

**PUBLIC HEARING**  
**Town of Preston**  
**POLICE BUILDING**  
**March 27, 2008**

The Public Hearing was called to order by Commissioner Ellery Adams at 7:00 p.m. Also present were Commissioners Bill Mills and Robert Stacey, and Mimi Willis, Secretary.

Attendance: Harold and Maria Moxley, Helen Fletcher, Shirlee Collins, Dawn Dickinson, Reg Maguire, III, Reg Maguire, Jr., Eunice Diefenderfer, Robert and Rose Marie Stacey, Gary Waltemeyer, Kevin L. Hauf, Barb and Tom Galloway, Brian Dadds, Kenneth Allen, Deanne Harrison, Ryan Harrison, Wendy Adams, Donna Lomax, Mike Blanchfield, Mary Anne Harrison, Kathleen Barry, Minia Nowotnick, Doug Vanderveer, George Abner, David Dalton, Mr. and Mrs. Steenken, Roger Banko, Ronnie Fearins, Mr. Klotzer, Rick and Flo Nelson, Diane Wallace, Robert and Peggy Newcomb, Ashley Sard, Clay Owens, Terri Hudson, Bob Lorenz, Mr. William Evey, Marty Hudson, Bill Willis, Kevin Woolsoncroft, Natalie Mann, Chief Robert Reed.

Ellery said the issue is the proposed purchase of land at 3683 Choptank Road. He turned it over to Mr. Mills. Bill Mills said with reference to the March 3, 2008 Commissioners meeting, since the intent of the Commissioners was to have the proposed purchase before the public review and since the criteria for an ordinance has been met, I do move that the minutes of March 3, 2008 meeting be corrected to reflect that an ordinance was presented rather than a resolution, thus giving the public the opportunity to call for a referendum on a proposal to purchase the property located at 3683 Choptank Road, seconded by Robert Stacey, unanimously approved. That gives everyone the right to redress through referendum for 21 days.

Ellery then read the ordinance stating the Commissioners agreed to pursue the purchase of 3683 Choptank Road from the Barnharts for a price of \$245,000.

Mr. Gary Waltemeyer spoke and said he believes that the Town also needs a Town Office and meeting hall in addition to the Police Dept. and he does not think it is worth \$245,000. to put in a home. He would rather table it and put the Police Dept. in the library temporarily. Also, he suggested the existing building be sold.

Bill Willis then asked for the terms of the loan. Ellery said the letter is dated March 12<sup>th</sup>. The loan amount is \$245,000; appraisal fee \$175.00; payment schedule \$7,683.00 principal and interest semi-annually; term of 25 years; interest rate of 3-3/4% fixed for 10 years and then reviewed. He also asked for a bottom line annual operating cost and debt reduction. Ellery said he estimates \$350.00 a month operating expense, or approx. \$20,000.00 a year. Bill asked also, how will it be funded and paid for and do you see a need for a tax rate increase. Ellery said some will be paid for by attrition, for instance one employee will be leaving and will not be rehired and should take care of about 1/4 of the expense per year. The other income is constant yield, which should be in the neighborhood of \$18,000.00. increase, which should more than take care of the payments. Also, there will be no tax increase unless necessary. Ellery said there is potential in getting some grants; one is for \$100,000. Bill Willis then asked how the referendum works. Ellery said it takes 20% of the voters. Mr. Palmer said it is in Section 309 of the Town Charter. It was suggested that it be put on the ballot when voting for a new Commissioner to get a general idea of those for or against. Ellery said this public hearing would do the same thing. Bill Willis also suggested that more part time officers be hired rather than expanding the police department by 8 to 10 times the current size.

Kathleen Barry said she is in favor of the purchase for the safety of the office personnel.

Bob Lorenz said he is in favor of a separate building for the police department. However, the location by the Fire Dept. and down by the public works building are good. The existing house is 1,704 sq. ft.; the cost to buy the house is \$245,000. or \$144.00 per sq. ft. The renovations would cost close to \$50,000. This would make a total of approx. \$300,000. divided by the square footage for a total of \$176.00 per sq. ft. He said they investigated some time ago to build a pre-engineered building similar to the fire house, which would break down roughly \$56.00 per sq. ft. The Chief made a sketch of a layout to be built by the public works building, 42' x 65' or 2,730 sq. ft and met his needs times \$56.00 per sq. ft. for a total of \$152,800. Finishing it off would cost approx. \$30.00 per sq. ft. or another \$81,000.00, for a building cost of \$234,700. He also said he doubts if you could get grants for an existing building, especially a residential house. He believes chances of getting grants for a new facility would be better.

Reg Maguire said he also is in agreement for a new building for the police department, however, he would like to see it near the public works building. Also, the new building could be added on with a Town Office and meeting room and we get what we want. He suggested we ask Homeland Security for \$100,000. also for the building. He suggested that if possible the issue be put on the ballot for referendum.

Jeff Trice, a realtor, said current market conditions indicate the sales price should not exceed the 2005 purchase price of \$230,000. At \$245,000., the Town would be paying over market value. If the contract was signed, shouldn't it have been done after this meeting? Also, he questioned the breakdown of costs, which was already addressed. Regarding the possibility of leasing a facility rather than purchasing or determining whether or not a building is necessary at all is being considered. Was a feasibility study done? Is it in the best interest of the citizens? Why do we need a jail for processing facilities in Town and are other facilities available such as Denton? Could the Town office be renovated to provide the security you are talking about? There is a back room where we could have meetings that could be partitioned and have a back entrance and then the two parties are separated so there are no longer any issues. He said on the Town's website and Caroline County's website, there is

only one phone number listed. He thinks the website should be updated more often. He also asked if there was a task force or other exploratory committee formed to look at this, especially since it is a capital expenditure. Is there a set of goals for the police department? Sheet rock walls could be a security issue and the building would have to be in A.D.A. compliance. Bob Lorenz asked if a contract for Choptank Road has been signed. Ellery said a conditional contract was signed. Bob also said the Patchett building is up for sale or lease. He said renovating the Town building is not a valid suggestion. Ellery said Chief Reed had no knowledge of the purchase of the proposed building. He believes the newspaper called the Chief and the Chief spoke off the cuff.

There would be no changes other than the handicapped ramp for two years and the appliances could be sold for the cost of the ramp and volunteers would help build that. There has been no talk of putting a jail in Preston; processing now has to be done in the car or in the office. Shackles could be put on the wall and a volunteer has agreed to install them.

Marty Hudson asked why 2 officers need 1700 sq. ft. and why are we paying more for it than what it is worth? Ellery said the purpose of buying this building is twofold; to correct the situation in the Town Hall and this is the way to correct something. Marty then said he agrees we need another building but he thinks we should build our own.

Ellery said it was suggested to move the police department to the library, but it is small and there is no parking to speak of and no restroom, so that was nixed. Then, it was discussed to rent an office trailer and it fell by the wayside. We discussed adding an addition on to the Town public works building. If we could build this one big building with the Town Hall, meeting room and police department, the Town Hall could be sold to go towards the cost. Mr. Hudson said he would feel better about it if the price was lower.

Ashley Sard said he is in agreement with a need to separate the Town office from the police department. He believes there would be much more renovations than anticipated especially changing from residential to commercial. You may have to install a sprinkler system; all doors must open out and other things.

Dee Harrison asked if the Town zoned the property to Residential, how are we correcting a mistake by purchasing this property. The property has been sold twice. She would like to see a spread sheet showing the bottom line to see the best way to approach this.

A Maple Avenue resident said she was not aware of the proposed purchase but was in agreement with a separate police department, however, do it right and build a building suited for the police department. She also would like to be able to vote on it.

Mr. Steenken does not see why the Town needs to rectify a mistake, but does agree with a separate police building. He said the funding is of interest also.

A question from the floor by a Police officer with Easton P.D. was: How much money would it take to renovate this building to make it a police department and where will it come from, after we pay for the house? Ellery said the restroom in the town office was built by volunteers and cost less than \$2,000. The town library has new doors and a new floor and cost nothing because of donations and volunteers. There are volunteers coming forth now for the renovation of the building.

Mrs. Diefenderfer suggested the police department use the Town Hall since there is a vault, a concrete floor. Ellery said they have discussed it and that it is a very good point.

The Easton police officer said you will need holding cells; at least one, and, if you arrest a juvenile and adult, they must be separated.

Robert Stacey said this is not a done deal and he appreciates all of the input received.

Bill Mills said there was a lot of good feedback and it is not a done deal.

Ellery said for advertising please read your newspaper, read the notices on the Town Hall door or bulletin board.

Mike Blanchfield suggested an ad put in the paper for bids. Bob Lorenz said you would need drawings to put out on bids.

Bill Mills asked if a straw poll asking for the various options would satisfy the residents.

Ellery said they would deliberate on all of the things brought up tonight.

Ronnie Fearins would like a commitment to be made with a plan in place that has been resolved and worked out within 90 days.

Doug Vanderveer said he is in favor of a separate police department but would like to see a new building built rather than purchasing this house.

The Commissioners decided to table a decision until the next regular meeting on April 7, 2008.

**Meeting was adjourned** at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Johnson