

FINAL



**WEARE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
January 13, 2008**

PRESENT: TOM CLOW, CHAIRMAN; DONNA OSBORNE, VICE CHAIRMAN; HELEEN KURK, SELECTMAN; JOSEPH M. FIALA, SELECTMAN; WENDY CLARK, SELECTMAN

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR: Fred Ventresco

RECORDING SECRETARY: Cherry Palmisano (not present at the meeting)

GUESTS: Chris Hague, George Malette, Chief Richards, Sherry Burdick

5:00 p.m. Chairman Clow called the meeting to order.

Chairman Clow said this is not a meeting for public comment.

Mr. Fred Ventresco said Mr. George Malette has concerns with the amount of funds being placed in the Building and Maintenance Upgrade article from CIP. Mr. Ventresco said they only have the appropriation articles at this time. Mr. Ventresco mentioned the redefinition of the Building Maintenance Fund and said at tomorrow's meeting they will be discussing all articles that involve money.

Chairman Clow said they need to start looking at the two bond issues for the Highway Department building for \$900,000. Mr. Ventresco said the wording on both of the articles is the same; he will not be getting the draft back from the Attorney until Monday. Mr. Ventresco said they need to discuss the payment for the first year. Mr. Ventresco said they should have estimates from the bond bank with payment schedules. Chairman Clow said the second article deals with Bolton Field. Selectman Fiala said PARC would like to recommend to the Board to make the bond amount \$1,250,000. Selectman Kurk said this amount does not include landscaping. Selectman Fiala is unsure what landscaping it includes, possibly trees. Mr. Ventresco suggests the budget hearing is tomorrow and this should be discussed then. Chairman Clow said they are trying to get a handle on issues tonight to get the articles to near final form for tomorrow. Mr. Ventresco said the Public Hearing is posted for \$1.4 million. Mr. Ventresco said once the meeting closes on Monday the dollar numbers are set and it is final. Chairman Clow said on Monday they can make changes on anything but at the close of the meeting everything will stay the same concerning appropriations until Deliberative Session and at that time can be changed but voters who are present. Chairman Clow said before it goes before Public Hearing tomorrow they can make adjustments as they see fit. Selectman Kurk asked when they will vote as a Board. It was discussed they hold their discussions and close the public hearing and engage in discussions.

Selectman Kurk discussed the word "expansion" in the Bolton Field Article. Selectman Fiala feels it is not the best word as well. The Board discussed replacing "expansion" with "improvements." Selectman Fiala feels they should take an informal vote to decide if this goes on the ballot. Vice Chairman Osborne feels that this is a lot of money to spend.

Selectman Fiala moved, Selectman Clark seconded to support the warrant article for \$1.25 million for Bolton Field being on the ballot. Passed 3-2-0. Selectman Kurk and Vice Chairman Osborne voted no.

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Selectman Kurk has concerns about the cost and having no prediction of yearly cost after the build out, which would include maintenance of bathrooms, policing, increased use and they have not heard from the neighborhood regarding noise and lights. Selectman Kurk said they are not getting any added fields for that money, landscaping as she understands is not included. Selectman Kurk said when she asked how much night time use of the fields there would be and she was told not too much and wonders if the cost would balance out. She also feels they haven't looked at alternative ways for funding. Selectman Kurk said this was originally laid out as a 3 part plan and in addition they have so many need expenses for infrastructure at this time that have been neglected. Even though this is a good plan and well thought out, Selectman Kurk said it doesn't mean they necessarily have to go through with all parts of the plan, she is totally against the paving and the cost of paving is high and cost to maintain paving is high.

Selectman Fiala said they did discuss the dust factor down at the field; paving is an expense but feels the paving would be an expense worth having.

Selectman Clark said because they did spend \$12,700 on the plan she feels it needs to be on the ballot to have the voters decide. Selectman Clark said she hopes at tomorrow's public hearing for this bond there will be public input to answer some questions. Selectman Clark feels this is a very good plan, but could provide a bit more information.

Chairman Clow agrees this should go before the voters. Chairman Clow said he knows they have the final determination but it did come to them as a recommendation for the whole project to be done at once and that is why it is in the format that it is. Chairman Clow said when he goes to the polls as a voter he would probably vote for it because kids grow up and if they put this off 5-10 years today's kids will be in High School, so personally he would vote for it. It needs 60% vote to pass.

Selectman Kurk commented that there is gravel paving available now that is much less expensive. She feels it is premature because they don't have all the information. Selectman Kurk said the CIP Subcommittee was not unanimous in their support to recommend this article.

Selectman Kurk said she feels the Board brings determinations of priorities on what they bring forth to the citizens.

Chairman Clow knows they need the Highway building, but this only came up in the last few months and the Bolton Field project has been being studied for years. He feels the Highway Building went forth very quickly.

Selectman Kurk moved, Selectman Clark seconded to support the article to raise \$900,000 for the bond for the purpose of a new Public Works Facility being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Selectman Kurk feels this is a high priority for the employees at the Highway Department and will result in less air pollution, the ability to recycle more and vehicles don't have to stay running to warm up which saves in fuel. Selectman Fiala said he shares the concern in the haste of how this was brought to them. He wishes he knew more about the plan, but it is clearly an urgent need and should go on the warrant. Selectman Clark feels it should go on the warrant as well but hopes it is not a dire need (can't hear rest of her comments).

Mr. Ventresco said the articles are not numbered yet, these are just spending articles, and the other articles still need to be included.

Chairman Clow said the bottom line expenditure on the Operating Budget is \$4,640,603. There have been no changes in the proposed since last Monday. Chairman Clow asked if there was a change on the one year prior adopted. Ms. Tina Pelletier said there was a change, in going through and doing the default report she went back to last years MS2 and they still have _____ presented to DRA were they had the \$4,210,122 which was last years default that got voted and became the adopted with the changes of the \$39,000 that they wished to take out for the passing of Article 17 and whatever the \$42,746 went in for the Police contract. Ms. Pelletier

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said the actual adopted and approved and appropriated budget for 2007 was \$4,252,868. Ms. Pelletier said at the Boards wishes they deducted the \$39,000 that DRA declined and that brings the adopted budget to go forward for the 2008 default to \$4,213,868. Ms. Pelletier said those numbers changed last week was because she was working with the new software and after the vote is taken she can only work with budget journals that effects the revised column which becomes the actual working budget against the expenditures so all year end numbers were not affected. Ms. Pelletier said the year end numbers, what was plugged in for invoices are all fine. Chairman Clow said they are comparing for purposes of passing then they should compare the proposed budget of \$4,640,603 and that should be compared to \$4,252,868 because the Board chose to take the \$39,000 out. Ms. Pelletier said technically according to DRA our appropriations were \$4,252,868. Chairman Clow said this is the number they should use.

Ms. Pelletier said she cannot fill out the MS6 until she has the warrant article numbers and whether the Board recommends or does not recommend the article. Ms. Pelletier said the 2 departments that had changes were the Police Department in the budget overtime line, \$43,500 for the 1 year adopted line instead of the \$32,000 bringing the. Total for the Police Department budget to \$1,108,503.30. Ms. Pelletier said the adopted total for Highway is \$994,154.

Ms. Pelletier said the total operating budget line under adopted that results in \$4,252,868 includes the \$39,000 that was put back in for Article 17 that DRA denied.

It was discussed grants are not part of the adopted budget they are part of the revised budget.

Ms. Pelletier discussed the sewer proposed and default need to be the same.

Ms. Pelletier said \$4,513,309 is the total of the Default Operating Budget. Ms. Pelletier said this is complete.

Selectman Clark commented on there not being much of a difference between the Default and Proposed budgets. Chairman Clow said because most of the increases on the Proposed Budget are due to increases in energy fuel which they need to carry into the Default Budget as well. The figures were calculated on actual usage numbers.

The Board discussed the funds to be placed into the Government Buildings and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. Someone was reading the items allocated for these funds, I think it was George Malette in the audience but I can't hear him clear enough to understand exactly what he is naming off. Discussion on Town Hall Roof. Selectman Kurk asking if it would make sense to separate some of the requests in this article. It was discussed all items that this fund is allocated for be listed within the article. Needs to have clear definition of all the items that funds are intended for.

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Fiala seconded for the amount of Article 13 to be \$286,500 to be placed in the Government Buildings and Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund and the article being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Clow moved, Vice Chairman Osborne seconded to support Article 14 being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

The Board discussed the Household Hazardous Waste Collection being in the Operating Budget.

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Kurk seconded to support Article 16 being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

The Board discussed separating the Article for 2 new full-time Fire Fighter/EMTs at \$13.50 per hour and to utilize current employees to cover weekends at \$15.50 per hour. Chairman Clow asked Mr. Ventresco draft one article for the \$80,085 for the full-time and then another article for the \$23,023 for weekends and holidays. The

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Board decided to split the article into two separate articles and will vote whether or not to support putting it on the warrant once they review the wording of the two separate articles.

Selectman Fiala moved, Selectman Clark seconded to support the article to hire 2 full-time Police Officers being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Article for \$3,700 to make repairs to walkways and improvement to fire alarm system at the Library with funds to come from the Town's Undesignated Fund Balance. Ms. Hague explained to the Board the Joint Loss Committee has cited them for these safety issues. Ms. Hague said this money is from the Library's 2007 Operating Budget that was not spent and was kept in the Library Account. This money will go back into the Town's Undesignated Fund Balance and be expended from that account.

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Kurk seconded to support the Article for \$3,700 for the Library being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Clow discussed the Article for \$14,500 from the Jones Memorial Fund for the Library to conduct a study of the building. Mr. Ventresco discussed that they do not need an Article for this purpose. The Board will have an answer on whether they need this article on Monday.

Selectman Kurk moved, Chairman Clow seconded to support the Article for \$20,000 for Cemetery Improvements being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Clow moved, Vice Chairman Osborne seconded to support the Article for \$6,000 for fireworks being on the Warrant. Osborne seconded. Passed 5-0-0.

Selectman Kurk moved, Chairman Clow seconded to support the Article for \$200,000 to purchase Conservation Easements in the Melvin Valley Area on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Chairman Clow moved, Selectman Kurk seconded to support the Article for \$30,000 to be moved into the Community Access TV Equipment Fund from the Cable Franchise Agreement being on the Warrant. Passed 5-0-0.

Mr. Ventresco discussed tomorrow's meeting is just for Warrant Articles with spending. Mr. Ventresco discussed the Revenue estimates being too high and he will be working on this with Ms. Pelletier.

Selectman Kurk mentioned an article for the Employee Retirement Capital Reserve Fund.

Chairman Clow would like a professional draft version available for the public for the Public Hearing with anticipated tax impact included in all articles.

The Board discussed the Benefit Review Article to bring all employees up to a comparable salary range. Chairman Clow said the Benefit Review Committee compared Weare to 4 other comparable communities to determine the salary ranges. This would be a 12 step pay scale. Department Heads would be able to start an employee with experience at a 3 step scale. This step increase would not represent a cost of living increase; it would represent a 3% increase and could be adjusted if the Board did choose to give a cost of living increase in addition. Selectman Kurk needs more clarification on how these numbers came about. Mr. Ventresco said Ms. Naomi Bolton is still working on the dollar figures for this article.

Chairman Clow said they still need to discuss the Chief of Police's salary; which he feels is low.

Chairman Clow said if they were to propose a warrant article that was based on this review by the Benefit Review Committee they could take into account the Board's ability to apply extra experience in the scale to adjust the salary. Selectman Kurk asked how long the Chief of Police was a Chief in New Boston. Selectman Kurk commented that if the previous Chief was still here they would be paying a much higher salary. Chairman Clow discussed the Board could make a decision to keep this within the Benefit Review salary scale. Longevity

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bonuses are not included in the step scale. Mr. Ventresco said the Board should be placing a dollar figure on the cost to implement the scale for this article for the warrant.

The Board discussed the pay scales for elected officials and how the step scale would be utilized if the individual did not have any experience in the position. Chairman Clow said Mr. Ventresco checked and it is the Board's responsibility to set the salary for the Police Chief. Selectman Kurk asked if someone was to get elected as Police Chief but they have never been a Police Chief before would they start at a step scale. Mr. Ventresco said there has to be wording included that would not be bind they to the scale for new hires. Chairman Clow said they need to have a bottom line for hiring a new employee. Mr. Ventresco said the Board needs to be concerned with salaried positions as well. Chairman Clow said this is for the personnel policy not for the purpose of the article. Mr. Ventresco said you do need to have a dollar figure for the article. Mr. Ventresco feels for a dollar amount on the article they should use a higher number. Selectman Clark is concerned with not doing anything with bringing up the pay scale they will start to lose employees who are filled with knowledge and are valuable to the town. Chairman Clow said they need to present this tomorrow night with a dollar figure.

Mr. Ventresco asked the Board on what dollar amount they wanted to use for Employee Retirement Fund. The Board said Ms. Pelletier has the figure.

Mr. Ventresco discussed the Cable Franchise Contract and told the Board the attorney was very concerned with the changes made by Comcast and feels the Board should ask for another 30 day extension on the contract.

Motion to adjourn at 8:37 p.m.

A True Record.

Cherry Palmisano, Recording Secretary