

**Southfield/Union Point Committee Minutes**  
**Town Hall Council Chambers**  
**January 3, 2024**

Present:                    John Abbott, Chairperson  
                                 Christopher Heffernan  
                                 Fred Happel  
                                 Arthur Mathews

Absent:                    Gary MacDougall, Vice-Chairperson

Recording Secretary:    Kim McCutcheon

Chair Abbott called the Southfield/Union Point Committee meeting to order at 6:02 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 the committee in light of the recent filing of the Notice of Project Change.

Chair Abbott stated that Councilor MacDougall had a prior commitment and is unable to attend.

The committee previously met on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2023 and discussed the outline of the committee’s purpose and met with the Town’s peer review consultant who is overseeing the various impact studies necessary for the MEPA Notice of Change.

The Committee also met on December 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss the impact on Town services focusing on Police, Fire and Schools. On December 11<sup>th</sup> a meeting was held to discuss the development’s impact reports regarding stormwater, wastewater, sewer, water and transportation. They heard from the Town’s Peer Reviewer of the impact & mitigation reports as well as experts leading the process from the master developer.

On December 19<sup>th</sup> the Council was informed by the town’s planning department that the master developer had submitted a Notice of Project Change to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. A copy of the Notice of Project Change was provided to all committee members on that date. On December 22, 2023 the Notice of Project Change was officially published in the State’s Environmental Monitor and started a 20-day window for the public to make comments. The window has been extended another 10 days at the request of the Town of Weymouth and the master developer. The deadline is now January 22, 2024. It is now up to the committee to decide next steps for the committee and for the full Council.

Chair Abbott opened the meeting to other committee members for commentary on the process so far or recommendations for committee’s next steps. The next meeting of the Town Council is

January 16<sup>th</sup> and if the committee would like to recommend anything to the full town Council it needs to be done prior to the next meeting to allow enough time for a full Town Council vote.

Councilor Abbott stated he was aware the committee had discussed a letter of recommendation or letter of public comment to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs on the Notice of Project Change on the expectations and Town of Weymouth's desires moving forward as well as the Council's recommendation. He opened the discussion up to the other committee members.

Councilor Mathews asked for clarification on approval of extension. Councilor Abbott confirmed that notification of the 10-day extension was received January 3, 2024.

Councilor Mathews stated he received an email from Robert Luongo the Planning Director that he expressed his understanding of the extension. Councilor Mathews was not expecting the document until after the first of the year. He stated due to personal obligations he had not read the entire document but has read the points he had the most concerns with. Now that the extension has been granted, he will now have time to review the remainder of the document. He does not believe he will be commenting on the entire document but instead will focus on the areas he has the most concerns about. If a 10-day extension has been granted that is good news for whether as individual Councilors or as a body to do something. He has also put much thought into whether or not they should submit letters as individual Councilors or as an entire body because he does not know if they will come to an agreement on the content of a letter. If they do not come to an agreement and it comes up at the next Council meeting, and the majority of the Councilors do not come to an agreement on the letter, where does that leave them? He's personally starting to think it would be better for individual Councilors to write letters versus coming to a consensus with all eleven Councilors due to differences in opinion. If the 11<sup>th</sup> deadline is still there, he will have something by then, but he does hope they have ten more days to be able to continue to review the Notice of Project change documents.

Councilor Abbott stated that John Twohig, representative from New England Development, expressed at either the September or December meeting that their goal was to submit the Notice of Project Change before the end of the year. While the timing is difficult for the committee, he agrees with Councilor Mathews that even with the 10-day extension, it may be logistically difficult to come to consensus on a letter, have it drafted, then meet again prior to the next Town Council Meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> to come to consensus, vote it out of committee and move to Town Council for a full vote. Ultimately, he believes the full Council would be supportive if there was full support from the committee. With that said, he does not know if there is time and he doesn't want to jump to conclusions on any potential differences in opinion between committee members on what should be included in the letter. He thinks it's appropriate to discuss if there are any other concerns or information that can be requested as the oversight committee from the Town's peer reviewer, the Town's Planning Department or the Master Developer. He is sure they would be happy to provide any additional information or further requests. He has a request from Councilor MacDougall for a specific report cited in the Notice of Change but it may be in the information provided but Councilor MacDougall is looking for it to be more easily identifiable. As Councilor Mathews stated, the report is quite long and in addition to that there is a flash that contains thousands of pages of technical reports. He believes it's important that if there are any specific requests for additional information that those questions

should be answered and any additional reports provided. any questions the Councilors have or documentation requested that those should be given. The Council has little to no oversight over the environmental monitor or the Secretary at the state. But we do need to comply with the timeframe set by the Secretary and state law.

Councilor Happel has questions about public safety but is not sure it falls under this purview He has concerns with public safety and response time and the question may fall under transportation. It was brought to the committee's attention there may be a lack of response time in South Weymouth. He questioned whether that was something he should bring up in an individual letter or as a committee. He suggests attaching the questions and answers from the previous meeting to any letters submitted.

Councilor Abbott stated the committee needs to determine best possible action. Possibly meeting once or twice before the deadline, keeping cognizant of the rules for obeying Open Meeting Law. If the committee is ultimately unable to come to an agreement then Councilors have no recourse other than to submit their own letters of recommendation.

Councilor Happel questioned is there a reason they could not do both? Start the process with individual letters and if that does not work out at least they have submitted their own letters.

Councilor Heffernan agreed with Councilor Happel that both individual letters as well as a consensus letter would be the best course of action. Understanding there are 11 Councilors who may have different opinions and points of view, having individual letters as well as a full committee letter would be a strong showing that the issue is on the forefront of this legislative body's mind as we head into this year.

Councilor Abbott agreed with Councilor Heffernan and then asked Councilor Mathews about his thoughts on starting off with a scaled back version of the consensus letter as opposed to including the details that each individual Councilor finds the most important-as individual letters can be tailored to list out more specific concerns.

Councilor Mathews stated in the past he has made comments through the MEPA process on this project as an individual Councilor. Back in the FEIR days, as well Notice of Project Change as well as others fifteen to twenty years ago, he handled all as an individual Councilor. After the past couple meetings, he thought about possibly doing something jointly but thinking out loud if a Councilor spent a significant amount of time drafting a letter and colleagues do not support the concerns in that submission, it would be disappointing and would not lend to the credibility of one's own individual letter. He is not as optimistic about the individual letters than he was at the last meeting.

Councilor Abbott stated there is nothing stopping them from taking both actions – the group letter that reconfirms the Council's ability, right and jurisdiction to provide oversight for the process and reconfirms their commitment to moving forward with responsible development at Union Point and reconfirms the Council's expectation that the Master Developer must live up to commitments made before the Council and Notice of Project Change. The group letter may not be as in depth as individual Councilor letters, but he believes the effort will be worthwhile

Councilor Mathews said the timing is bad due to the changes among Council as it pertains to him no longer being Council President. New Council President Molisse is responsible for assignments to committees and that will not be happening until the next Town Council Meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> so the timing of this makes it more difficult. Councilor Happel was questioning writing his letter as a member of the DPW Committee. Councilor Abbott believes the Open Meeting laws prohibit the item from being referred to multiple committees. Councilor Mathews believes that does not matter and if he was writing an individual letter while Council President he would have written it as an individual Councilor versus Council President unless he had vote of the Council to do so.

Councilor Abbott stated that as committee chair he believes they should take some action on this. Even if ultimately it is unsuccessful and they cannot get consensus either with the committee of the full Town Council. He is willing to draft an initial letter and schedule a meeting where the committee can discuss the content of the letter. His goal with the letter is not to go into any one specific topic, but reaffirm two things- the Council and the committee has a role to play in the oversight and ongoing development of the air base. He doesn't believe there is any disagreement that there is support for responsible development; outlining the public steps taken through the zoning change process and the public hearings, as well as the impact hearings regarding town services. The would not go into any specific topic, and would concentrate on responsible development. The specific topics of concern would be left to individual Councilors to be submitted as public comment.

Councilor Mathews would recommend Councilor Abbott to reference that Town Councilors will be submitting individual letters with specific topics they may have issues with regarding the Notice of Project Change, while also making them aware that the changes are being discussed in Council meetings. The letter should explain to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs that in general we are supporting this and there will be additional letters submitted by individual Councilors with any points or issues they may want to bring up.

Councilor Abbott wants to make it clear to the Secretary that the full Town Council as well as the committee take these matters seriously and that they recognize there has been a lack of oversight in previously failed and stalled attempts of redevelopment. It is important to take that step as a unified body. He understands Councilor Mathew's concerns of possible confusion with multiple letters and will work hard to draft a letter that will lessen any confusion and he will then reach out to the Council Assistant to schedule a meeting on Monday January 8, 2024. Councilor Abbott also recognizes Councilor MacDougall has his own concerns and wants to give him the ability to raise his concerns as he was unavailable to attend tonight's meeting. If anyone needs any more information while they are drafting their letters, please reach out to him or Diane Hachey for any documentation they may need. He wants to make sure everyone has the information that they need and hopefully be able to vote at the next Town Council meeting on January 16, 2024. The committee will continue to meet going forward to continue oversight.

Councilor Mathews agreed, and once the certificate is issued by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs, they can have another meeting to review. When they begin to discuss enabling legislation at the State level they could invite local delegates and have a discussion on some of

the language to get their thoughts and insights and possibly work together and make sure they are protecting the Town of Weymouth.

Councilor Abbott stated he knows one of the biggest concerns is the interim water source. He is aware of the potential request increase in the daily water allowance with the Office of Environmental Protection. Ultimately, it is up to the Mayor to make that decision, but believes this Council also has a role, at minimum, to have a public communication and venue for discussion of those topics to ensure it does not seem as if those decisions are not being made without the public's input. Councilor Abbott's next steps are to draft the letter and discuss with Diane Hachey tomorrow to refer to full Town Council

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

Respectfully submitted by Kim McCutcheon as Recording Secretary

Approved by John Abbot as Chair of the Southfield/Union Point Committee  
Approved unanimously on 16 January 2024