude the committee's responsibility moving forward, the developers will have to adjust to legislation and come to an agreement with the Town regarding water. That will be the administration's responsibility, but the committee will provide oversight, which, to Councilor MacDougall's point, is a benefit for all residents of Weymouth.

Councilor MacDougall stated for the record again that it was a very compact timeline, but the plan is sound, and the developer's plan is right for this project. It will ultimately be up to the committee to decide on other variables, and as a Councilor, he will take it upon himself to read the Notice of Project Change and understand what will impact the Town and his district. Councilor MacDougall will be submitting public comments with those items he believes are important. Councilor MacDougall asked Chair Abbott for clarification on the wording used in the unified letter, which is not being submitted, regarding full Council versus individual Councilor's concerns. In conclusion, Councilor MacDougall stated he hoped the committee would have had more time to vet the Notice of Project Change but understood there was not enough time to do so.

Councilor Mathews thanked Chair Abbott for the effort put forth to this point. He noted that the committee would continue to discuss the project after the Secretary of Environmental Affairs issues the Notice of Project Change certificate through MEPA. Councilor Mathews suggested inviting the local delegation such as Senator O'Connor and Representatives Mariano and Murphy when it gets to the point of enabling legislation, to discuss and offer input.

At 6:29 p.m., there being no further business, Councilor MacDougall made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Councilor Mathews. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Kim McCutcheon as Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Abbott" followed by the initials "DH". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Approved by John Abbott as Chair of Southfield/Union Point Committee
Voted unanimously on 5 February 2024

APPROVED