

**TOWN OF DEERFIELD
PUBLIC HEARING/DISCRETIONARY PRESERVATION EASEMENT
RANDS CORNER BARN, LLC**

7:00pm Chairman of the Board, Stephen R. Barry convened the Public Hearing to hear input regarding the proposal to have a Discretionary Preservation Easement applied to Rand's Corner Barn LLC, Map 405 Lot 15.

Chairman Barry read the public notice which stated the purpose of the hearing is to weigh the public benefit to be obtained versus the tax revenue to be lost. Chairman Barry indicated the notices were posted and published.

As Chairman Barry was not a direct abutter, but owned property 20 feet away from the boundary, he did not see a reason to excuse himself from the discussion of this Discretionary Preservation Easement.

Vice Chairman Robertson mentioned his insurance company held a policy for the owners of the barn but he did not consider it a reason to excuse himself from the discussion.

Chairman Barry opened up the Public Hearing to public comment.

Glenda Sorak, owner of the barn, presented a photo, drainage analysis, a copy of the Heritage Commission's Barn Calendar which included the barn and a stamped site plan by Fred McGarry.

While this information is helpful, Chairman Barry redirected the discussion to the pros and cons of whether or not to grant the Discretionary Preservation Easement for Rands Corner Barn, LLC.

Maureen Mann questioned how much tax revenue would be lost. Reading from the property card, the Selectmen found the total parcel value was \$78,800, the building zero and the category "Other", \$5,000. A lot would depend on what percentage the Selectmen granted, if any, because the range is from 25% to 75%. Chairman Barry did not believe the foundation was part of what is preserved.

Maureen Mann commented that old barns take a lot of work and she believed they should be preserved. Mrs. Mann favored granting the Discretionary Preservation Easement for Rands Corner Barn, LLC.

Chairman Barry pointed out there was not much left to the original agricultural building and it has been said that when restored, the barn would be a commercial site. Chairman Barry did not recall if under the statute the use must be agricultural. He did see the importance of preserving the barn.

Vice Chairman Robertson remarked that granting a Preservation Easement is, in a way, encouragement to keep the barn. Clearly the owners have a desire to keep the barn looking like a barn on this corner, Old Centre Road and Route 107.

Glenda Sorak described the barn as sitting on a half acre of land which does not provide for a lot of agricultural use. Many old barns around the State have become craft shops or are restored for residential use. The late Kay Williams, former owner, did not want it to be a home.

Some of the Board members preferred to see the renovations half way or three quarters of the way done before granting a percentage to be applied to the Discretionary Preservation Easement.

If the easement was granted, Mrs. Sorak would see that as an incentive to continue the preservation work. Some restoration has begun. Selectman Reagan asked Mrs. Sorak if the Preservation Easement was not granted, would the Soraks still proceed with restoring the barn. Mrs. Sorak replied yes.

To Vice Chairman Robertson, the guiding principal was to encourage people to preserve the old barns and offer a tax break.

Selectman O'Neal found it premature to request the barn easement. It isn't known what the future value would be or what the approved plans are. He did understand the point that granting this type of easement helps get the preservation work get underway. Selectman O'Neal saw the end result as being the barn would become commercial property. In reading the statutes, to allow commercial use or not, for a Discretionary Preservation Easement, could be read either way. Selectman O'Neal would like to have a better understanding of the law.

Chairman Barry recalled the agricultural use of the barn as Mr. Williams housing a tractor there and at one point, there was a horse. There was nothing done to preserve the barn and now there is someone willing to do the restoration and keep the barn alive.

Once the easement is granted, Vice Chairman Robertson pointed out it would be in place for ten years. As there is little value there now, waiting to proceed might be an option.

Looking at the property card, Selectman Hooker found the value on the barn, this year, to be \$5,500; 25% of that would be \$1,250. Chairman Barry added if the easement is granted for ten years the percentage granted would stay in effect for that time period.

Selectman O'Neal's preference would be to wait and see what percentage of the existing barn remains and if the characteristics match what used to be there. At this point, it is just a shell.

Mrs. Sorak further described the barn as a double king post barn of which there are only three in Deerfield. One other barn, built like the Sorak's barn, is the Carbonneau's on North Road.

Frances Menard informed everyone the Heritage Commission struggled with some aspects of the preservation of this barn. The barn is being restored and granting the easement would provide incentive to keep going. This barn was part of the barn survey that was done in Deerfield. It isn't clear how the agricultural issue versus the commercial issue should be addressed. There are other tax incentives for historic buildings. This barn is one of the most historic barns for the reasons already mentioned but the answer concerning agricultural use is still unresolved.

Mark Williams, son of the late Kay Williams, said he and his two sisters support what their mom set out to do, keep the barn alive. Kay Williams was involved in the mapping and documentation of barns all over New Hampshire. It was an absolute love of hers that this barn be preserved. It is a monumental task that David and Glenda Sorak have taken on. The Sorak's are doing what no one else could do. Speaking for his mother, if he could, her wish is validated by the preservation of this barn and he believed the Soraks should be given every advantage as otherwise, this barn might have been lost.

Vice Chairman Robertson was glad an evening had been provided for this Public Hearing versus what happened to the blue building down the road. He suggested bringing the Historical Society and Heritage Commission on board and a more formal recommendation be brought forward. He recalled a gentleman named Steve Taylor being involved in the barn preservation program. Vice Chairman Robertson found the need to locate some answers concerning the preservation of this barn.

7:21pm As there was no further public input, Chairman Barry declared the Public Hearing closed.