



Selectmen's Meeting  
Rindge Town Office  
Wednesday, November 9, 2011  
Present: Jed Brummer (Chair), Samuel Seppala, Patricia Lang Barry, Carlotta Pini

### **APPROVED Minutes**

6:00 P.M. Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

#### **I. Approval of Minutes: October 26, 2011**

Pat Barry motioned to approve the minutes, Sam Seppala seconded, and all were in favor.

#### **II. General Business**

##### **1. Personnel Committee: Proposed Changes to Employee Policy Handbook**

Rick Kohlmorgan: The Personnel Committee recommends that, should the Town Clerk's or Tax Collector's position be vacated, the incumbent's compensation fall into the midrange for that job level description. The Committee also recommended changes to the Employee Handbook. Selectman Brummer asked the Committee for their recommendation concerning cost of living adjustments, and Rick replied that they recommended making an adjustment pool based on the social security index to be administered by the managers or Selectmen at their discretion, but not across the board.

Changes to the Employee Manual included how to advertise positions and who can apply for certain jobs, the statement that part-time employees with the Fire Dept. include volunteer members, additional wording saying that the Board of Selectmen may make individual adjustments to salaries as needed, and clarifications of the vacation language. Carlotta said she would go over the changes with the Department Heads and suggested revisiting them in two weeks.

Jed Brummer asked whether the Town's pensions and retirement are based on contributions or defined benefits. Town Administrator Carlotta Pini said that the Town of Rindge is a member of the NH State Retirement system which is a defined system. The employees contribute a portion of their salary and get it back if they leave employment. The employer's portion is not their money but funds people who are retired today. Employees need to put in a number of years to be vested in the system and their benefits are based on their earnings and length of service. Police Chief Sielicki said there is legislation to change that which will make it hard to recruit. Plus, he said, a floating scale is hard on employees; i.e., "Exceeds Expectations" might merit 3% one year but 1.5% the next.

Carlotta said it's been 10 years since the comprehensive Bennett classification study developed job descriptions and a pay plan in which those positions were scored based on the employee's level of education and ability. People's job descriptions have changed, and it might be wise to consider reviewing the system. The sole recommendation of the Bennett system that wasn't implemented is how increases would be awarded. There have been no increases since 2008. The recommendation is that a pool be set aside annually according to the Social Security index. That would remove some discretionary aspects and let employees know there's a plan.

##### **2. 2012 Budget**

###### **a) Planning Board, presented by Robyn Payson, Acting Planning Director 1) Staffing Proposal**

In 2010, the Planning Board received five site plans or subdivision applications, but already to date in 2011 there have been 17 submitted. The Planning Board hopes to hire a full-time Planning Director at around \$49,000, and a part-time Secretary at \$12-\$15/hour at 25 hours a week with an anticipated start date of March, 2012 or earlier. Burt Goodrich said that the Town is at a critical juncture, and we need the Planning Department's leadership in light of the challenges ahead. We need to expand our tax base and get companies in here to generate revenues and take the burden off the taxpayers.

Roberta Oeser said that the Budget Advisory Committee was amenable to having a Planning Director and a part-time person. Selectman Pat Barry said that Planning is a department dedicated to growing the town and we can't make money without spending money; an investment in Planning will yield future returns. The towns with the lowest tax rates have more green space and fewer businesses—there's an added cost for police, fire services, and roads when a Town builds, but we want people to come to town.

MOTION: Selectman Barry motioned that the Planning Board should prepare for hiring a full-time Planning Director and a part-time secretarial position up to 25 hours in the salary ranges proposed to start sometime in 2012. Selectman Seppala seconded, and all were in favor.

Kim McCummings said that Planning would like to move forward first with the Director's position because that person would be involved in hiring the Secretary. Dan: If we want to push forward on Planning, why not get a crème de la crème Director and get rid of the secondary, secretarial position. Then we could consider rejoining the Southwest Region Planning Commission if we don't have the part-time secretarial position. Pat Barry suggested that the new Planning Director might advise, as the former Director did, that we don't need Southwest, and then perhaps use money from contract services to pay for the part-time person. Someone else said that the Planning Board probably would rather have staff than Southwest.

## 2) Encumbrance

The Planning Board requested an encumbrance for \$15,800 (\$10,800 for consultant Roger Hawk). The Planning Board needs approval to carry over unspent contract funds to the next year since otherwise that money will be forfeited, and the \$5,000 for Plan NH wasn't spent this year. The consultants have been engaged but can't do the work until next year.

MOTION: Selectman Sam Seppala motioned that the Planning Board transfer the \$15,800 to 2012. Selectman Barry seconded, and all were in favor.

b) Executive – This budget reflects the actual salaries of employees and no other increases. Salaries have remained level but health costs have gone up 15%. The only operating increase is the \$4,000 study. Selectman Seppala said he doesn't think we should do that this year. Town Administrator Carlotta agreed that, although it's been 10 years since that initial study and it's important to keep these things alive, maybe this year's not the time for it.

c) Elections – In 2011, the Town had only a Deliberative Session and a Town Meeting. In 2012, we'll have five sessions (three elections in January, September, November plus the Deliberative Session and Town Meeting), so we're going to need to pay the Supervisors of the Checklist and the election workers extra hours. The printing line item isn't just for printing—it's also for programming the ballot machine to scan and count the ballots, for which we pay LHS a fee.

d) Town Office – This shows the budget for the Office's one full-time employee, Linda Stonehill, and three part-time employees, Pat Miller, Helen Rogers, and Ellen Smith. Town Administrator Carlotta Pini considered having a single Finance Director in the Finance office but opted instead to increase the hours of the part-time employees. Pat works 26 hours and Helene averages about 6 hours. Recently, they're working a combined 30 hours. Police Chief Sielicki was concerned that the part-time employees are not making the Town's finances a priority, but a full-time position would require benefits. The Town has 29 bank accounts, including the separate accounts required for each grant, and three people are doing the financial job piecemeal, while Kork is elected. We do need several employees for reasons of internal control – one to write the check, one to sign, etc. Initially, we thought there was a cost savings to not having a full-time person. The Board talked about going from a weekly to bi-weekly payroll, which would save us some money. Additionally, our payroll service offers an automated time clock payroll whereby instead of dealing with paper timecards, employees log into their computer and punch in and out. On Monday, the supervisor would review the payroll and submit it to Bookkeeping, which then submits it to Payroll. If we use the savings of the new payroll schedule to implement this new system, then we could reduce the hours of the Bookkeeper by, say four hours, the Department Heads would spend less time doing the payroll, and the payroll might be more accurate. Bi-weekly payroll would cost \$4,568, so that's a saving per year of \$3,000 minus a one-time setup of \$500 and a monthly charge of \$100. The first year we would save \$1,500 and the following years \$2,000, plus the four hours' wage savings.

e) Technology – The Town made recent improvements to its internet access with cost savings. Sequoya has a program whereby our computers check in with them and they know when the internet's down. FairPoint offered a good DSL promotion: \$34 at Wellington but here it's \$64.00 because we need a static IP address. We have a turnkey contract for using computers that are fully supported for \$47/month for each (servers are more); we don't own the computers and they will be replaced at no charge if they fail during the contract. Since we don't have an IT person on staff, we're outsourcing that function and have been pleased with Sequoya. Also, the Department Head and Highway Department cell phones ended up costing less than we thought this year.

f) Assessing – It will cost \$800 for an update to the Town map showing subdivisions and lot lines, but we had a lower cost for assessing houses and additions this year.

g) Legal – We’ll be spending a little more than the \$20,000 allotted for legal expenses this year but overall have gradually been bringing the legal budget down.

3. Monadnock Tenants Co-op – Monadnock Tenants Co-Op applied to People’s Bank for an improvement loan and the Bank found out the Town of Rindge had a mortgage against them. Back in 2001 when the Town took out a CDBG grant to upgrade the septic system, this mortgage was put on Tenants Co-Op as a condition not to sell the property and to discourage flipping because the Co-Op was to be used for low-to-moderate income housing. The mortgage, which does not represent any money owed, has been there for 10 years and will remain until 2021. The bank didn’t want to take the third position behind us, so Carlotta suggested that the bank to take the second position, with the Town last position. People’s Bank said they don’t have a problem with that.

MOTION: Selectman Sam Seppala motioned that the Town should subordinate its position to People’s Bank regarding Monadnock Tenants Co-Op, Selectman Pat Barry seconded, and all were in favor.

4. Fire Command Vehicle: Deb Douglas represented the Fire Department since Rick was out sick. Rick took the truck to Townsend Ford because it was not acting right. The inner cooler, a component of the turbo, failed and blew the head gasket which unfortunately is common with diesel Ford trucks. The cost to repair the truck is over \$4,700, and it’s a 2004 vehicle with 60,000 miles, out of warranty. Rick advises that we fix it since it has low mileage and is a diesel. How will we pay for it? Rick believes that another dealer would give us a similar bid, but Dan suggested having it looked at by Calvin Raney at the new Select Concrete building; he’s very good and loves what he does. Rick planned to have the SCBAs filled this year and he could defer that \$3,000 till January. So we would be looking for \$1,700 or possibly less, and maybe we could use the TANS line item.

MOTION: Selectman Sam Seppala motioned to fix the command vehicle after getting a second opinion; Selectman Pat Barry seconded and all were in favor.

5. Payroll Manifest and Accounts Payable Manifest – Selectman Barry motioned to accept both manifests, Sam Seppala seconded, and all were in favor.

### **III. Town Administrator’s Report**

#### **1. Ongoing Business**

The Town has set its tax rate and received the official word yesterday: the rate has changed from \$23.52/1,000 to \$25.32/\$1,000 which is an 8% increase. That breaks out as follows: the Town rate went from 4.02 to 4.43 (up 41 cents). The local School went from \$13.86 to \$15.08 (up \$1.22 or 9%) and the state School is up 14 cents (6%). The County is only up 3 cents, or 1%. In total, the tax rate’s up \$1.80 (on a \$200,000 house, that’s a \$360 annual increase). Our assessed values went down, but from last year to this, the Town is up \$5M in value. The assessed value has less impact than the appropriations minus the revenues. The appropriations were up \$253,000. Voters approved the plow truck for \$155,000 but we only had \$55,000, so the Town had to raise taxes for the rest. And the voters approved money for the Meeting House. There was an increase from one year’s default budget to the next. The default budget is last year’s budget plus any contractual increases minus expenses. The budget is decided by the Selectmen. We’ve been on the default budget for four years. Back in 2007 the budget was \$3,247,818, and it was \$3,564,730 in 2011; so in four years it has increased \$280,000 (a little over 2%) a year.

In 2011, the Town set aside monies for the overlay (money for abatement refunds) since this is the year after the revaluation, and we had to give Wal-Mart \$70,000 of that money, leaving little left. Selectman Sam Seppala said that the Town has warrant articles coming up that are almost state-mandated that we have to look at. And the Capital Improvement Committee is saying that there are so many things that need to be replaced. Town Administrator Carlotta Pini said that when we think about replacing plow trucks and fire trucks, rather than take a hit on the tax rate, we could look at leases or bonds to pay the cost over time. Selectman Jed Brummer added that there’s no question that the town has infrastructure needs that need to be addressed even in tough economic times, and that we should seriously consider regionalizing some of our services and combining with other towns. While Rindge is in the same school district as Jaffrey, we have our own Police and Fire Departments and there would be economies of scale by combining resources.

John Kauer asked how the budget cuts for Fire Mutual Aid will affect the Town, and Town Administrator Carlotta Pini said that Fire Mutual Aid is in the 2011 County budget and we’ll be making our \$1.8M payment to the County next month. Next year, Fire Mutual Aid will be billing the towns separately.

#### **2. October Expenditures/Revenues**

**IV. Informational Items / Communication**

1. Discussion re: Changing the Next Meeting Date due to Thanksgiving
2. Local Government Center Conference
3. Town Clerk and Tax Collector Budgets at Next Meeting

Selectman Pat Barry asked the Board to consider moving Deliberative Session to February 4<sup>th</sup> due to an unavoidable conflict on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Selectman Pat Barry motioned to go out of Public session and into Non-Public session; Jed seconded, and all were in favor.

- V.** The meeting adjourned at 10:00pm.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Stonehill, Administrative Assistant*