

Marvin Marone – North end of town– I just want to say that I live very close to East Pond Meadow Road and I walk my dog daily and there is a beautiful farm in our routine that is quintessential New England, Maple Breeze and I walk by it all the time, in fact, I patronize, they have great products by the way. The difference in the north end vs. the center of town if you will, my property sits back about 400 ft. from the road so, in essence, my neighboring property is their back yard is my front yard and that is what I tried to instill....when my neighbor started to do the illegal automotive, and I, as a gentleman went to talk to the father, his chest went out and he said “my son, my son”. What happened was I ended up putting in a \$6,000 fence because I couldn’t stand the look of what was going on. Nancy finally came out and they started bringing in, and I have documentation, car doors, refrigerators, dryers...strewn through the woods...big oil drums which freaked me out because I’m thinking what kind of solvents or chemicals are leeching into my well. I wrote the town a letter and documented in 2007 that if something happens to my well because of such and such I’m covered, CYA. Because of the fact that their back yard is my front yard, it is very different. I have no issue. I know Carol personally. She has a beautiful little mini estate. I am very organic myself, I do not use any chemicals. In fact, I even get manure from the farm down the street to grow my vegetables. I don’t spray or anything like that. I take great pride in being a natural person. But there needs to be a balance between the rural and the city. We all have to live together. What might have been acceptable 40 years ago is not acceptable now and I’m sorry. I just had a 26% rate hike in my taxes and I almost had a hemorrhage. It just is what it is. Ann is right, we have to pull together. What is acceptable in one part is not acceptable in another.

Mindy Gordon– I had one quick additional thought. We should consider what other ordinances or guidelines that may be contributing to the blight problem. For example, there is a home on Leslie Ave. that for over 8 years has just had Tyvek on it. I imagine that at some point they had to go for a building permit or a zoning permit or a zoning board of appeals variance to get approval to fix their home. The fact that 8 years can elapse with the junk all around the house and just Tyvek on it makes me wonder if we don’t have the correct ordinances in other places like building, zoning, etc. I would encourage you to think about what we need to do to would affect other ordinances as well.

Carol Ketelsen –I just want to sum up the town vs. country issue. What is blight in town is 3 inches of grass, it is not blight in the country. What is beautiful in town which is a beautifully manicured lawn is not beautiful in the country where I can see all of the trees and animals that come out, I can sit on my back porch and see this vast expanse. I come from New York City. This is the contrast from town to county. So my point is, maybe we should have a blight ordinance but we have to be very careful what we write so long as the problems that need to be problems without tramping or inhibiting the right of someone on the other end of town.

Noel Bishop – I started by saying there were 12 individuals who sent letters to the Selectman’s office. Those 12 names will be entered into record (Mary Jo & Michael Biedrycki, Beth & Stephen Gerundo, Wendy Hurlbert, Michael Ferry, Barbara Wolf, Bob Harris, Bill Fish, Gary Bazzano, Elaine & Elmo Aiudi, Karen Calvanese, Mary Visone, Pam Lehn, Jane Millen (phone call). I was handed a petition tonight:

"We, the undersigned residents of the town of Westbrook, CT hereby petition the town to enact a blight ordinance. Said ordinance would align our town with neighboring shoreline communities. Enactment of such an ordinance would provide our town with the tools necessary to address concerns of its citizens regarding blighted homes, and apathy on the part of said owners. Our homes are our investments, by not having said ordinance, we risk decreasing property values, loss of home sales as well as environmental concerns."

This will go to the Town Clerk.

Are there any other comments now before we go back to the Board of Selectmen meeting?

The BOS agenda states Follow Up On Blight Public Session. If I could make a couple of comments. Not about the pros and cons but about the article in the newspaper. That was an example of a blight ordinance. It happened to be printed but it is one of many examples. It is not something our Selectmen endorsed. It was there, put out for information. I think the value of having it in the newspaper encouraged people to come to the meeting. From my point of view, whatever blight ordinance we do, that is a process that we are going to work through as a town. There are lots of blight ordinances that can be looked at. We can amend or change them. That would be my comment on that.

To the two Selectmen, maybe to begin our discussion, I would suggest that we do the following. We've had a lot of comments tonight. Those all have to be done verbatim. They will be part of the record. The people who signed this petition, the people that called, we have information from other municipalities. This is a process. It is a Town Ordinance and would have to go to the Town. Whether it go to a Referendum vote or not, is something we have to decide at the time.

Maybe something the Selectmen can think about tonight is a committee. I would encourage us not to form one tonight but a committee that, first and foremost we could agree to the charge of that committee would be. Set the parameters of what we want. Perhaps one of the charges would be what are some of the staffing implications? We've mentioned, Nancy Rudek over here by the way has been very popular. She is our Zoning Enforcement Officer. One of the issues is going to be who and how is this going to be enforced, what is a definition of blight, what are the cost implications if you can't enforce something, there are legal implications. My suggestion is for us to talk about a charge, finalize that at our 10/6 meeting as well as consider people for appointment to the committee.

Before we make that appointment, I think we should talk about how we want to proceed with that committee and what its charge would be. Those are my introductory comments.

Chris Ehlert – I am not sure if it is appropriate for tonight but we sent the Clinton ordinance to Land Use and we asked for feedback, you mentioned at our last BOS meeting that they were, the committees met...is there any comments from those committees that we should be looking at.

Noel Bishop – Mr. Ehlert appropriately points out that when we first discussed this, one of the obvious commissions to look at this is the Land Use staff or the Commissions. I can go up to my office and get my letter. Yes, I think there were, Nancy help me out, I think there were four comments.

Nancy Rudek – This is the memo:

The following comments are offered in response to a review of the Nuisance Ordinance as requested by First Selectman, Noel Bishop:

- 1) Administration of such an ordinance cannot presently be taken on by any existing Planning & Zoning staff given current workloads. Additional staff resources would likely be required.
- 2) It should be noted that provisions of the ordinance pertaining to unregistered vehicles (item D) and accumulated debris (Item F.(1)) are already addressed specifically items A and C., may be covered through the activities of the Building Official, Health Agent and/or Tree Warden.
- 3) It is suggested that if the BOS chooses to pursue such an ordinance, that it be limited to only those concerns that are not already addressed through existing programs, focusing primarily on aesthetic issues related to overgrown vegetation or building maintenance that do not pose a health or safety concern.
- 4) Understanding that neglect of properties is often due to extenuating circumstances (i.e. health issues, financial difficulties, etc.), in conjunction with any such ordinance, the Town might consider forming a volunteer organization to sponsor “dump runs” or assist with maintenance items where there is a need.

Lionel Santos – With all due respect to the committees, it seems to me that they are looking for a way out, not a way to fix. We are here as a community, we are not trying to dodge anything, we are not trying to hurt anybody. We are trying to make the whole community better. That letter indicated, here is a way out so we don't have to do it. Please don't do that to our community, please don't do that. This is a wonderful place to live and we just want it to be better. That is all. Thank you.

Noel Bishop - Just a moment for clarification. John and Chris as Selectmen, do you have any objection that we continue to encourage discussion from floor even though we went back the 3 of us. I have no objection.

Greg Burr – Some people have talked about unregistered cars. Back in the 1990's I was on Salt Island Road and I had some adjoining property owners who weren't as good as the people that live next door to me now. I made calls to the State Police, one of my biggest concerns was a rusting, unregistered car. Unless the law has changed, the State Trooper that came out at the time, he explained that it is against the law in Connecticut to have an unregistered motor vehicle on your property unless it is garaged. That may have resolved that problem right there. So unless the law has changed, that is what the State Trooper told me back in the 1990's.

Bob Curt- I just had a question. The issue of a referendum was brought up. How long does it take for an item to get on the ballot....months, years?

Attorney Wells - this would be an ordinance. An ordinance would normally go to a Town Meeting. Anyone, the BOS or a petition from the voters can move an item from a Town Meeting to a Referendum. It is not under a particular length of time. It does not have to be on a November election, it can be anytime during the year.

Bob Curt - I think there is a simple test. If you are trying to sell your house, would anything your neighbors are doing affect your ability to sell the house? If you put it in that frame of mind, you can get an idea of what blight is. You can't write it down.

Ann Mazur – I'm sorry Nancy I could not understand you when you were reading all that. I'm just trying to go over this a little bit. Three doors down from me, Nancy has a lot on her plate, she has too much, she can't get to all of these things. That why we are suggesting one person in charge of the ordinance with a committee below. We have, on our street, 3 doors down from us, a boat was dropped off on a parking lot property. It has been there for 10 years. There has now been junk, garbage put into it. Vermin are in it. We have not been able to get it removed in the past 10 years. I have contacted the owner. He said it was dumped here by somebody. He is not going to take it off the property. It is going to cost him \$350 to \$500 to be removed. So it sits there. It had bee hives with bees in it. I shouldn't have to live next to this. So, there has been nothing done in 10 years. That is why a blight ordinance has to be in effect. To take things like this and get rid of them. It is ridiculous.

This whole business here of what Nancy read. I have to agree with Leo. It is a way out. There are things done, and have been done in this town that take forever. There is no reason for this. That is why you have a BOS, P&Z, you have all of this in the town. Use it. Something shouldn't take 10 months, 12 months. You look it up, see what has to be done, you go ahead and you take care of situation. You don't ignore it because you want to ignore it. I'm sorry but that is how I feel.

Virginia Tomesetti - The more laws we make the more rights we lose. If you have a problem with the neighbor, if there is something that neighbor does not want to remove, if it is a whole bunch of people that are wanting to get rid of it, put a little donation together, put a little donation together. If you don't like to see it, if you can't sell your house because it is there, put a donation together and get rid of it. Why can't we just talk to each other? If you don't like my grass, if it is too high, come tell me to please lower it. If you don't ask me, you will never know.

Amy Palumbo – I live on Pepperidge Ave. If what you are saying here in this letter is that there is committees that are supposed to deal with some of these things already in place, if someone is not doing their job, and I think that voters should vote with their feet and start voting for people who will change this town and make it better. If we have people on our committees that are not doing their jobs, we need to get rid of them.

Ann Conton – Hammock Road- I don't know if this letter was able to be read before or whether it had to wait until after. It tended to have opened a can of worms in that the things that are mentioned that are already existing ways to handle blight, it seems from hearing everyone, they haven't been working.

Not just for a few weeks but for years. Sometimes when we don't live next door to something, we don't just see it or it might not affect us and it is just not in the front of our minds perhaps but we are hearing from different parts of the community and they are not happy because their town is not what it could be and it sounds like people in other towns recognize that that could happen in their town and they have a blight ordinance. Of course, we have, apparently, things that take care of "stuff" but, so in other words, you could have a blight ordinance, but if we don't enforce it, we are right back to this memo. We have to because we live here. It is the right thing to do. People need to be comfortable in their community and have that respect. Thank you.

Jeff Gordon - This kinda triggers some things for me too. The letter. I think it is a defacto situation here. We would not be here if things were working. Clearly, they are not or we wouldn't be having this meeting. I think part of the problem is, what is being said in the letter is that there might be or not be different facets of solutions in the laws already. There is clearly not a process to get them resolved. Part of the goal should be to put some singularity into the code and not have it scattered, going to different committees and departments. To think about the process which is just as important as the law itself to solve these problems.

Noel Bishop – as a point of discussion, is it our wish tonight to proceed with a charge defining what we would like a committee to do. Perhaps on 10/6 coming back and finalizing that charge with suggestions of who might be on such a committee. I would defer to the two of you.

John Hall – we need to move forward . We should give this some thought. I agree that we should not form a committee tonight. We can come back on the 6th with some suggested names. I think it should be a wide range of names from across town and have...I'm not in favor of the Clinton model. It does not get all across town. We need to come up with our own model that is applicable to every zone, half acre, quarter acre zone. I sat on ZBA for 27 years. There is a lot of different properties in town. There are a lot different effects on your half acre than there are on my 200 acres. We should have a process with people on the committee. I think there should be a blight ordinance that is written and tailored to our town. Not copy somebody else's. We should address the beach concerns and the inland concerns and those zones in the middle. I think this is something we can't do in one week or one month. It is something, as you said, no one has moved on this before. We need to take a little time to form a committee to look at it and come back to the Selectmen, in my opinion, with a proposed ordinance that we can consider that will fit the town, not one specific area.

Noel Bishop – John, to summarize, between now and our next meeting which is 10/6. We could take suggestions and maybe formulate a committee that night with the understanding that there be some charge that the three of us agree to. Maybe all of us can put our thoughts together to come forth that when the committee goes forth, give them a charge of what they are to look at. I think there is a number of parameters here that we have to consider.

John Hall – There are also consideration of cost...payroll, benefits and all that.

Chris Ehlert – I agree with the committee approach. Mr. Gordon brought up some points that I did not think about with blight specifically docks and I don't know how that fits into all of this because, you are on the Harbor Commission, you know more about that stuff than I ever will. I think in the short term, no disrespect to our staff in town hall, it does seem to me that if our chairs and staff are coming back saying that we do have regulations that cover these things, that enforcement is a problem. Whether our current regulations don't have the teeth for Nancy and others to do what it is they probably in their heart feel is the right thing to do for the neighbors, we need to look at enforcement. Mr. Brown did send me an e-mail today dealing with one of our departments. I am very interested to see what comes back from that department that you inquired with. Garbage, that is a health issue and that should be dealt with in our Health Department. Hoarding, there is a terrible incident over on Old Clinton Road. An individual does not have the means, by the way, to take care of her situation and has been in that situation for years. There have been, gosh, probably 10 dumpster loads of stuff coming out of a very small cape. This poor woman doesn't have the means. We talked about this because we look at other funds to look at that and Suzanne has tried to get for the town from the State to help people clean up their property. This woman does not have the means. She was at Apple Rehab and couldn't come back because of the conditions and now there have been 10 loads of large dumpsters taken out of a small cape on Old Clinton Road.

I think in the short term we need to figure out and, Noel, maybe between now and the 6th, what is inhibiting our enforcement? Is it the workload? Are we overwhelmed with....we have things on the books and I drive around too and think Jeez, you know, only if we could.... Rte. 1 for example. Rte. 1 is the gateway to our community and I hear from a lot of people why aren't we looking at you know, I'm not looking at big government here and a big heavy stick...I think Ms. Tomesetti had a good approach. If you don't ask, you won't get any answer potentially. We need to figure out what is going on with enforcement.

Nancy Rudek– if you don't tell me, I don't know it is out there. Tonight is the first time I am hearing about things. I've never known them to be out there. Unless you tell me, and I can see them from the road because I cannot go on private property, I can't enforce.

Chris Ehlert – Not to put more emphasis on the Selectman's office, but if we are going to departments to enforce regulations, Health Department, Zoning or whatever, we don't have a central coordinator/supervisor in our Land Use office. We were talking about that earlier. Do we need to have that? Everybody is doing the best they can and what is going on with a health complaint. Who is getting that and who is ultimately following up on that? Are these things being logged to make sure they are being followed up on? I think in short term in addition to this committee, we need to look at why we are unable to follow up on things. If they are new to Nancy, sorry Nancy, send e-mail to her, send something. If we have enforcement mechanisms, we need to enforce this stuff.

It is about everyone in the community. I do not like the north/south thing, I never did. I've only been in town for 12 years. We had Save Westbrook, we had north and south. We are one community so we have to find an ordinance that is going to fit for everybody. I don't want areas of town to pit neighbors against each other. We have enough other issues. Whether it is at the State or down in D.C. where people are pitted against each other. Let's figure out how we can work at this together. Enforcement to

me seems to be something that we need to be look at and figure out what do we have on the books now. We don't want to conflict those things either by the way. If we are going to have blight, maybe Attorney Wells, I could ask you, maybe you don't do work in Clinton, maybe somebody in your office does work in Clinton, did they not have the zoning regulations that we have? Do they overlap and can we make sure they don't conflict with each other.

Attorney Wells - John Bennet in my office is Town Council in Clinton. This came to our office for review back in 2008. It was draft by, I believe, a Committee that the Selectmen put together to fit Clinton issues. We don't represent the P&Z in Clinton so I'm not sure what came into play there or why they did exactly this but certainly the idea of having them sort of review is all very good ideas.

Chris Ehlert I would suggest as part of the committee as it would be folks at large to be part of it that we make sure that things like what Mr. Gordon suggests on the river and all that that we have folks that understand that part of it. Whether there is representation from Harbor, Zoning, Planning, Health, Conservation. Let's figure out what are we doing now and how can we make this better to accommodate all of the concerns we are hearing tonight.

Noel Bishop – Can we agree that the selectmen will come forth with names to be considered for purposes of getting the discussion going only, I will develop a tentative charge which I would like to circulate to the two of you, that can come up for discussion. Just so we move this along and we don't let more time go. Is that agreed?

John Hall/Chris Ehlert - Yeah, sure.

Noel Bishop - have I, is there anybody else before we conclude who would like to speak?

Nick D'Amico – Brookwood Drive – after listening to all of this tonight, I can appreciate concerns. There is something else. We have had stuff in place in town to take care of problems. One thing we got going, Noel knows that once in a while I send an e-mail to tell him to just cut the weeds from encroaching on sidewalks in a sub-division. The town is supposed to maintain it. Every year I gotta, you know, say please do this, please do that. It should be automatic. To be asking all the time for it to be maintained the walkways and things like that.

Monday 10/6 we are going to have a meeting on the chip seal and all the stones left behind and the failure to get the sweeper out. We got to get more on the town to maintain things in the town as well. I just wanted to say that.

Mindy Gordon – I think this letter brings to the forefront that we like that people work very diligently and hard and have their heart in the right places. The fact that the process is aggregated between 4 or 5 areas and committees without any workflow or understanding. I personally have experienced, one of

the cases that was brought up here tonight where it was reported to one department, handed off to another department, nobody gets back to you. You go to the other department, they deny having received it from the first department. There is a process problem, not necessarily a people problem and I think that really needs to be looked at.

Ann Mazur – I have a compliment to pay. If you go down Goodrich Street. Nancy was saying things are not reported. This was reported. If you go down to the end of Goodrich Street there is a very, very sharp curve, as a matter of fact, there was an address there 3 Goodrich, which Nancy has taken care of, they cleaned it up a little bit...but also on that curve, is brush that is taking over street. The street is very narrow. Somebody, someday is going to come around that curve and get killed because the brush is way over the street. John Riggio took it upon himself to cut all that brush down for the woman that lives across the street. That should be the responsibility of the property owner. There should have been something sent to her telling her to cut that brush. John should not have had to cut it down. It should have been the property owners business. I complement John for doing that for us. Those are the things we want these people to be penalized for because they don't care. They live a distance away from these shrubs and they could care less about control of them. So, that is a compliment to John.

Nancy Rudek - We need to take into consideration that some people, some of the reasons that things get delayed is because there are people out there with mental disorders or there are.....we need to use caution. I can tell you that one of the properties you are talking about, you know, she is just very ill....

Ann Mazur - I'm not talking about that house. It is the one across the street and they are well...

Noel Bishop – Let's not talk about individual homes or people.

Nancy Rudek – I think that any blight person or zoning person has to be very careful because there are social issues that have to be look at.

Noel Bishop – Our next meeting is at 3:30 on October 6 and we've agreed that we will come forth with names. Thank you all for coming.