

Hamden to Sell Old Motel Property

By Robert A. Cairns

HAMDEN - The former Valley View Motel in Hamden appears headed for demolition after its current owner, the town of Hamden, approved its sale last week.

Town Supervisor Wayne Marshfield said the town council, after discussing the matter at a closed executive session during its Aug. 4 board meeting, accepted an offer of \$100,000 from Walter Vita for the property. The town acquired the property with funding from the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) to accommodate a community septic system for the hamlet of Hamden. The new septic plant sits behind the motel building. The lot was later subdivided.

Marshfield said the CWC and the town's law firm must approve the sale before it becomes final. Proceeds will go back into the CWC septic system fund.

"Rumor has it they're going to tear down the motel, which is all right with us," Marshfield said. He said he had heard of plans to build storage units and a car wash on the site.

Also at last Wednesday's meeting, the board heard a presentation from Kim McDonnell, director of client relations with JNS Towers' LLC., the company that has built cellular telephone towers on municipal land in Franklin, Meredith, Walton and Delhi. Hamden and JNS have been in negotiation on an agreement to place a tower, or more, in the town.

Under the JNS business model, the company builds towers on municipal land, leases tower space to phone companies and splits the profits with the municipalities. "It costs the municipality no money out of pocket," she said. She told the board that she had reviewed "a few properties" in the town and would begin seeking wireless carriers as soon as an agreement is reached with the town. No towers will be built without a commitment from a wireless carrier, she said.

McDonnell said the company requires a 3D-year agreement with the town, which mirrors the agreements the company makes with cellular service providers.

Board members insisted that a contract contain provisions that allow the town to withdraw if JNS fails to activate a tower within a set amount of

time. They cited the example of Roxbury, which signed a contract with JNS, but never got a tower.

McDonnell admitted there were problems in Roxbury. "We were unable to develop a tower within their time frame," she said. "We spent some money in Roxbury. We spent a couple thousand dollars." She said, if the company spends money to develop a site in Hamden, and then the town pulls out, the town would be liable for those costs. "You have to pay us back that money. It's only fair," she said.

"No," replied Councilman Robert Bishop. "You took the risk."

Marshfield said a draft contact provided to him gave JNS 42 months to build a tower, but no one was sure if that was the correct number. McDonnell said the town's attorney, Kevin Young, requested the time period. "We honored that request," she said.

"I think we'd be a lot more comfortable with 24 months," said Councilwoman Rosemarie Bryden. "Our concern is, we'd really like to see it happen and not drag on for five years."

McDonnell assured her that the company is eager to get towers going. She said it takes about eight months to activate a tower from the time a carrier signs a contract to use it. "We're not going to wait," she said. "We get a tenant, we build a tower."

JNS towers in the county currently have just one tenant, AT&T. McDonnell told the board she expects Verizon to add service to the Delhi tower within six months, and that she hopes they will be in Walton soon after that.

If a tower were activated in the town with two tenants, Verizon and AT&T, for example, the town would gain \$24,000 in revenue the first year, with annual increases of three percent, according to McDonnell.

In other business, Highway Superintendent Roger Dibble said rumors that the town is preparing to widen Ridge Road are not true. He said the rumors apparently sprang up when orange paint appeared on a rock in the roadway. He said the paint job was not an official act. "This guy was mad because his wife kept hitting it, so he painted 'rock' on it in orange letters," Dibble said.

He said the highway department later

dug up the rock, which was a bigger job than expected. "We started digging, and then dug some more and dug some more," he said. "It was half the size of my pickup."

Dibble told the board that his crew had removed 400 yards of gravel from the Launt Hollow Brook, below the Route 10 culvert, and had installed a 48-inch culvert to improve drainage on Neish Road. He said Gregory Hollow Road had been paved and that Gregory Hollow and Fuller Hollow roads would be sealed this week. He said new culvert pipes will be installed in Fish Hollow Road the week of Aug. 23, in preparation for paving, which will take place next year.

Also at the meeting:

- Marshfield informed the board that the town's contribution to the New York State Retirement Fund will increase from the \$10,916 paid in 2009 to \$31,646 this year. He said he had projected \$28,000 in the town budget. "In my opinion, they're raising it to pull out and do other things," he said.

- Marshfield said the town had submitted applications to the Delaware County Soil & Water Conservation District under the West Branch Delaware River Stream Corridor Management Program, for two projects. The town is seeking \$141,702 to replace a culvert along Mallory Brook and \$30,550 for stream bank stabilization on Chambers Hollow.

- The board gave permission to Dibble to take the town's roller and grader to the Delaware County Fair to assist in maintenance of the track during fair week.

- The board awarded bids for heating fuel, gasoline and diesel fuel to Mirabito Fuel group, which was the only bidder.

- The board passed a resolution honoring the memory of Leonard "Porky" Shepard, who died on Aug. 3. Shepard was a former water commissioner and the husband of Town Clerk Linda Shepard.

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