

Board of Selectmen Meeting
Minutes of February 5, 2007

Selectmen:

Peter N. Miller, Chairman
Peter F. Brothers
Miller C. Lovett
Frank S. Michel
Colette Worsman

Town Manager:

Carol M. Granfield

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Miller called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

The Chair introduced the Board, Town Manager and Recording Clerk. He made announcements pertaining to exits, listening assisted devices and the use of microphones.

ACCEPTANCE AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:

07-09 Regular Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of 01/08/07 and 01/22/07; Budget Workshop Minutes of 01/22/07; and Non-Public Meeting Minutes of 01/22/07.

Colette Worsman motioned to approve the minutes of the Board of Selectmen meetings of 01/08/07 and 01/22/07; the Budget Workshop Minutes of 01/22/07; and the Non-Public Meeting Minutes of 01/22/07. Seconded by Peter Brothers.

Miller Lovett proposed a change in the January 22 Board Minutes under the Town Manager's Report, page 2, to read "access" instead of "address". He requested the word "humorously" be inserted to accurately reflect his intention when he suggested public funds be raised to help cover the costs associated with the flooring at the new police station.

Peter Miller motioned to make the changes proposed by Miller Lovett. Seconded by Peter Brothers. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board acted on the motion to approve the Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of 01/08/07 and 01/22/07; the Budget Workshop Minutes of 01/22/07; and the Non-Public Meeting Minutes of 01/22/07. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

- The 2006 Town of Meredith tax assessments were printed in *The Citizen* last week at no cost to the Town. Copies are available at the Town Hall and will be available at the Town meeting.
- Last Friday was the closing date for the upcoming elections. Two selectmen positions will be up for election. The candidates are Bob Flanders, Richard Juve, Miller Lovett and Peter Miller. Mark Donohue and Delphine Clough are running for the Library Trustee; there are no candidates for the Trustee of the Trust Funds – there is the potential of a write-in for the position. A Candidates Night will be held at the Community Center and televised live. Potential dates for the event are Wednesday, February 28; Thursday, March 1; Wednesday, March 7 and Thursday, March 8. The Town Manager asked the Board members to let her know their preference. Lou Kahn will act as the Moderator.
- The next regular Board meeting will be Monday, February 12 at 5:30 p.m.
- The Meredith Rotary Fishing Derby will be this weekend. Everyone is encouraged to be safe. The Town worked with the Rotary Club to ensure good markings for access to the Lake.

VISITOR'S AND RESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:**PUBLIC HEARING**

The Chair opened the public hearing at 5:45 p.m.

07-10 Public Hearing – 2007 Budget

Colette Worsman motioned to open the Public Hearing for discussion of the 2007 budget. Seconded by Frank Michel. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Miller opened by explaining how the selectmen arrived at the draft budget that will be presented to the public. The budget requests made by Department heads represented a \$1,800,000 budget increase (15 ¼%). The Town Manager and Finance Officer worked to reduce the budget requests to \$925,000 (8%). The Board met 5 or 6 times, approximately 23 hours, in an intensive review process. They met with each Department head, tried to identify where the draft budget could be cut without compromising the quality of service to residents, and addressed some of the goals that were set as priorities for the Town at an earlier goal setting session. The budget that will be presented to the voters represents an approximate 6% increase. Colette Worsman presented a list of potential cuts in the draft budget that were contemplated and discussed by the Board. A few of the proposed cuts made their way into the budget. Miller Lovett presented a model to the Board regarding how to determine an acceptable budget increase (See Addendum I, 1/22/07 Workshop Minutes). His proposed \$100,000 decrease in the

bottom line of the draft budget was not approved. Chair Miller explained that he uses the word “draft” when referring to the budget because public input will be considered.

Town Manager Carol Granfield summarized the budget process and departmental budgets and Administrative Services Director Brenda Vittner reviewed capital debt and revenue in the form of a Power Point presentation (**SEE ADDENDUM I**).

Resident Eileen Harris requested that the Board reconsider budget cuts that do not allow for a full time person at the front desk of the Community Center. She read a letter from the Parks and Recreation Commission in support of a full time person. She believes the position will lose continuity if it is covered by two part time positions and cited the training that has gone into the position over the last year. The Parks & Recreation Department identified other areas in the budget that would create a hardship if they were cut but would not be as critical as the proposed cut to the front desk.

Parks & Recreation Director Vint Choiniere expressed the need for a full time person on staff at the front desk. A full time person is needed in order to accommodate the growth of the Community Center over the last year. Vint is willing to juggle the Department’s budget in order to fill the full time position with a net effect of \$0 to the budget. He would like the opportunity as the Director of the Department, along with colleagues, to make decisions and adjustments in its budget.

Peter Miller responded that although a full time position makes sense and is supported by a number of residents, it is the responsibility of the Board to look at all the needs of the Town and deem an acceptable increase in the department budgets. He pointed out that other Departments are faced with some of the same situations. There are many constraints on the budget and the Board is not able to accomplish all that needs to be done in a year. The Board received many communications from taxpayers that they want to pull in the reins on what they think has been excessive spending in recent years. Dialogue ensued regarding the cost to the Town of a full time person including benefits such as retirement and health insurance. Chair Miller pointed out the advantages of part-time staff as far as cost containment.

Resident Bob Flanders spoke in favor of a full time position at the front desk of the Community Center. He cited the loss of continuity with two part-time employees and thinks it is short sighted to deny a full time position if the Director believes it can be done without affecting the Department’s bottom line.

Brenda Vittner explained that the 14% increase in the Parks & Recreation budget is a reflection of the ’06 budget being based on the 9 months the Community Center was open, as opposed to the 12 months it will be open in 2007. She answered questions regarding the actual cost of bringing on a full-time person at the front desk. Director Choiniere pointed out that part of the budget increase is attributed to additional activities taken on by the Department last year including maintenance of facilities such as beaches and hiking trails.

Speaking as a private citizen, Miller Lovett presented a proposed Town budget for fiscal 2007 entitled “The 2007 Budget Can Be Reduced!” (**SEE ADDENDUM II**). He outlined the

demands on the budget and explained that the budgeting process is fatally flawed. He believes the 2007 budget can be reduced by at least \$100,000 and that it has to be done. He will move for reconsideration of the bottom line as a Selectboard member and feels that the Community Center problem has to be fixed.

Resident Bob Ambrose expressed concerns about the level of spending over the past few years. At the current rate the budget will double about every 10 years. He suggested a maintenance level budget where each Department documents the increases necessary to stay at the same level of service as the prior year. Chair Miller responded that capital projects have been driving the budget increases significantly and without them there would be an approximate 4.5% increase for 2007. Selectman Worsman is in favor of a more conservative approach to the budget in 2008.

Resident Richard Juve requested a budget summary report indicating salaries, health insurance, training, etc. for all Departments as opposed to the current form listing the increases by Department. He would like to see more detailed graphics in the power point presentation that are easier to interpret. He is concerned with compounded increases in the budget and would like to see the budget go up around the cost of living increase, if at all. He believes in a level funded budget or one that starts with \$0 with each increase being justified. He found that the charts in the presentation moved too quickly and were difficult to read. Brenda Vittner answered questions regarding COLA and the reclassification of certain employees.

Resident Dave Sticht voiced his agreement with Bob Ambrose. He expressed concerns whether the RSAs allow the Town to set aside money in Funds without definite plans as how they will be spent. He questioned some of the priorities of the Town, such as putting lights on the docks and trees along the roads. He spoke against the reclassification of the Town Planner, and suggested that he is overqualified for the job, and that he might put his talents and expertise to better use in a larger community. He suggested a moratorium on new building permits for a year, during which time the Town could address zoning ordinances and road standards. He is in favor of subbing out work such as plowing and road work in order to reduce expenses.

Public Works Director Mike Faller addressed questions regarding construction debris. He explained that the estimate for disposal costs has decreased due to a decrease in construction. The Town increased its tipping fee for construction and demolition debris this year. He agreed that subbing certain road work is cost effective.

Tax Assessor Jim Commerford addressed concerns raised by resident Phil McGown regarding the reclassification of the real estate data collector position to real estate appraiser. He explained that it is a slight upgrade in the position and that they do not want the current data collector to become overqualified and move on. The increase in salary for the reclassification is \$967 per year including FICA and retirement.

Brenda Vittner told the Board that the total increase attributed to reclassifications for 2007 including FICA, Medicare, and retirement benefits is \$20,290.34. She answered questions regarding the request for a full-time GIS person. The GIS person will digitize tax maps and

make them available on the website. The maps have different layers that include roads, culverts and manholes, and will be utilized by many different departments.

Chair Miller explained the transfer of \$750,000 from the General Fund to offset taxes. He explained DRA guidelines for the Fund balance and noted that the projected balance of about 6% is within those guidelines. He identified various sources of the money in the General Fund.

Resident Pat Mack spoke in favor of a conservative approach to spending.

Frank Michel motioned to close the public hearing at 7:50 p.m. Seconded by Miller Lovett. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed.

Miller Lovett moved for reconsideration of the bottom line of the 2006 budget. Seconded by Colette Worsman for discussion purposes.

Chair Miller asked Selectman Lovett for a specific motion.

Miller Lovett motioned to authorize the Parks & Recreation Department to make an adjustment within its 2007 budget to accomplish the part-time to full-time position. The motion was not seconded.

Selectman Lovett questioned the reasons for not authorizing the adjustment. Chair Miller explained that if the Board were to give permission to one department to make adjustments, they would have to give permission to all departments to do the same. If departments are given that kind of leeway, the priorities that the Board worked so hard to define and refine would be null.

Miller Lovett motioned that Director Vint Choiniere give the Board the figures he would like to see changed and the Board authorize those changes in his budget.

It was the general feeling of the Board that there was ample opportunity during the deliberation process for Director Choiniere to come before them with his request.

Selectman Brothers moved the question, citing it as non-productive and non-contributing.

The motion was not seconded.

Miller Lovett motioned that the Board use his Scenario I adaptation that the budget be cut by \$125,000. Seconded by Colette Worsman. 3-2. Motion Failed.

W 07-02 Draft Town Warrant

The Board took action on five draft Warrant Articles (**SEE STAFF REPORT, ADDENDUM III**).

Article 4:

The bundled water, sewer, road, and sidewalk project improvements are near design completion. The Town has secured 46% of the total cost of the project through State and Rural Development grants. A loan from Rural Development for the balance of the project has been approved at 4.125% for 30 years. Money has been set aside for the 5% of ineligible items included in the project. Dialogue ensued regarding the extent of the project and the financial impact for the Town. A change to roadway and drainage improvements together with extending the construction project from five to seven months accounts for the difference in projected costs from \$2,238,000 to \$2,485,000.

Frank Michel motioned to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Million Four Hundred Eighty Five Thousand dollars (\$2,485,000) (gross budget) for the purpose of replacement of existing cast iron water mains, replacement or rehabilitation of existing sewer lines; roadway and sidewalk reconstruction and drainage system improvements on Waukegan Avenue, High Street, Red Gate Lane and Stevens Avenue, said appropriation to be inclusive of State and Federal grants-in-aid in the approximate amount of 46%, or contributions from other sources; to authorize the issuance of serial bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Finance Act, Chapter 33, of the said appropriation, provided that the total amount of bonds or notes to be issued shall be reduced by the amounts of grants-in-aid or contributions from other sources; said loans to be in the amount of approximately 51% of the total project as presented; to authorize the Town Treasurer to make temporary borrowings, in accordance with the provisions of said Chapter, in anticipation of the receipt of the proceeds of said bonds or notes; and to authorize the Town Treasurer to determine the method and manner of sale of such bonds, notes and temporary borrowings, as shall be in the best interest of the Town, including the authority to enter into a Tax Regulatory Agreement containing such representations and covenants as are necessary to maintain such notes and temporary borrowings; to authorize the Selectmen and Town Manager to apply for and accept any contributions in aid of the project and to expend the appropriation in accordance herewith. Seconded by Peter Brothers. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

Article 11:

Chairman John Sherman and Vice Chairman Don MacFarlane spoke on behalf of the Conservation Commission, clarifying the purpose and intent of the Article. The Commission was granted stewardship of three properties abutting Town Forest (two parcels formerly owned by Leighton and one parcel formerly owned by Eames) by the Selectmen. "Steward" is not defined and the Commission has to come before the Board when it wants to do something of a managerial nature. Designating the parcels as Town Forest gives the Commission authority to manage the forest for specified objectives such as forest management and wildlife enhancement activities. Selectman Michel expressed concerns about public participation in matters regarding these activities. Mr. Sherman assured him that as long as he is on the Commission, public meetings will be held on any forest management plans that are undertaken. The public will continue to have access to the land if it is designated Town Forest and the Commission will eventually develop marked trails utilizing funds generated by forest management activities.

Miller Lovett moved the approval of Article 11 to see if the Town will vote to designate three certain parcels of land as Town Forest pursuant to RSA 31:110, as follows:

1. *Two parcels formerly owned by Leighton, identified in the Town's records as Tax Map R23, Lot 4 and Tax Map R32, Lot 11;*
2. *One parcel formerly owned by Eames, identified in the Town's records as Tax Map R18, Lot 9-a.*

Seconded by Peter Miller. 4 in favor, 1 abstention (Frank Michel). Motion passed.

Article 15:

Article 15 pertains to the sale of the old police station and town hall annex. It was redrafted to reflect the Town can sell one or the other, neither or both; and is not obligated to sell any of them.

Peter Miller motioned to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sell either, or both, of the following properties:

1. *The Old Police Station Building property, Tax Map/Lot U10/34, 347 Daniel Webster Highway;*
2. *The Town Hall Annex Building property, Tax Map U07/43, 5 Highland Street.*

Any such sale shall be upon the terms and conditions and employing such methods to accomplish the sale as the selectmen shall deem to be in the best interests of the Town.

Further, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to take all actions reasonably necessary to effect the sale of one or both of these properties. This warrant article shall not be construed to require the Board of Selectmen to sell either or both of the properties, but as granting authority to do so. Seconded by Frank Michel. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

Article 18:

Article 18 is not required as part of the budget.

Article 26:

Chair Miller pointed out that Article 26 gives the Board the opportunity to present a united front to the public.

Chair Miller motioned to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eleven Million, Eight Hundred and Seventy Nine Thousand, Eight Hundred and Forty Two Dollars (\$11,879,842) for the necessary operational expenses of the Town for the ensuing year's budget. Seconded by Peter Brothers.

Carol Granfield told the Board that all numbers will be confirmed.

3-2. Motion passed.

Colette Worsman asked the Board to watch two Bills that were mentioned in the LGC notifications this week. HB 262 excludes certain retirement account assets when determining the

elderly property tax exemption; HB 274 reflects a mandatory increase in income and asset levels for the elderly exemption in each age category. Carol Granfield will place copies of the Bills in the Selectmen's files.

Frank Michel motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Seconded by Colette Worsman. All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Granfield, Town Manager

Peter N. Miller, Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Peter F. Brothers

Miller C. Lovett

Frank S. Michel

Colette Worsman