



Selectmen's Meeting
Town Office
Wednesday, December 21, 2011

APPROVED Minutes

Present: Jed Brummer, Pat Barry, Sam Seppala, Carlotta Pini

CALL TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Approval of Minutes: Jed motioned to accept the December 7, 2011 minutes, Pat seconded, and all were in favor.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Elderly and Disabled Exemption: Selectman Pat Barry said that, with regards to raising the exemption limits, we first want to get all the proposed warrant articles together and go through the list; petition warrant articles are due by January 10th, so by the 11th we'll have them, and they must be finalized by the 18th.

Roberta Letourneau re: Warrant Article to Abandon 200 Feet of Fieldstone Lane – Fieldstone Lane, a Town road, extends 200 feet into Becky and Dana Ryll's property, so they can't meet setback requirements when they need to place structures appropriately on their land. Roberta researched all abutter's deeds and no one has deeded or ROW access across the Rylls' property, and she read all the Town Reports, which do not say that this 200 feet is of use to anyone else. The question needs to be proposed for a vote by the Town to see if it will discontinue these 200 feet where the road ends. The petition has been completed and Roberta has attended the Roadway Committee meetings. If the Selectmen approve and the voters pass this warrant article, the Rylls will amend their Deed to agree that the Town plow can still turn around there.

MOTION: Selectman Sam Seppala motioned to approve the proposed warrant article to abandon the 200 feet of Fieldstone Lane that extends into the Rylls' property. Pat Barry seconded, and all were in favor. The motion was amended to include language in the Deed, should the warrant article pass, to reflect that the Town plow can turn around on the Rylls' property. Pat seconded, and all were in favor.

Petition to Amend Zoning of Map 32, Lot 12, Fogg Property at 119/202 Intersection – This zoning petition proposes to rezone 1410 Route 119 from "Village District" to "Gateway Central District." The petition was checked by the Supervisors of the Checklist and found to be complete: 25 of the 27 signers are registered voters. An unofficial copy was given to the Planning Board.

MOTION: Pat motioned to accept the petition to amend the zoning of Map 32, Lot 12, since it has the required signatures, and forward it officially to the Planning Board. Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

The Safety Committee – is required to meet quarterly. It has equal representation of management and employees as required by Statute, and one of the items on our agenda is to inspect all Town buildings. We are not completely done, but here's what has been noted so far:

- Wellington Recreation Center – needs eight emergency battery units (\$2,240); must fix attic door lock so people can't lock themselves in (\$50)
- Library – needs emergency battery units (\$1,500) and new pads for the AED (\$50)
- The Highway Garage, Transfer Station and Swap Shop haven't been inspected yet
- However, the Highway Garage needs an exhaust system similar to the Fire Station's (approximately \$40,000).
- Police Station – needs light bulbs at front door (\$16); must re-mud the interior ceiling because ceiling tiles are falling down (\$10,000); address stainless steel toilet in cell/collapsed sewer pipe (\$750); emergency battery units (\$1,680); replace all windows which contain lead paint (\$2,300)
- Fire Station – non-slip mats at the door so they don't slip (\$960) if we rent the mats that are cleaned; emergency battery units (\$1,680); stairwell lighting (\$500); fix concrete apron where trucks exit the bays (\$6,000); replace floor tiles with linoleum (\$600); need extensive rewiring (\$15,000+/-); install fire separation between the floors (\$4,000); replace Amsel system suppression (\$1,500); and relocate kitchen hood which is a violation (\$300). Carlotta will put

these projects in a spreadsheet to prioritize and tackle them. Some are capital expenditures that might come out of the public safety impact fee. We need to have a safe workplace for employees and also keep our worker's compensation costs down. Mike Cloutier, DPW Director, requested a \$22,000 repair budget for the seven Town buildings.

2012 Budget

Town Buildings – Last year, Red's gave us a better price on oil, so Mike will approach him again. We had to lock in a price before the season started, and prices were fluctuating then. Mike explained that we were averaging 18,000-20,000 gallons of oil use a year but since replacing the furnace in the Meetinghouse and insulating some areas, we're now using 15,000 gallons—a good savings. Electricity use was also cut back from \$37,000 to \$35,160. We've done a lot of energy efficiency project in the Town and haven't had a chance to reap all the savings yet. The BAC said they'd still like to see the budget reduced to \$135,000 from the requested \$139,316, but appreciated the savings Mike was able to bring about.

Cemeteries – By statute, Towns must now pay more attention to their cemeteries, and our Cemetery Trustees support Mike Cloutier in all his work and diligent oversight of the Hillside Cemetery. Not all cemetery lots have perpetual care, so those have to be maintained with funds from other sources. The interest accrued on the perpetual care lots by the Trustees of the Trust Funds is not enough to cover all the costs. Burial lots are prepared by the Highway Department, and that cost comes from the Highway budget.

Parks & Playgrounds – There was discussion on what was the most cost-effective way to mow the Town's 11 acres of grounds each spring/summer. Right now, we have seasonal Town employees cut the grounds for \$12/hour, whereas Jaffrey subcontracts mowing for \$5,000/month.

Street Lights – Mike's crew eliminated some of the lights and replaced most, if not all, of those remaining with high-efficiency sodium lights in July. Since then, the monthly street light bill has been almost cut in half.

Highway – The theft of street signs is a real problem. We've lost 30 in the past month.

Highway Projects and Block Grant – Mike Cloutier, Director of the Department of Public Works, said that the State reduced the grant this year by \$27,377 because the state lost \$30 million from repealing the gas tax, which is disbursed to the towns. We were supposed to have a 15-year plan, paving 10 miles per year. Sam: Paving is the one service the town provides that everyone uses. Not everyone uses the schools, Fire, or Police Departments. When the roads are bad, everyone knows it, so I'm all for whatever we can do for our roads. I hate to see the state cutting us back. Mike: We have two bridges rated at E-3s – Wellington Road and Converseville. I'm hoping we can get a right-of-way to the state road on Converseville. The State came in with a preliminary estimate of \$733,000 for the Wellington bridge, and we'd need to fund 20% of that (the State funds 80%). Carlotta: The process for getting bridge aid is to get the estimate then apply for aid, and the application must say that the Selectmen have raised or appropriated our share of the bridge cost. Other communities have pledged to raise that money when they don't have it. By the time the DOT has the money to repair our bridge, we'll probably have our share of the cost. If we split the cost up over nine years, it won't be so onerous for the taxpayers. The bridge should be safe to travel for that period of time. The DOT could increase their ratio for the Town's share from 20% to more in the next nine years, but we can't predict that.

Solid Waste – Mike Cloutier: We own our own truck, trailer, and compactors, and currently transport solid waste to Bethlehem. The waste disposal contract was up in December, and I was asked by Select Board and Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) to get different prices on disposing of our solid waste. I presented a spreadsheet to the BAC Monday night showing six different pricing scenarios, and the preferred scenario is to have Monadnock Disposal haul solid waste to Jaffrey in our containers at \$80/ton, and they will lock in for 5 years at that price. Meanwhile, we'll keep our truck and haul our recyclables to Keene. Keeping our truck will give us flexibility. With this scenario, our contract costs are reduced, plus we will spend far less on tools and parts because we'll no longer be hauling our own trash to Bethlehem. Carlotta: This scenario also will free up the time of the driver to get more things done in the Highway Department, which is something Mike has been struggling with for years. Mike is looking into a compactor for single stream disposal at some point. Maybe we'll sell our other three bins or trade them for a compactor. It would save the trucking cost, but that's a work in progress. If we stop hauling our trash to Bethlehem, the truck we have will last us another three to five years because we'll only be hauling recyclables to Keene. In the meantime, we can look into alternatives for our recyclables. Dan Aho: We will eventually need to replace that truck, which costs \$180,000. Carlotta: Mike has spent a lot of time coming up with the different options, and the BAC was extremely helpful in analyzing them. Roberta Oeser: Our truck was not going to last and the contract was up, so this plan will keep our truck on the road longer and save money.

Recreation Department – Craig Fraley, Recreation Director: Our budget is down from last year since we scaled back on initiatives such as Concerts on the Common, and we dropped \$4,000 in Rec. vehicle operations. We mailed a brochure to homes showing some upcoming activities, and received good feedback on that. We switched our telephone services from OneCommunications (now Earthlink) to FairPoint and we'll soon have a better handle on what the phone bill expenses will be over time. We requested \$1,000 last year to keep the van on the road; no general fund money goes towards the bus. The Rec. Department acquired a new sound system at the cost of equipment only (around \$6,000) due to the generosity of someone who installed the system as an in-kind contribution.

Resignation of Treasurer/Appointment of New Treasurer – Selectman Jed Brummer thanked Kork Little for her time of service for the Town of Rindge, and Carlotta Pini, Town Administrator, also thanked Kork for saving the Town money. Carlotta said that Kork helped us keep a very close eye on cash flow so that we didn't have to borrow money to pay our bills. Pat Barry said that the first year she was on the Board, borrowing money to pay the bills incurred \$19,000 in TANS fees. For instance, the Town has to pay \$844,000 each month to the School. And we just paid the County more than \$1,800,000, nearly half of Rindge's total budget, for our annual share. Kork: It's been an honor to serve the Board, Department Heads and residents of Rindge, and I'm just sorry that I can't stay. Carlotta: We will be advertising for a new Treasurer at the upcoming election because it's an elected position, but we need someone between now and then. Ellen Smith had been appointed as Kork's deputy and normally the deputy would take over. But we have sort of a unique situation in that Ellen started helping out in the Accounting office when Helene and her husband went on sabbatical in England. Ellen is a CPA and held down the fort, so when Helene came back, I asked her to stay on and get our year-end books in order. Ellen has more time to commit to the accounting function than Helene has, so we're asking Ellen to stay in accounting and for the Board to appoint Helene as the Treasurer through March, and everyone seems to be in agreement, so I've put it out for the Board's discussion.

Kork: The Board needs to make sure the internal controls review is upheld. Carlotta: Yes, I didn't put a full-time person back in the budget proposal this year because it isn't the time, but it's something we should be aware of and work towards. If Ellen's willing to work towards the 25 hours, and no one person both reconciles and signs the checks, this is the best situation for the time being.

MOTION: Pat Barry motioned to accept the proposal to appoint Helene Rogers Treasurer until March 13, 2012, Sam Seppala seconded, and all were in favor.

Repeater Update and Proposed Budget Transfer to Purchase 2nd Cruiser – Police Chief Mike Sielicki: We had a warrant article to purchase a repeater and thought we were all set with the tower but we weren't. However, last week Tractor Supply approved our putting the repeater in the building, and the owners of that building agreed to let us putting the tower outside. The Antenna will be 20 feet tall. Now, the police force will not have to constantly switch channels; this repeater will really enhance the system, though reception still may be dead in the Binney Hill area. If the Selectmen agree to go forward, the system should be up and running late January/ first of February. Carlotta: The purchase, if approved, would need to be made this year because the voters approved it for 2011. The cost will be \$19,721 total.

MOTION: Selectman Seppala motioned to go ahead with purchasing and installing the repeater, Selectman Barry seconded, and all were in favor.

Last year, the Town had the request to purchase two cruisers on a warrant article but the budget was voted down, but now we have money to buy the second cruiser and, as in the warrant article, we would reduce the fleet by one if the second cruiser were purchased. The cruiser we can get is \$24,300 – around \$28,500 not counting the trade-in. We could advertise the old cruisers, Mike's old truck, and an item at the Recreation Department, inviting sealed bids. Carlotta: Tom Coneys raised a good point at our last meeting: there was a cruiser in the proposed budget, but the budget was amended by \$300,000 in the default budget. The voters' guide said that if they approved that warrant article, we would reduce the fleet from six to five. We set aside some money earlier in the year, unsure what the State was going to do with its retirement, and we do have this opportunity but Tom thought that some people would think that this might be a situation where the people were not listening to the voters, and this ought to be discussed. If the budget passed and the warrant article passed, we were to get two new cruisers and reduce the fleet by one. By reducing the number of cruisers, we'll be reducing the revenue because we'll be doing fewer details. Also, the alternator just broke on Detective Dan Anair's car. Chief Sielicki: My suggestion would be to approve an appropriation not to exceed \$28,500 to replace the cruiser and swap over the equipment. Dan Aho: I know that we do have to replace that fleet and we do have the money right now; I don't think it's a bad idea. Tom Coneys: I think it's a good idea to put a cruiser in the budget. But I think it's not wise to spend extra revenue that the town could save to go back to the voters. Selectman Seppala: So, what would we be doing differently than what was proposed? If we sell the old cruiser and reduce the fleet, what are we not doing? Tom: Having a new cruiser is prudent, but it's the voters' perception on the street I'm concerned about. Roberta Oeser: People's memories are really bad, and people have forgotten which year they voted "no" to the raises. I'm in favor of the cruiser but it is a conundrum. You have to make it very clear publicly that there was not a vote last year against getting a cruiser, because that was in 2009. Sam: Right now, people were in favor of reducing the fleet

by one if we got two cruisers. Roberta: They voted “yes” for the cruiser but the budget failed. Carlotta: The system of government in NH provides that certain choices are made by the legislative body, the town meeting, and the governing body, the Selectmen. The legislative body, the voters, are voting on the bottom line number. The Selectmen have the authority to transfer/reallocate resources from one department to another to make any purchase or investment on behalf of the Town that is fiscally sound as long as they don’t exceed the bottom line. Sam: The idea was to reduce the fleet by one and have a more up-to-date fleet at the same time. I think that’s explainable.

MOTION: Selectman Seppala motioned that we purchase the cruiser and reduce the fleet by one, Selectman Barry seconded, and all were in favor.

Continued: Personnel Committee’s Recommendations – Four weeks ago, the Personnel Committee appeared before the Select Board and made a number of recommendations, including that the Selectmen adopt the Social Security cost-of-living index as a method for maintaining the Town’s pay plan. Ten years ago, the Town had a consultant write job descriptions, grade each job by various criteria, assign a pay range minimum and a maximum, and provide for annual performance reviews. An individual’s salary was to be adjusted on an annual basis, and the Personnel Committee had recommended that a pool be set aside for that, but either the Select Board didn’t approve it or the budget didn’t pass, and basically the plan stopped working. So the Personnel Committee identified a fix that would be fair to all the taxpayers and employees. They suggested an annual wage increase pool that would equal the Social Security cost-of-living index. If it were, say, 3.6%, the wages would be tallied up and multiplied by 3.6% and then, according to annual performance reviews, that pool would be divvied up based on performance. If the Social Security index were 0%, as it was last year, there would be no merit or other increases. The Select Board was asked to vote on whether to implement this plan because it will need to be reflected in the budget. Jed: Social Security doesn’t even give increases when times are tough. This plan would create a pool of money to be divided amongst employees based on performance. This is not a cost-of-living raise, but a merit pool.

Dick Coll: Each year, would you spend the whole pool or reserve surplus for another year? Carlotta: My understanding is that it would be divvied up. Dan Aho: That’s not necessarily a bad thing, but we need to be able to find the money. The Budget Advisory Committee put together a budget for you to review. We weren’t necessarily against discussing raises. Chief Sielicki: If you adopt this on a performance evaluation, I would urge the Board to adopt what the raise is – if an employee “exceeds expectations” one year and is given a 3% increase, they might do the same the next year but earn only 1%, or even nothing. If the pool fluctuates from year to year, it’s impossible for an employee to predict his/her wages or how they’ll be able to live. And if there’s a pool of money to be given out but only a few get it while the rest live another year without an increase, that’s going to create animosity among the employees. Now, we have a lot of employees looking for better-paying jobs. I would suggest a 3.5% across the board cost-of-living increase. Carlotta: But that system doesn’t work with the Personnel Committee’s recommendation. Chief Sielicki: But I think a merit-based system is fair. My understanding is that in private industry, this is how it works. The leadership determines how much money goes towards raises and then they decide how to divvy it up. Jed: Managers decide how to give out bonuses. Kim McCummings: At most businesses, the job ratings are in place and pay is tied to performance. And if you’ve had a good year, you’ll have more money for increases. And if it hasn’t been a good year, the pool gets smaller. So it’s not guaranteeing a certain amount. I think the Committee was looking for a mechanism to determine that pool because in the past it was always a moving target. Charlie Eicher: We surveyed all the major employers and researched the salary ranges for each job. Things can get very confused if you start talking about filling up a pot based on an index and taking out of the pot based on performance. John Kauer: A merit increase is not a bonus. Pat Barry: In an organization of this size, someone who does not meet expectations does not stay around.

Evelyn Lewis: When the Town reviewed its wage ranges, they determined that I was paid lower than what they recommended but said they couldn’t give me the recommended raise; so they gave me 25% of it in 2005, and six years later I’m still waiting for the other 75%. Tom: Reviews and raises should be separate. A review is not an expectation of a raise. Kim: You should keep performance separate from merit. You’re hired to meet or exceed. The purpose of the pool is to have some monies available so that when you do decide to give increases, you have a mechanism to give them. It doesn’t mean that everyone will get a certain amount each year. Sam: The problem I have is locking yourself into something for years to come. I’m not prepared to do that; you have to evaluate raises when they come up. Pat: But there must be some middle ground where we can budget for the ability to do that without guaranteeing any particular employee a specific amount. We must be able to intelligently budget for what might be needed so that, when the evaluations are made, we have the ability to provide a merit increase if the decision is made to provide one. Dan: I think you have to look at it each year.

Chief Sielicki: I used to be able to say to prospective employees: “If you come to Rindge, this is the step plan you can anticipate.” I can’t tell them now what they’ll make next year. We’ll continue to attract uncertified guys that will stay two to three years and then leave. Employees are wondering: “Is it worth staying in Rindge or not?” The Officer that just left us said he just can’t trust what’s going to happen the next year. Tom: The one thing I really don’t hear is that the rank and file should get something. And what I’m not hearing is how we can become more efficient. If you want to give 3% raises, maybe we should consolidate. Pat: Those are the discussions we have all year long. Jed: The truth is that our operational budgets are

pretty skinny in this town. Tom: I agree. But raises are fixed costs you have to live with year after year. But I agree that the department heads have been really good at proposing level budgets and cutting costs. Kim: Tonight's decision would only create the mechanism to have a pool; another decision would then be made on whether to use it or not, and how. Carlotta: The idea behind the Personnel Committee's recommendation was to break this cycle. With the budget being defeated, there was no money set aside for employee pay adjustments. So this year the Board had to adjust wages that were out of line with the market. But that was the Selectmen's only option, and if we continue to have a default budget... Someone then commented that a 2% across-the-board raise would cost \$25,500, and the cruiser we are planning to buy will cost more than those raises would. Pat: We made conscientious decisions within the budget that was approved to address the wage issue and we were vilified for doing that. Dan: We can show you a budget, but if you add the raises, it will push it over the default budget. We're in favor of the raises, but if you put it over the budget, it will get voted down.

Mike Cloutier: In all honesty, if you look at my operating budget, there's a point where I can just provide a service to the taxpayers and there's a point at which I can't.

Roberta Oeser of the Budget Advisory Committee acknowledged that the Department Heads can't cut anymore but restated the need to cut the budget. A BAC member then handed out a memo proposing 13 suggested cuts to personnel and operations.

Payroll and Accounts Payable Manifests – Pat motioned to accept the Payroll and Accounts Payable manifests, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Ongoing Business – none

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS / COMMUNICATION

Contribution from Toah Nipi – Toah Nipi contributed in lieu of taxes almost what they would pay in taxes, a very generous \$7,285 accompanied by a lovely letter to the Town. The Board of Selectmen expressed their sincere appreciation to Toah Nipi.

MOTION: Pat motioned to accept Toah Nipi's payment in lieu of taxes, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

Transfer Station Closed Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve – The announcement will be posted on the Transfer Station sign and on Facebook.

MOTION: Pat motioned to go from Public Session to Non-Public, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS PER RSA 91-A:3 II.(C) FOR REPUTATION

MOTION: Pat motioned to leave the Non-Public Sessions for reputation, seal the minutes, and enter the Non-Public Sessions for Personnel. Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION PER RSA 91-A:3 II.(A) FOR PERSONNEL

MOTION: Pat motioned to leave the Non-Public Sessions for Personnel and seal the minutes. Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

ADJOURNMENT

Jed motioned to adjourn, Pat seconded, and all were in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 10:23pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Stonehill, Administrative Assistant.