

SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 6:00 PM

Dennis Town Hall, Hearing Room

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Attendees: Selectmen; Paul McCormick, Sheryl McMahon, Heidi Schadt, Alan Tuttle and Wayne Bergeron. Town Administrator Richard White and Wendy Pells Secretary.

Chairman Paul McCormick opened the hearing at 6:00 PM.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Town of Dennis Public Hearing Notice Dennis Board of Selectmen Street Lights Shut Off Hearing

The Dennis Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at 6:00 PM in the Selectmen's Hearing Room at the Dennis Town Office Building, located at 485 Main Street, Dennis, MA on the following matter:
Termination of Street Lights. The process for the lights to be turned off will be to remove the photocell and light fixture will remain but will be inoperable. The general public will have the option to purchase a street light at their own expense by contacting NSTAR. The list of street lights that are slated to be turned off is available online at www.town.dennis.ma.us, or at the Town Hall, Senior Center and all Dennis Libraries. If you would like to appeal the termination of a street light please fill out a street light appeal form that can be obtained at all the above mentioned locations and return it to the Dennis Selectmen's Office prior to the October 20, 2009 hearing. The public is invited to attend and provide comment. If you are not able to attend you may send comments to The Dennis Board of Selectmen P.O. Box 2060 So. Dennis, MA 02660 or to WPells@Town.Dennis.MA.US

Town Administrator Rick White explained that the Town has been concerned with street lights since the 1980's. This reduction in street lights has been discussed during the budget process. The Board charged him with developing a process to look at the reduction of street lights. A committee was developed to research the process and make recommendations to the Selectmen. In the 1990's there were 900 lights shut off. He mentioned that as of today the Board has received 37 appeals.

Police Chief Michael Whalen explained the criterion that was used in 1990's in determining which street lights were to be shut off. He mentioned that those folks that currently lease a light need to contact him, as NSTAR will not provide the Town with that information. Chief Whalen also explained that NSTAR has stated that they are no longer interested in getting into the private light business. He also explained the local and national studies related to crime and the termination of street lights. He added on a personal note that he does have some concerns with the termination of street lights.

Board of Selectmen Approved 11-10-09

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Public safety perception is very important. He went on to explain the set of standards that were used in determining which street lights would be terminated. There are currently 697 lights slated to be shut off. The Town would contract to dead head the photo cell. This is an easy fix if the Town finds that light need to be reactivated.

Paul McCormick explained that the Board has received at least 100 emails. Most of the comments were from residents that were desirous of keeping the lights on for various reasons.

Vernon Ellars from South Dennis stated that the safety issues have not been addressed. The Board should wait until the Annual Town Meeting to make a decision.

Julie O'Neil asked the Board to vote no on terminating the street lights.

Don Robitaille questioned the cost of adopting a street light. He also explained that on Old Wharf Rd. there are no sidewalks.

Chief Whalen explained that the savings next year will be roughly \$57,000.

Sue Brigham, resident of Dennisport explained that there are no sidewalks on Telegraph Rd. or Depot Rd. There is only one light on Lane Rd. She requested the Selectmen to consider other cost cutting measures.

Mary Lou Walsh stated that she checked the poles in her neighborhood and none of the poles have numbers on them.

Rich Fiehter asked if there has been a survey done to determine how many streetlights are on all the time.

Chief Whalen stated there are 193 lights that are currently in need of repair. According to Republic Electric it is typical to have at least 10% failure rate. He added that we are working with Republic to step up the maintenance.

Lois Farmer, W. Dennis resident addressed the Selectmen. She explained that many people walk in her neighborhood. While walking her dog at night she encounters coyotes and other animals. She explained that it is important to see what is in front of you. She explained that the area next to her home is a complicated area.

Fred Meyer, resident of So. Dennis questioned the process of terminating the filaments.

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John McDermott, resident of South Dennis addressed the Selectmen. Turning off these lights will affect the image of this Town. He would rather pay more in taxes rather than have the Town go dark.

Larry Nicholas asked the Town Administrator if the Town has done research in shopping around for better utility rates.

Janet Depizza explained that there has to be a better way to save money. Everything she has learned in crime watch has taught her that we need more lighting.

Claire Richie stated that she is concerned that this is a scare tactic to raise taxes.

Paul McCormick stated that this is a reality. We have to find the funding from some place.

Doris Alexander stated her neighborhood has experienced two car break-ins and a house break-in on a street with only one street light.

Bill Simm said public health and public safety are the largest concerns in a community. This is not the right decision for the Town right now.

Gloria Budrick asked if terminations are spread evenly throughout the Town.

Mr. Simons was concerned that the Board has not heard the concerns of the people that have attending the meeting this evening.

Wayne Bergeron stated that he is concerned with the lack of numbers on the poles. There are many poles without numbers. He would support shutting off some lights where it makes sense.

Heidi Schadt stated that the "Board hears your concerns".

Rick White explained the ownership of the utility poles. He also explained how the Town acquired ownership of the street lights.

Alan Tuttle thanked everyone for attending and for providing their comments. The Town has received many State cuts. The Board has to look at ways to save money. He explained that until we have a better process we should put the project on hold.

Sheryl McMahan stated that she has heard concerns about safety. She also would like to see a concrete plan for adopting a light. Ms. McMahan went onto explain the need to increase taxes.

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Paul McCormick explained the recent budget cuts.

Wayne Bergeron stated that we need to know that the numbers are correct on the pole.

Heidi Schadt stated she would like to continue this hearing.

Jim Plath stated that the termination of street lights was discussed as far back as March 2009. Mr. Plath explained that the Town has to have a balanced budget in order to send out the tax bills.

Paul McCormick stated that he is also concerned with the well being of the Town.

There was a consensus from the Selectmen to contact NSTAR regarding the missing pole numbers and to structure a Adopt A Light Program.

Motion:

Wayne Bergeron moved to close the hearing. Sheryl McMahan seconded. The Board of Selectmen voted 5-0-0. The motion was carried.

8:00 PM

Motion:

Wayne Bergeron move to adjourn. Sheryl McMahan seconded. The Board of Selectmen voted 5-0-0. The motion was carried.