Assembly Meeting Tuesday, January 13, 2009

Item P under New Business: “Approve Sitka Local Food Network prospective/proposal for Sitka Community Greenhouse to be located on Sitka Community Hospital property.”

It was emphasized that this is only a request to approve use of the Community Hospital site pending development of a viable comprehensive plan and final approval of the Community Hospital Board.

Some of the documents included in the Assembly packet were unnecessary at this time and may raise questions related to wood heat and concerns of the SCH Board that will be addressed in the comprehensive plan.

SLFN is not asking the City for money only for permission to develop a plan for a greenhouse on that site with the consideration that if such a plan met the approval of the SCH Board, then they Assembly would also give all due consideration and support the project by approving a lease of that site to SLFN for a minimal lease rate.

After some discussion it was decided that each of the SLFN steering committee members will make a brief statement for the Assembly.

1. Ms. Wilson – Sitka resident since 1975, local gardener and an end user of a community greenhouse, personal benefits, concerns about increasing local food production
2. Mr. Osborne – health benefits of greenhouse, production of nutritious foods, volunteer benefits
3. Mr. MacLane – background on successful community greenhouses, horticultural therapy,

Mr. Ozment stated that any future lease for City property would be developed through the City Attorney’s office.

Ms. Fuller suggested that SLFN give the Assembly a commitment to provide quarterly or annual reports on the status of the greenhouse project if requested.

Mr. Osborne stated that a five year lease of the property for a minimal amount could be used as an in-kind donation for grant writing purposes. An appraised value of the property would be needed. It should be emphasized to the Assembly that such use of this property fits within the City’s Comprehensive Plan and will not cost the City any money. Also it needs to be made clear that the greenhouse can be moved if needed.

Mr. Ozment said he would try to get a copy of the Community Hospital’s Five Year Plan for review.

Mr. Osborne stated that some concerns over parking might be raised at the meeting and that we should be prepared to reassure Assembly members that this issue will be addressed in the greenhouse plan, and that it has already been considered with several options identified to ensure parking will not be a problem.

Ms. Filler reminded members to consider accessibility for the handicapped in planning.

Mr. MacLane agreed that parking will be included in the comprehensive plan and designed in such a way as not to adversely affect Hospital use.

Mr. Osborne reminded members that there is a setback requirement from the hospital and that any greenhouse structure cannot physically touch the hospital buildings.
The physical and emotional benefits to SCH patients who are mobile enough to visit the greenhouse need to be mentioned when seeking Assembly approval for use of this site.

Lease development, on approval of the site, will require two to three months and need to go back to the City Assembly for final approval.

Currently there is no approved or formally proposed plan for use of the site in question. A community greenhouse would be a constructive and productive use of the site until other use of the site is determined. At that time the greenhouse can be deconstructed and moved to a new location.

Mr. MacLane added that potential property improvements made during construction of the greenhouse and additional site development would be of great benefit to the City. Such improvements may even include a clean-up of the basement (requiring removal of asbestos etc…). Such site improvements should be considered during any lease negotiations.

Mr. Osborne stressed, once again, that we need to make it clear to the Assembly that, at this time, SLFN is simply asking for permission to move forward with development of a comprehensive plan based on use of this site.

The next SLFN meeting was scheduled for Noon on Friday, January 23, 2009.