

Minutes December 17, 2015 Citizen's Forum

Over 20 residents attended the forum on Thursday at 5PM at Mrs. Mitchell's.

1) Zone change request for Lower Westfield Road

The zone change request was reviewed. It was noted that the properties involved include a closed store zoned BL and a home zoned RA. There may also be another house included in the request.

2) Holyoke Community College road request (Doyle Drive)

An order had been filed based on back-ups of traffic during rush hour with the new light operating at the new road. Our new engineer Yem Lip stated that the lights are coordinated. When it was shared that the light turns when one car approaches the intersection, he said he would look into it further. It was stated that changing the light to blinking red and yellow would be considered unsafe.

3) Neighborhood Watch update

Glen Sexton from the Sheriff's Department attended and gave an update of their activities. He reviewed the increased problem of identity theft and reviewed some precautions each person can take to avoid this serious problem. He discussed the increased focus on school age children, currently at Donahue School, taking a proactive approach regarding law enforcement and community relations. Glen let us know that the Neighborhood Watch meetings will begin again in January at Holyoke Community College.

4) Update on votes to balance budget and set tax rates

The tax rate was set at 19.12 for residential and 39.86 for businesses. This will result in about a \$27 tax increase for a home of average value in January.

5) Other updates

A. Solar: There are three possible areas of interest for solar projects in Ward 5, at the Forestdale Cemetery, at the Goutak property 80 acres and one at the property at Homestead and Whitney Ave near the railroad tracks (?acres). Only one proposal has been submitted to the Planning Board at this time. An order has been filed by me to change the zoning ordinance so that

solar is only allowed with a special permit in an RA zone unless it is for an individual home. This will be taken up in Ordinance Committee.

B. **Storm Water Fee:** Councilor Gordon Alexander filed an order to establish the storm water fee that was withdrawn by the Mayor during the election. This remains an unfair proposal and will be taken up in Ordinance Committee.

C. **Lack of street lights on Farnum Drive:** A resident Gayle stated there are no street lights and it is a safety concern in that neighborhood. It was noted that HG&E is the department that handles that.

D. **Apremont & Rock Valley intersection:** Residents again brought up the safety issue when proceeding from Apremont to Rock Valley. They requested another evaluation with the possibility of a yield sign to be added as the visibility is not good for traffic coming down the hill on Apremont from 202.

E. **Comcast:** Residents have requested an update on the money that is going to the city from Comcast. There are continued complaints about the TV broadcasts of meetings also. A question was raised as to who controls the money for the public access dollars at this time with the changes that were made.

Thanks to everyone for your interest, ideas and participation.

Submitted by,

Linda Vacon

Your Ward 5 City Councilor