



Selectmen's Meeting

Town Office

Wednesday, September 5, 2012

Present: Jed Brummer, Chair; Sam Seppala, Selectman; Roberta Oeser, Selectman; Carlotta Lilback Pini, Town Administrator; Linda Stonehill, Administrative Assistant

APPROVED MINUTES

6:00pm Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

MOTION: Jed motioned to approve the accounts payable and payroll manifests, Roberta seconded, and all were in favor.

MOTION: Roberta motioned to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2012 Selectmen's meeting, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

Now that the revised Procurement and Disposition Policy has been adopted, the Town will run an ad for sealed bids listing all the old Town equipment including the old fire truck, cruisers, and the DPW's plow truck.

Consensus was to follow up with NHDOT regarding our request to repave Cathedral Road. After the Board had voted to send a letter to them, Doug Graham sent an email saying that road likely would be included in the NHDOT's 2013 Betterment Program, but it's not clear what that is.

John Kauer asked about the status of the DPW exhaust system, and Mike has submitted his requests to the CIP committee. John thought the Town had \$50,000 in surplus from healthcare and prescription savings, cruiser maintenance, and the Recreation salaries over seven years [*Ed. note: the Rec salaries did not generate surplus—they were paid by the General Fund which is being reimbursed by the Rec revolving fund so the net was zero*]. Jed: Our legal and fuel budgets will be up, yet we're trying to build our surplus towards the recommended level.

John asked how we'll handle the 18-month budget, and Jed said there are several ways to implement it and we'll see how the people want to do it. There are many issues to understand. The new fiscal year would help the Budget Advisory Committee; it's been tough for them to work when the School and County have a different fiscal year.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Taxes for Payson Village Senior Housing:

Payson Village (a 55+ community with 24 one bedroom and a few two bedroom apartments, now all rented) was a joint 10-year project between the Town and SW Community Services that opened in April, 2011. Tenants must have income under certain limits but they must also be able to pay the rents which aren't subsidized. Southwest said they'd be willing to pay their fair share of taxes once the Village was built, so the Town leased the property to them for 99 years at no cost. SW is now ready to pay the taxes, so the Board has to set a fair amount for this year, preferably before setting the Town's tax rate. The Dept. of Revenue says the Village must be assessed at market value this year because SW didn't opt for the program that takes effect next year. At that time, a state statute will govern the taxation of 55+ communities and SW may elect to be assessed at 10% of the gross rent potential each year for 10 years, with the rents increasing annually.

The Town's assessing firm estimated its worth at \$2.6M using the replacement cost approach but some felt that the income approach would be more appropriate. Roberta estimated \$1,138,000 based on net rent including utilities and the fact they were being assessed on more land than the 2.9 acres they own. Keith Thibault of SW said that they charge \$663 for 20 units and \$796 for four units, so it would make sense to opt for the program. Southwest Community Services is non-profit, but Payson Village Senior Housing is not.

MOTION: Jed motioned to value the property at \$1,138,000. Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

Rindge Crime Watch: Hawkers & Peddlers Ordinance:

Gary Stevens, a member of Rindge Crime Watch, said the Town needs a policy for door-to-door vendors, some of whom are casing homes and preying on the elderly, and some have criminal backgrounds. A policy (rather than an ordinance) was proposed to give citizens more control over who comes to their homes and during what hours, and to require hawkers and peddlers in this town to have a license that would require a background check (at no cost to the Town) and allow the Police to take action. Failure to have a Town license could lead to a Class B misdemeanor conviction. Anyone who asks for a license will be referred to the Police Department.

Exceptions from the licensing requirement would be Rindge residents, people selling their farm products, nonprofit fundraisers, and candidates for public office. Contractors, pizza drivers, and people you've already invited to your home also would be exempt. Guilford charges \$2,500/year for a license or \$65/day. Other towns charge 100-\$200 for a license, and we're thinking of \$150.

MOTION: Jed motioned to add the words "trade show" after "industry" in Section 4.4, delete section 3.5, change the name from "Ordinance" to "Policy" and add verbiage in Section 4.6; Roberta seconded. MOTION RESCINDED after further discussion.

MOTION: Jed motioned to table this until they can further refine the policy, Roberta seconded, and all were in favor.

Meeting House Oversight and Energy Committees: LCHIP grant application:

The Meeting House Oversight Committee formed 11 years ago to make sure that our iconic Meeting House, on the National Register of Historic Places, doesn't fall into disrepair. Last year, with primarily Ward Fund monies, the bell tower was repaired for about \$90,000. The MOC recommended that we apply for the current grant round of the Land Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) for assistance in restoring the many old windows in the Meeting House. We're working with Richard Monohan, a Peterborough architect, on plans that will comply with the State's and LCHIP's guidelines for preserving the historic integrity of the building.

All the weights and counterweights and any broken glass would be removed from the windows which would be reputted, planed, painted, and reset to operate properly. Historically accurate storm windows would also be installed. The estimate we received was \$33,000; since the Ward Fund has about \$17,000 in it, we'll be applying to LCHIP for \$16,000 (applicants may apply for up to half the project's cost). Linda is working on the application. Once the windows are done, we could proceed to paint the building (estimated at \$68,000) which is ineligible for LCHIP funding since it is considered maintenance. If we're awarded the grant, Pat Martin suggested that Margaret Dillon, who conducted energy audits of the Town's buildings last year, review the plans.

MOTION: Roberta motioned that Jed sign the LCHIP grant application for the historically accurate restoration of the Meeting House windows, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

Update: Police Chief job description:

Alan Gould suggested minor changes to the Police Chief's job description that was developed by Bennett Associates in 2002: Page 1 said the Chief is responsible for supervising eight full time and six part time officers, and he suggested saying, "all full time and part time." Page 4 said the Police Chief serves as Interim Emergency Management Director as required, but that has never been the case. We not only have a Deputy Emergency Management Director but all fire department members are cross-trained to handle emergencies, so Alan suggested saying, "plays an essential role on the Town's emergency management team." Alan also proposed adding "or an

equivalent combination of education and experience to demonstrate that the candidate has the ability to perform the job successfully” to the educational requirements and, under “special requirements,” added that “the successful candidate must achieve and retain certification... according to the rules established by the NH police standards.”

Roberta requested #13 on p. 3 to read, “perform all police officer functions as required” (not only the functions of a patrol officer). She also requested that the Chief’s supervisor be specified as either the Board of Selectmen or a Town Manager. Jed: The supervision should be by the Town Administrator. Roberta: I disagree totally. Jed: Carlotta was hired on the basis that the Department Heads would report to the Town Administrator. Roberta: The Selectmen can authorize actions and duties but the responsibility rests with this Board; we don’t have a Town Manager. Jed: Those responsibilities can be delegated to the Town Administrator. Roberta: But the responsibility stays with the Board. Jed: I think it make sense on a day-to-day basis that the Dept. Heads report to the Town Administrator. Roberta: The statute says that only a Town Manager has that authority. Jed: I don’t think having the Selectmen involved in the day-to-day issues will be productive. Roberta: Then the townspeople have to vote for a Town Manager. Jed: The Selectmen have given Carlotta the authority to supervise. Roberta: I disagree because the statute is very clear. Jed: The ultimate authority rests with the Selectmen, but the day-to-day matters get handled by the Town Administrator. Let’s look at her job description. Roberta: It says “administrative” not supervisory; I’ve read it a hundred times. Jed: I’m not hiring a Chief under the guidelines you’re suggesting; it’s not the way to run the Town. Roberta: The Police Chief and Fire Chief are not under the supervision of the Town Administrator. Jed: I disagree. Tom: I think changes may have taken place over the years; there is a difference between a Town Administrator and a Town Manager. I think having an accountable Town Manager is the way to go.

MOTION: Sam motioned to accept the proposed changes to the Police Chief’s job description except for the line about supervision which will be further discussed at the next meeting. Roberta seconded, and all were in favor.

2013-2014 budget process:

Carlotta gave the Selectmen a memo proposing a budget process and copied the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC). Tom Coneys, Chair of the BAC, said they have concerns about the 18-month budget and feel it may be hard to sell to the public. He said that some of the increases in this year’s budget had to come out of somewhere, so the BAC is advising reducing the current budget by 2%. Tom said they all feel there is room to cut \$100,000 in personnel, jobs, and benefits in general. They’re asking that directives be given to the Dept. Heads to come up with those cuts and to look at our personnel policies.

Tom: A 2% cut is probably easily funded. Jed: We’ve been operating with a default budget for four years, and less than a default budget last year, and meanwhile the contractual expenses are going up. To even save \$100,000 will not be easy – it could mean cutting services. Tom: There are easily ways to come up with that without cutting services. When we pay someone \$12/hour, we pay \$8 for benefits. If the dump were operated on a part-time basis we’d save \$10,000. And we could increase each employee’s contribution to health insurance.

Fire Chief Rick Donovan: We’ve looked for a long time at where we could trim budgets and still operate. There are still needs that haven’t been addressed because they haven’t been funded. You have not given employee increases for four years and there’s a retention issue. If you give someone a raise and then make them pay more for their benefits, you haven’t helped them out. And then there’s the doubling up on responsibilities that employees are already handling. Plus there are the fixed cost increases--if they go up 10-12% next year and you want a 2% decrease from where we are today, you’re looking at a 14% shortfall. How can we decrease our budgets when we’re hit with rising costs?

Jed: We have an active Planning Dept. and many people move to this rural community because they don’t like the city atmosphere. The viability of growth in this town depends on whether people perceive that it has good standards and practices that will allow the Town to grow in a desirable way. If people are going to come here, they’ll look at what services we have. And if we don’t maintain our services, we’ll start going downhill.

Tom: The money's there; it's how you manage it. Jed: We might have to increase the hours of the Town Accountant. Tom: So we have to find out how to pay for it. We've added \$75,000 to the budget for the fire truck lease and never looked at how to fund it. It's important that the people know why the budget will be so much more (we'll be covering 18 months rather than 12). Tom: One of the biggest numbers is insurance. And it would be nice to get the wages by department. Carlotta: That's our plan.

Carlotta said if the change in the fiscal year is defeated, the default budget would be for 12 months. Tom: Revenue can be managed better when you start the year with money in the bank. Jed: It also allows you to know what your expenses will be.

Carlotta: Each fall, the Personnel Committee meets, reviews wages, and recommends whether there should be a wage pool distributed for merit to help with the cost of living. Roberta: It wasn't in last year's budget. Carlotta: Would the Personnel Committee like to come in and suggest any wage adjustments for the 2013 budget? Roberta: Raises aren't going to fly this year. Jed: I think a wage pool should be addressed. Roberta: Their strongest recommendation was that it be implemented gradually, which was ignored. Carlotta: This is an annual exercise. So is the Board saying that there will be no consideration of wage adjustments in the 2013-2014 budget? The Personnel Committee recommended that a pool for merit distributions be established according to the Social Security cost of living index, but the Board didn't take action on that. The idea was to have a number to put in the budget. The Board has three choices: 1) do nothing and not include any wage adjustments: 2) consider the policy the Personnel Committee recommended to adopt the Social Security cost of living index as an annual budgeting tool, 3) or to ask the Personnel Committee to convene, as it has each year, to consider if it wants to make a recommendation for the coming year's budget. Tom: You also have the option of calculating what a wage increase would cost and put it out to the voters on a warrant article. And dental insurance is a \$20,000 line item. Jed: Many people take our lower wages to work here for the consistency of benefits.

Richard Mellor: When you talked about maintaining services – you can't keep a level budget for four or five years and maintain this Town. You've got to maintain services if people are moving into town and I think any reasonable person would understand. The Town infrastructure needs stability and retention will be a big issue; if you take 10% away from people here or there, you will have people leaving. We promised the employees raises years ago and defaulted on that for a number of years. And to stick it to them again because they're the easy target for cuts is not fair. Give the populace some credit to understand this. We have to think about what's going to improve the community long-range. Tom: To keep the dump closed four more hours would save \$10,000.

Richard: We've gone barebones a long time, and it's time to stop. Tom: We gave out \$50,000 in a barebones budget so there was fat in this budget. Jed: We funded that because we saved for it. Carlotta: The State keeps cutting, the County raises its budget, and the people absorb it. That can only go on so long. When the State cuts the Town's revenues by \$60,000 and then \$27,000 the next year, and then reneges on its retirement contributions, then little by little the services townspeople count on get eroded until it reaches the point where it affects them and they finally say, "Enough is enough." Maybe I'll let the Dept. heads know that they need to figure out how to achieve that but be frank about what that means about the services they're supposed to be delivering to the public.

John Kauer: The School is looking at a huge increase in 2014 because they're mandated to cover everyone under Obamacare or they can cut everyone and let everyone go to the pool. Carlotta: I think there's value in having the Personnel Committee convene to talk about employee retention, wage and benefits, and the board would not be doing their due diligence if they did not at least consider it in light of the coming budget. Jed: I think it's also our responsibility to let Town employees know that we are concerned and want the input is from the Personnel Committee. Sam: I would charge them to look at the benefits at the same time.

Carlotta: Is the board considering the BAC's recommendation relative to the 2% decrease or does it have any other thoughts? Roberta: I think the Department Heads should prepare the budgets they think they need. You can't tell them to cut the budget when they don't even have one yet. Then we'll go from there. Sam: They can use their last year's budget as a guideline. Carlotta: They not only do that, they itemize every little thing. Sam: You can tell the Dept. Heads that they should reduce their budget by 2%. Carlotta: So the Board wants the Department

Heads to know that the BAC recommends a 2% cut but encourages them to prepare the budgets they need, and they will invite the Personnel Committee to make recommendations.

Proposed letter re: Voluntary Payment in Lieu of Taxes:

Carlotta: Nonprofit and charitable organizations are exempt from taxation. There are about 15 in Town. Over the years, some of them made voluntary contributions in lieu of taxes. Camp Monomac and Camp Starfish said they would but didn't. The Meeting School used to contribute and every year Toah Nipi hand-delivers a nice letter with the check for the equivalent of the municipal portion of their taxes. We'd like to reach out to the other organizations and ask them. We'll prepare this for the Selectmen's signatures at the next meeting.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Ongoing business:

Carlotta mentioned the meeting on Sept. 21st for municipalities to submit any proposals for legislation. Richard Mellor mentioned that the SW Regional Planning Commission has a lobbying arm which is another benefit of membership. Holly Koski mentioned that there will be a meeting Sept. 12th at 7:00pm regarding the Christian Outreach Church/North Street issue.

MOTION: Jed motioned to leave public to nonpublic for reputation, Roberta seconded, and all were in favor.

MOTION: After the nonpublic sessions, Roberta motioned to adjourn, Sam seconded, and all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:12pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Linda Stonehill, Administrative Assistant