
Gilmanton board approves plans to build around the Town Pound

Historic cow corral site to be penned in by newly constructed duplexes

By TIM CAMERATO | Oct 10, 2015

1



TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN

THE GILMANTON TOWN POUND on Province Road was built in 1807 and has stood in The Corners for more than two centuries. It was originally a place for local farmers and residents to deposit and retrieve wayward livestock.

GILMANTON — The Board of Selectmen will soon have to choose between two options for duplex development on Province Road, following a Planning Board vote on Thursday.

Both choices were conditionally approved and would transfer the land underneath the historic Town Pound to the town. They would also subdivide the remaining land into four residential lots for the development of duplexes. One option would allow the town to own a 50-foot semicircle around the pound, while the other would provide a larger, unbuildable parcel.

Professional Engineer Christian Smith of Beals Associates, Inc., represented landowner Kenneth Cegelski Jr. before the board. He said plans to divide 23 acres of land into five-acre plots resulted in an unbuildable one encompassing the Town Pound.

In New Hampshire, town pounds were once utilized as a place to hold cattle or farm animals found by neighbors or townspeople.

Speaking as president of the Gilmanton Historical Society, John Dickey said the site is a “unique and amazing historical resource” the town has. He said the stone structure was built in 1807 and has stood for more than 208 years.

“For the last several years, I’ve been taking the entire fourth grade of the Gilmanton School on a little history tour of Gilmanton, and that is one of their favorite places to stop,” Dickey said. “If you’ve ever stopped and walked into it, the construction there is just amazing. It was beautifully, beautifully done.”

Smith said they prefer the Planning Board approve their proposal to deed that remaining

unbuildable parcel to the town, an action that would ultimately require a vote from the selectmen. The pound itself would be located at the corner of the property with a 20-foot setback from the nearest residential plot.

The other option presented would combine the first residential lot and Town Pound lot, but provide a 50-foot easement around the pound itself. Through speaking with Cegelski, the board later changed that choice to a deal where he would turnover the circle to the town.

The town cemetery trustees are entrusted with the pound's care. Speaking before the board, Trustee Candace Daigle asked the Planning Board to require a 50-foot easement, regardless of the property line.

"The ownership of the property by the town is not the same as having an easement around it," she said.

Through its care of the Mary Butler Eastman Homestead, she said the Trustees found that the easement is needed to secure the site from vegetation and excavation.

Abutters of the proposed duplexes also expressed concern about the impact of construction on the neighborhood. William McGee said he was worried about the look of duplexes.

"They're going to look like quarter-acre lots and and be an eyesore," McGee said. "Are they going to be rental units or low-income housing?"

Attorney Christopher Bolt, also representing Cegelski, said the building won't become low-income housing, but the town cannot stop a property owner from renting their property.

"Mr. Cegelski's family has owned this parcel for over 100 years He is not simply going to let this turn into a low-income housing rat hole," Bolt said. "He's as invested in maintaining the appearance of this piece as anybody in this room."

The board granted conditional approval to both options under the conditions that an easement be created for the first option that gives the town a larger parcel. Other conditions stipulate that buildings will be no closer to the road than the 135-foot and 150-foot setbacks shown on plans and the developers work to keep the maximum number of trees between lots and the duplexes in setbacks and other areas.

The Board of Selectmen is expected to choose one of the options during its next meeting on Oct. 19.

1

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Tim Camerato
Reporter
603-581-1967
[Email Me](#)

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