



Town Times

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Serving Durham, Middlefield and Rockfall

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Blue Trail reports on improvements to packed house

By Sue VanDerzee
Town Times

Over 100 people turned out Tuesday evening to hear updates on the problem of bullets striking homes and landing on property near Tri-Mountain Road in Durham. The third floor at Town Hall was so packed that First Selectman Laura Francis arranged to move the meeting to the library basement meeting room across the street.

State Police Major Christopher Arciero was the first speaker, and he repeated a line that residents questioned – “the (state police investigative) report is on the way,” he said. Skeptical residents noted that they have heard the same

thing since 1999, when the first public complaint was filed at the urging of town officials when a bullet came through the den of a Tri-Mountain home.

In fact, the 1999 police report came in for a bit of discussion, as resident Pasquale “Pat” Dinatale quoted it as concluding that the bullets found in and around homes at that time “most likely came from Blue Trail Range.” However, no copy of the report appears to exist in Town Hall nor do Francis, former town clerk, or Kim Garvis, former assistant town clerk and current town clerk, ever remember seeing such a report.

According to Maj. Arciero, investiga-

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Hello in there, buggy ...



Above, two little girls are interested in the bugs Durham author Leslie Bulion brought to her program at the Durham Library last week. More on page 19.

Photo by Kate Mitchell

Quilter extraordinaire



Dorothy Flanagan, left, celebrated her 90th birthday in June with a quilt show at the home she shares with son and daughter-in-law Chris and Kerrie, right, Flanagan. However, the iris watercolor quilt, above, somehow never made it into the show even though it is one of Dorothy’s favorites. More on page 10.

All quilt photos by Sue VanDerzee

Middlefield dog park bounds forward

By Pamela Morello
Town Times

Plans for a dog park in Middlefield are moving forward thanks to the efforts of one determined Boy Scout and his family, and the support of town officials.

At this week’s Board of Selectmen’s meeting, the selectmen unanimously

voted in favor of a motion to approve the dog park agreement drafted by Tyler Sibley, the Troop 33 Boy Scout who has taken on the task of creating a dog park in town as his Eagle Scout project. Sibley began his quest to create a dog park about six months ago, and has since

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Middlefield Selectmen (Continued from page 1)

garnered support from many residents, as well as the Park and Recreation Commission and the Conservation Commission.

After considering several sites in Middlefield for the location of the park, it was narrowed down to the King property on Mattabeseck Road.

"The fit with the King property is great," said Selectman David Lowry. "When I was on the Conservation Commission, I always wanted to see something more done with that property. This is going to be an awesome thing."

Pawnee Road resident Daria VanderVeer, at the meeting with her dog Lucy, agreed. She said she was proud of the work that Sibley had done so far to create the dog park, and said he could count on her for help in maintaining it.

"The opportunities that dogs have in general to be off-leash are very limited," VanderVeer said, "and the opportunities they have to socialize with other dogs off-leash are even fewer."

Donna Golub, who said she is in favor of the dog park, said that dog owners who use it should have to prove that they

are licensed with the town, and display tags that show as much.

"For the safety of other dogs and those who are walking dogs, knowing that these dogs have their shots is important," Golub said.

Sibley said that one of the requirements for use of the park is that dogs be licensed.

The selectmen approved the agreement with the stipulation that the revisions by town attorney Ken Antin be incorporated into the document. The motion also had the board give authorization to the first selectman to execute the dog park agreement on behalf of the town. The Board of Selectmen will delegate authority to oversee and regulate the dog park to the Conservation Commission so long as the Park and Recreation Commission is also willing to delegate the managerial authority to that group.

Lake Beseck Beach

Under public comment, resident Ken Blake said all is going "swimmingly" at the beach, pun intended. He told the selectmen that there has been a noted difference at the beach since it has been designated for town

residents only, and it is currently being manned by lifeguards and various residents who volunteer to check passes.

However, Blake did recommend that the selectmen tweak the arrangements this summer so that next year will be even better. He noted that after 6 p.m., when the lifeguards leave, there are still non-residents who try to get into the beach.

Golub reported that beach passes have sold very well among residents. In the month of June, \$1,800 worth of passes were sold, both through her office and at the beach. She estimates that that amount has increased to about \$4,000 through this point in July.

Levi Coe Library

The selectmen briefly discussed the library, with First Selectman Jon Brayshaw noting that they are using this juncture to question whether there should be both a library board and a library association.

In recent months the selectmen have discussed whether the library should become public and be under the wing of the town, especially because the library's operating costs are just about entirely funded by the town's budget. Selectwoman Mary Johnson reminded the board about that fact.

"We're not getting the same level of services that people in other towns are getting," Johnson said.

As an example, Johnson said that her Levi Coe library card does not grant her access to the

UConn Library as many others do. "We're paying 100 percent, but we're not getting 100 percent," she said.

Should the library indeed switch from being private to public, Johnson said she envisions that the library association will change their bylaws and act as a "friends of the library" type organization that fundraises and helps in defraying the costs of running the library.

Brayshaw said he expects that serious talks about the potential switch will happen in the fall. In the meantime, the selectmen are going to look into whether or not the library's financial "books" were turned in to Middlefield's finance director for review as requested.

Economic Development

Using a map of what has become known as the Hubbard property, Brayshaw showed fellow selectmen the delineation of the property as proposed by Zygo. The town and Zygo, and their respective attorneys, are still trying to hammer out a mutually beneficial deal to gain access to the property in order to develop it.

According to Brayshaw, Zygo is proposing that the property be split 30-70, with the town being able to develop only the bottom 70 percent nearest Brookside Road. The split is an attempt by Zygo to be sure that there will not be a thru road on the property to Hubbard Street.

Brayshaw said he is concerned that the state, which

gave the town money through a STEAP grant to purchase the property, will not look favorably on the proposal. However, Lowry and Johnson felt that it would not prevent the town from developing that property to its fullest. The top portion of it, which Zygo wants to block from development, is mostly wetlands anyway, they said.

"We really don't want any access from Hubbard Street," Johnson said. "It's a very dangerous road."

Lowry agreed that increasing traffic on Hubbard would not be a good idea. He suggested that the maps be shown to the proper authority at the state level.

Charter Revision

Revising the town charter is still a contentious topic in town, as was proved by the discussion among the selectmen on July 22. Brayshaw said that there will be another attempt to make some changes to the document which is used in governing the town. However, Johnson said the issue was "dead in the water" because the Board of Finance did not approve any money in the budget for it.

"We need to start with a whole new group of people and a new mandate," Johnson said. "The last one was a farce."

She did, however, admit that there are a number of "house-keeping" issues that need to be changed.

Lowry suggested that the three of them get together to agree on a new charge for a Charter Revision Commission. He didn't think it would take a lot of money for legal fees as the issues he would like to see changed are not monumental.

"I don't want to reinvent the wheel," Lowry said. "I just want to get things done."

Tax abatement

When a Middlefield resident who was preparing to buy a hybrid vehicle inquired about a tax abatement on that type of car, Brayshaw talked to assessor Steve Hodgetts to see what the town could do. It turns out that in addition to not having to pay the sales tax on hybrid cars, some towns are also giving their residents extra incentive by abating the property taxes as well.

Brayshaw brought the issue to the board for discussion, but neither Lowry or Johnson bought into it. "I'm not sure that abating these taxes is being 'green,'" Lowry said. "If someone can afford the hybrid car, they should be able to afford the property tax."

Johnson agreed, especially because the state is not proposing to reimburse the towns who do provide this tax abatement.

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