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TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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TOWN CLERK

55 MAIN STREET • P.O. BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187
TEL. 860-870-3105 FAX 860-870-3721
www.ellington-ct

Donna G. Hosey, CCTC
Town Clerk

Margaret L. Schmidt
Assistant Town Clerk

Special Town Meeting

July 10, 2023

Minutes

Electors and citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings of the Town of Ellington, Connecticut, are hereby warned that a Special Town Meeting will be held at the Ellington Town Hall, Nicholas J. DiCorleto Jr. Meeting Hall, 55 Main Street, Ellington, Connecticut and via ZOOM conferencing on Monday, July 10, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. prevailing time to discuss and vote upon the following:

- Termination of the Pinney House Lease Agreement

Applicable supporting documentation is available for review in the Town Clerk's Office, First Selectman's Office and on the Town website at ellington-ct.gov.

All interested parties are encouraged to attend in person or via ZOOM.

Dated at Ellington, Connecticut, this 28th day of June, 2023.

First Selectman Lori Spielman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and asked for a motion for a moderator.

MOVED David Stavens **SECONDED** Mike Madru to nominate John Turner as moderator.

All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Turner read the Notice of the Special Town Meeting as it was published and posted and then entertained an action for the town meeting item:

TO TERMINATE THE LEASE BETWEEN THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON (AS LESSEE) AND DEER VALLEY, LLC (AS LESSOR) FOR THE PINNEY HOUSE.

MOVED Walter Lee **SECONDED** Tom Modzelewski to terminate the lease.

Mr. Turner asked if there was any discussion, instructed any speakers to state their name and address, and notified speakers their time would be limited to 3 minutes each.

Dale Roberson, 53 Snipsic Lake Rd., explained that over the years of the committee's existence they have both successfully applied for a \$500,000 grant from the state and raised \$100,000 privately. This has gone to the restoration of the outside of the building and ensuring the integrity of the inside, but the inside has not been restored to what it was in Mr. Pinney's time. He encouraged the town to recognize Mr. Pinney as not only a war hero but also an original organizer of the town of Ellington and thus be compelled to support the project of restoring the house. He mentioned that COVID created setbacks in their work and asked that the town allow the committee more time to continue making progress keeping in mind that historians have confirmed the value in its restoration and that Congressman Courtney may assist in raising more funds if they can complete a project having been in progress for the last 5 years. He asked for 1 year of time before any decisions are made.

Lori Spielman informed that DPW had been on-site to take photos of the Pinney House that day to demonstrate the state the house is in.

Said photos were put on a continuous loop for viewing throughout the meeting.

Walter Lee, 125 Hoffman Rd., asked of D. Roberson if the committee had any long-term strategic plan.

Dale Roberson answered that the committee feels there is more grant money, both state and federal, to be applied for with the end goal of making the 1st floor accessible as a museum of sorts with period furnishings that could also be utilized for functions. The second floor could possibly be a home for a curator such as himself. He reminded the town that historic preservation takes a long time. He conceded that ADA is an issue for historic structures and that when they are closer to finality the fire marshal will need to assist in getting the building up to code. He concluded saying there is no dollar amount in mind for this plan – that they just get as far as they can with each grant – but assured the committee would not be asking for money from the town.

Miriam Underwood, 15 Eva Cir., volunteered that as a long-time resident who at one time had friends living in the Pinney House she was in favor of giving the committee a year to present progress. Given the amount of money that has been raised for the project it would be foolish to close it.

Warren McGrath, 155 Windermere Ave. #1708, asked of the BOS why not wait a year? What are the downsides?

Lori Spielman answered that in 19 years the committee had only met 24 times – 2012 being the last meeting. She cited that the town has spent \$95,000 with some funding included in every budget on the house, but that Dale had not been to any budget meetings. She recommended the town cut ties and the Friends of the Pinney House Committee form a 501-C for the year like the Nellie McKnight Museum.

Warren McGrath countered that \$95,000 is not a lot of money. Give them a year.

Lori Spielman reiterated 19 years, no fundraising, no meetings, and no end goal.

Peg Busse, 37 Abbott Rd., claimed that BOF is tired of spending money each year without a plan. She toured the building a couple of years ago and nothing has been done since. She emphasized the lack of effort being put into the project, and she refused to allow another dime of taxpayers' money to go into it.

Kathy Heminway, 179 Abbott Rd., spoke as the President of the Historical Society and on behalf of the Nellie McKnight Museum they worked their tails off to get the museum to where it is today. She reminded Roberson that a goal is needed to receive a grant, that future generations are not interested in past history, and that the committee will need a lot more effort if they want to make progress.

Ron Stomberg, 145 Jobs Hill Rd., called the house a stagnant waste of time, and though he appreciates history, feels the building will be trash.

Jamie Boucher, 319 Somers Rd., asked the BOS if the council dissolved the committee how that affects the town.

John Turner answered the BOS is motioning to terminate the lease between the Town of Ellington and Deer Valley LLC, not the committee.

Melinda Ferry, 3 Jonathan Dr., added that the committee can take over the lease and that she would like to see the time to decide extended so they can come up with a plan.

Dale Roberson reminded the town that Deer Valley LLC agreed to transfer the lease to the Town of Ellington so they are a legal entity. It was the integrity of the town that enabled the lease in the first place. He is concerned a reversion would occur should the town terminate the lease and the committee would lose the opportunity to take over the lease. He also added that the committee meets and talks regularly and pledged to be more diligent about notifying the town of their work.

John Turner pointed out there is no record of minutes from these meetings.

Lori Spielman asked Diane Trueb to comment on her work with the Nellie McKnight Museum regarding her experience with having a professional recommend guidance as what is expected of their museum. She also expressed concerns regarding staffing the museum post-completion.

Dianne Trueb, 105 Pinnacle Rd., spoke as the Vice President of the Historical Society and recommended they seek a grant via CT Humanities for a professional to come in and propose a 3-year plan as the Nellie McKnight Museum did. She emphasized that though she would hate to see the house knocked down, the town cannot fund his special interest.

Mike Madru, 6 Settlers Way, confirmed that he had heard both sides – no more money without progress – and suggested a compromise of a shorter time frame. He recommended a 3-month check-in instead of a 1-year check-in which would allow time for the committee to talk to Deer Valley, LLC regarding the lease.

Dori Famiglietti spoke as Town Attorney and clarified that if the motion is to table the decision, then it cannot be tabled for more than 3 months.

John Turner asked if there was any further discussion regarding the motion on the floor. There was no further discussion.

MOVED Melinda Ferry **SECONDED** Miriam Underwood to table the decision until October 2023 at a date TBD by BOS.

John Turner asked for discussion regarding the motion on the floor.

Dori Famiglietti clarified that any further discussion should be limited toward the issue of tabling the motion versus the merit of the main motion. She also clarified that after 3 months the decision can be extended for another 3 months.

Townspeople agreed that after 3 months if no progress has been made based on reports from the committee to the BOS, there would be no need to extend for another 3.

Hearing no further discussion John Turner asked for a vote by show of hands on the motion to table the decision until a future meeting on October 2, 2023.

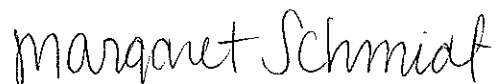
YES 24 ZOOM YES 1

NO 3 ZOOM NO 1

With a final vote of 25 to 4 the motion carried.

John Turner adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret L. Schmidt
Assistant Town Clerk

Attachments

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL TOWN MEETING
TOWN OF ELLINGTON**

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Dated at Ellington, Connecticut, this 28th day of June, 2023.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Lori L. Spielman
First Selectman

Join via ZOOM Conference at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81232501928>

By Phone: 1 929 205 6099

Meeting ID: 812 3250 1928

Passcode: 940349

Journal Inquirer: July 3, 2023