



**Selectmen's Meeting
Rindge Town Office
Wednesday, September 28, 2011**

Minutes -- APPROVED

Present: Jed Brummer, Chair; Pat Barry (late); Sam Seppala; Carlotta Pini

**6:00 P.M. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance
Meeting House Oversight Committee re: Change Order**

Dick Isaakson discussed West Rindge Builders' second revision to its initial bid for repairing the Meeting House bell tower. The revisions were based on work shown to be necessary in the engineer's report, including re-roofing the area just below the clock tower. The original bid was \$59,000; the revisions bring the project to \$88,691.30 and there is \$90,000 in the budget. Bill Harper of West Rindge Builders assured the Board that this project won't go over budget. The Town again expressed its gratitude for the monies donated by the Ward Fund for repairing and maintaining the Meeting House.

Sam Seppala motioned to approve the cumulative change orders from W.R. Builders and increase the project cost to \$88,691.30. Jed seconded and all were in favor. Carlotta said our attorney is looking for a written work agreement between the Town and West Rindge Builders. Sam motioned to authorize Carlotta to sign the agreement, Jed seconded, and all were in favor.

**I. Citizen's Forum
1. Follow-up**

Kork Little reminded everyone that P.O.O.R.'s 14th food raffle event in Jaffrey is this Saturday and early bird tickets are being sold. The food includes 600lbs. of meat and 100 lbs. of lobsters. All money raised goes to the Rindge Veterans (up to \$300) and community projects that benefit the residents of Rindge. In the past, this raffle raised \$15,000 to begin constructing the Rec. Building.

Roberta Oeser was not satisfied with the Personnel Committee report that she was given and presented another report. She did not think that Rindge wages should be compared with those of Jaffrey or Peterborough even though the three towns are similar in size. Kim McCummings of the Personnel Committee said that the LGC puts out a guide to the towns, across the state where there are similar positions. The Committee then looked at the ranges and found that Rindge almost consistently was at the bottom of the ranges. For the past two years, the Committee recommended increases that hadn't taken place and reviewed not only the positions but the functions of each job (since most Rindge employees wear several hats and perform concurrent functions).

Roberta went on to say that some towns the size of Rindge either don't have a Town Administrator or an Administrative Assistant and we have both. And some of those towns, she said, did not give raises last year. Kim replied that other towns did. Jed reminded Roberta that the Personnel Committee spent quite a bit of time researching the data. Roberta repeated that a lot of townspeople didn't get raises last year. Jed suggested focusing on Rindge, and added that Rindge has a problem with addressing fair wages and salaries. Rindge, he said, is at a crossroads that will determine its future direction. And, unfortunately, Rindge has not funded its infrastructure.

Jed said that, when the market comes back, he knows a Rindge family who will sell their house and leave. They thought Rindge was a community that cared about the roads, etc. If Rindge does not take care of its Fire Dept. building, the ISO rate will change and cause a substantial jump in homeowners' rates. Plus there is a great deal of negativity (which is broadcast by the media and to the world on our Facebook page); why would someone want to work in Rindge, live in Rindge, or locate their business here? It's sad because this town has so many assets: a University, lakes, and many natural resources but people don't want to relocate here. The perception of Rindge is negative, and we've got to have the leadership to make this town a place where people want to come in and invest. The Planning Dept. could have guided new storefronts to adopt the colonial look that many residents wanted. People didn't want to have a Wal-Mart, Dollar Tree, generic cookie-cutter storefronts looking like other towns' strip malls. The Planning Board can do so much to make the town look the way people want. But if we don't care about our services and people, then Rindge may be a second-class town that won't attract people and

businesses. We have the natural resources and people; we can all make that happen. Regarding the salaries, we're not trying to give money away; we're trying to make this town's wages competitive in order to keep the employees who provide the services that make Rindge a place that people and businesses want to be. Is the best time to do it? No, admittedly it's not.

Roberta: "It's easy to spend other people's money; governments always do."

Jed: "We are fiscally as sound as it's possible to be with this budget, and we're trying to keep our people. Rindge is supposed to have an \$800,000 surplus and we don't—why? As the residents requested, we used it to reduce the taxes one year, and now there is no surplus to fund things that the Town needs. So, we can cut services or we can cut staff. Either will have an effect on the town. We're in a spot now, and it's not easy.

Bruce Hall expressed his displeasure with the raises given, and Jed responded that he can understand the views of both sides. The Select Board is trying to bring wages that haven't been addressed to a fair level because it costs Rindge more to retrain new employees when their predecessors leave due to the Town's generally low and stagnant salaries, among other things.

Sam Seppala: "The construction industry has been devastated. The unfortunate part is we can't print money like the federal government can. I know Rindge has paid its employees less than other towns, but the reality is that these employees are not going to find a job elsewhere. I've only been here since March and everyone's hurting and I can understand why the town is upset about huge increases. I voted against it. Jed: "You voted to raise the salaries of the Fire Chief and Ed at the Transfer station." Sam: "Yes, but I didn't vote for Carlotta's raise. We have to be sensitive to people in the town, and the reality is that there will be cutbacks and we likely will be cutting Rindge employees. Townspeople are willing to accept fewer services."

Dick Coll said the tax rate in Rindge keeps people away. "As far as giving raises, the whole country is laying people off, and here we are in this small town giving raises after the townspeople said no. So maybe what we should do is get rid of our annual town meeting because the voice of the people apparently means nothing, and this is going to bite you guys really bad."

Jed replied, "The other side of the coin is that the townspeople have ignored the employees of the town. There are two sides to this. So, fine; if the Town wants to make the cuts, we'll do that in Deliberative Session, but we want the town to know there will be consequences in the form of fewer services."

Bruce: "Why didn't you wait till the next budget cycle?" Jed: "The budget cycle is starting, so we need to bring it up and discuss it."

Kim McCummings would like to see the Selectmen's Agenda mass-emailed six days before the meeting, rather than the required 24 hours before, and mentioned the misstatement in Tuesday's *Monadnock Ledger* that said the Town of Rindge had decided not to hire a Planning Director. She said, "The Selectmen do not make staffing decisions for the Planning Board," to which Jed replied, "No, but we fund the budget for the Planning Board." Kim: "We wanted an Acting Director until we could determine if we needed one, but our budget was put towards other things, and I think the paper stated something a bit different."

"The third item is a letter we believe that Kirk emailed to the four of you regarding the Planning Dept.'s workstation computer, which we still need, and you'll be hearing from us regarding our staffing needs. We're thinking of moving from having an Acting to a Planning Director and possibly other assistance."

II. Approval of Minutes

1. September 14, 2011 – approved with no changes. Pat motioned, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

III. General Business

1. Continued public hearing re: Atlantic Drive acceptance

A proper survey has been completed, and Atty. Jason Czekalski prepared a memo to the Board. Jason said that the road was built improperly, is on his client's property without their permission, and there are legal implications for all parties. If the Town takes the road, it will have seized the property of Atty. Czekalski's client and will have a takings case on its hands. The lot is now unbuildable without a variance, and his clients bought the property for their retirement believing it was on a real road. Meanwhile, the road has been improved to the state's satisfaction to be taken over by the Town. If the ZBA doesn't grant a variance to build, the road might be torn up from the centerline to the client's property. Jason suggested that this issue might be solved during the deliberative session and cautioned the Town to stay out of it for now.

2. Recreation Director's report:

a) Van repairs

Rec. Director Craig Fraley reported on needed van repairs. When the Rec. van was put on a lift for repair to its air conditioning, the front suspension fell out of the frame. A body shop could not weld it together as it would ruin the crumple zone, causing a liability issue in case of an accident. Installing a used frame ordered online that includes a guarantee will cost \$4,026. The van has 44,000 miles on it and drives 4,000 miles/year. It has been parked outside during winter, and has rusted a bit but is otherwise okay. The Rec. Dept. needs that vehicle for senior transportation (seniors can't use the school bus), summer camp, and more. The van can also be used a utility vehicle and a hitch can be put on it. It's a very necessary piece of equipment, and the Rec Committee voted unanimously to get it fixed.

Last year, the Rec Dept. gave \$15,000 of its budget to other funds, so it is looking to recoup some of that for this emergency. Carlotta said there is \$2,300 in savings in the ZBA budget because Linda, the TA/BOS Administrative Assistant, has taken over the ZBA secretarial function, and since hiring her we have been able to replace a family health plan with an individual health plan for August–December which is an \$800/month difference or a \$4,000 savings.

(At this point, Pat Barry joined the meeting.)

Sam motioned that we authorize the Rec. Dept. to allocate \$4,026 to fix the van, using savings from the Town Office Health Insurance to fund that. Pat seconded the motion and all were in favor.

b) Ice skating rink proposal

Craig is asking for sponsors for a 50'x100' portable ice rink, to be set over the infield, to make Wellington Park more of a year-round facility. So far, Rec has more than half the donations needed by November 1st from business and service organizations. The cost is \$5,000 and includes a converted lawnmower to shave the ice and a Zamboni pulled behind it to put new ice down. Sam asked whether the Rec Department is insured for winter sports and Craig replied that we're insured for skiing trips, etc. and would just need to let our insurance company know.

3. Review of letter re: delinquent dog licenses

The Board reviewed wording of this year's first letter to residents who have not licensed their dog by the April due date. Pat Barry suggested that the letter should include a sentence asking residents to please let the Town know if they no longer own the dog(s) on record.

4. Permission to serve wine at Ingalls Library function

Pat motioned that we give permission for wine to be served at the Chamber After Hours event at Ingalls Memorial Library. Jed seconded. Two were in favor, and Sam was opposed.

5. Permission to serve wine/beer at Agriculture Committee event

Pat motioned to give permission for the Agriculture Committee (sponsors of the Farmers' Market) to serve wine and/or beer for their end-of-the-season soiree on October 13th from 6:00-8:00pm at the Meeting House. Jed seconded. Two were in favor and Sam was opposed. The Farmers' Market did well this year with 38 vendors. Kim McCummings added that they are possibly considering a winter (inside) event.

6. Payroll manifest

7. Accounts Payable manifest

IV. Town Administrator's Report

1. The Fire House electrical work is done, and it looks like they did a great job.
2. We're still planning to publish a *Rindge Connection* with the University and will be meeting again soon.
3. We still haven't received word from the Dept. Revenue re: whether John Ryan's revaluation meets their standards. Dave was getting frustrated because he wasn't getting any response from Mr. Hines.
4. Budget: Dept. Heads have been working on their CIP proposals. Carlotta has talked with members of the CIP committee still interested in serving. The Planning Board would be addressing their reappointments on Tuesday, and the Energy Commission may appoint someone for the committee. Carlotta will give the Dept. Heads their expenditure reports tomorrow. Some of the Dept. already have their proposals, and Carlotta will review them by Oct. 26 and give them to the BAC by Oct. 31st.

Pat: "Is the expectation that the Selectmen will give the Dept Heads a recommendation on their budgets before they put together their proposals?" Carlotta said that's up to the Board but the Dept. Heads are already fairly clear on what their budgets should look like this year. Sam said they should propose budgets less than the current default to prevent people from really slashing it. Pat Barry suggested level funding. Jed said it's the Board's responsibility to set the policy, because there will be consequences to the next budget.

Kim McCummings again brought up staffing for the Planning Board. She said the starting salary for a director level is \$50,000 plus they want possibly a full-time person to help plus another part-time person. She said they have to start having those conversations.

Discussion ensued regarding putting a survey on the Town's Facebook page regarding people's preferences for the timing of the Deliberative Session. It would be nice to have those results for the next Select Board meeting.

In other news, the Economic Development Initiative is next Tuesday, and there have been changes in the Town-Gown team. Ed Lamereux has resigned and the University has appointed Patricia Garrity.

Bob VanDyke has paved Monadnock View Road and that will come before the Board for acceptance. We did take over Meadowview and Taggart Circle, and he has assumed that the Town will take Monadnock View over. Jed said that it may be unwise to keep taking on new roads that add to our road maintenance budget considering the Town's budget difficulties. Pat said we probably need to review new road requests on a case-by-case basis.

The Cemetery Trustees group is under way and will be meeting again Thursday, October 6th to talk about the needed cemetery improvements.

Carlotta asked whether it would be acceptable to fund capital projects in an amount indexed to our total assessed valuation. The Dept. Heads are trying to move what they need around on the spreadsheet so it's palatable and nothing has been. Kim McCummings said the Town stopped putting money into the capital reserves. So now we're trying to rearrange chairs on the deck of the Titanic before everything goes down. Pat said it's insanity, doing the same thing over and over again. Carlotta said we need to try something different this time.

Sam said that the Police Dept. sign needs to be redone; it's rotting and looks horrible, and the front of the Station looks shabby.

Pat motioned to go out of Public and into Non-Public session; Jed seconded and all were in favor. After the Non-Public session, Pat motioned to adjourn, Sam seconded and all were in favor.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Stonehill, Administrative Assistant.