

BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of 01-24-11
5:30 p.m.

Selectmen:

Charles G. Palm, Chairman
Colette Worsman, Vice Chairman
Peter F. Brothers
Miller C. Lovett
Nathan J. Torr

Town Manager:

Phillip L. Warren

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Chuck Palm called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He introduced the Board, Town Manager, and the Recording Clerk, and made announcements pertaining to fire exits, listening assisted devices, the use of microphones, and cell phones.

ACCEPTANCE AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:

11 -01 Minutes of the December 6, 2010 Workshop, Meeting, and Non-Public Session; the December 20, 2010 Workshop and Meeting; and the January 10, 2011 Workshop.

Selectman Brothers motioned to accept the minutes of the December 6, 2010 Workshop, Meeting, and Non-Public Session; the December 20, 2010 Workshop and Meeting, and the January 10, 2011 Workshop. Seconded by Selectman Lovett.

Selectman Lovett moved to amend the minutes of the December 6 Board meeting, page 3 to read: "Selectman Worsman was excused from the remainder of the meeting in order to attend a Belknap County meeting". There was no objection to the amendment.

December 6 Workshop, Meeting, and Non-Public Session; and December 20 Workshop and Meeting: 5-0. *All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.*

January 10 Workshop: 4-0. *All in favor. Motion passed unanimously. (Selectman Torr abstained from voting because he did not attend the meeting.)*

NEW BUSINESS:

11-02 Hearing on the proposed 2011 Municipal Budget per RSA 32:5-1.

Selectman Torr motioned to open a public hearing for the presentation of the 2011 budget at 5:35 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Town Manager highlighted the 2011 budget:

- The budget goal for 2011 was to remain level with the 2008 budget. The 2011 budget does not increase the amount to be raised by local taxation.

- The Town Manager presented a slightly lower than level funded budget to the selectmen in December 2010.
- The Board agreed to two additions to the Town Manager's budget recommendation:
 - \$10,000 additional funding for General Assistance based on 2010 year-end figures and walk in traffic in the General Assistance office.
 - \$27,500 additional funding for a second police cruiser. Two cruisers were scheduled to be purchased in 2010, and only one was purchased. In addition, the Crown Victoria will no longer be produced after the 2011 model year, and the equipment being used at this time will not fit in the replacement cruiser.
- In January 2011, the Board agreed upon a wage adjustment for employees. The current economic conditions were analyzed, and it was made it clear that the adjustment is to reward employees for their performance. The adjustment totals \$72,500, and equates to a 1.25% increase in employee wages.

Budgetary Considerations:

- Maintain current service levels.
- No new positions or reclassifications - vacancies due to voluntary separations from employment will not be automatically filled; the Town Manager will evaluate all positions to determine appropriate action.
- No new services or programs.
- Holds on equipment purchases.
- Fund capital improvement program recommendations at a minimum level.

Calendar to Town Meeting:

- Deadline for warrant articles - February 1.
- Last day to hold public hearing on annual budget - February 11 (held January 24)
- Public Hearing to be scheduled subsequent to February 1 to present petitioned warrant articles (scheduled for February 7 Board meeting).
- Town elections - March 8
- Town Meeting - March 9

Summary of 2011 Municipal Budget:

- 2010 appropriations - \$10,692,534; 2011 Board of Selectmen Budget - \$10,788,637, for a dollar change of \$96,103 (equates to a .899% change).
- Conservation Commission - Appropriations for 2010 and the Board of Selectmen budget for 2011 are level - \$1,515.
- Cable Franchise Revenue - appropriated \$24,805 in 2010; \$24,000 proposed in 2011 (decrease of \$805).
- Regional Agencies - appropriated \$232,679 in 2010; Board of Selectmen's budget for 2011 - \$225,199 (decrease of \$8,995, or 3.85%).
- Debt Service - \$1,382,810 in 2010; \$1,330,241 in 2011 (decrease of \$52,569).
- Capital Projects - \$155,000 in capital purchases were proposed by the capital improvements committee and approved by the Board of Selectmen. The \$52,569 reduction in debt service in 2010 is a combination of debt payoffs and renegotiating the

- terms of existing debt, and is non-recurring revenue that will be applied to the capital fund and targeted for non-recurring capital items.
- 2010 appropriations - \$12,429,343; 2011 Board of Selectmen budget - \$12,523,077, for a change of \$93,734 (a .754% increase over 2010).
 - Personnel - No changes in staffing levels from 2010.
 - Wage Adjustments - not to exceed \$72,500; there will be no step increases for a third year (increases for FICA and Medicare must be factored into the wage adjustments).
 - Regional Agencies - The Board spent a great deal of time reviewing all agency requests to understand the needs of the agency before recommending funding. Three to five meetings addressed the preparation of the analysis for funding requests, and three meetings were spent on funding requests.
 - Equipment purchases were placed on hold; however, the Board recommends purchasing two police cruisers instead of one, and increasing the General Assistance budget by \$10,000 in anticipation of the needs of the community.
 - Debt Service - There was a \$52,569 (3.802%) decrease in debt service, reflecting the debt payoffs for the Wagon Wheel Trail sewer project and the Westbury Rd. sewer project; and the refinancing of the Page Pond project, the fire station building project, and the police station building project.

The 2011 proposed municipal budget reflects a substantial review of costs and services to meet the needs of the Town, while continuing with current service levels to the public with the understanding that the economy has not yet recovered. Decisions affecting this budget were made with the understanding that spending needs to be in proportion to the ability to fund services and expectations. The Board will continue to review revenue projections on a quarterly basis during 2011, and if needed, will place projects on hold if revenues are not meeting expectations.

The Town Manager thanked Director of Administrative Services Brenda Vittner and the department heads for their assistance in putting together the budget, the employees for their contributions to the Town, and the Board for their cooperation while working through the budget process.

Conservation Commission member Mark Billings inquired if the Page Pond project note was extended as a result of the renegotiation of that debt. The Commission agreed to withhold from receiving any funds from the Town while that debt is being paid off. Ms. Vittner explained that the term remains the same, but the interest rate was reduced from 4.99% to 3.8%.

Resident LuAnn Breen of Meredith inquired why the water and sewer rates recently increased when the budgets for those departments appear to be going down significantly. The Town Manager explained that the rates increased to cover operating deficits and take care of future capital improvement needs. Selectman Brothers briefly highlighted the efforts that have been made by the water committee and the water department in the last three to five years to get the plant in proper working order. Selectman Lovett explained that the reserves have been used, and now need to be rebuilt. Chair Palm offered the analogy that the money has been taken out of the bank and used, and must now be replaced.

Chair Palm extended his thanks to the town employees for the efforts they put forward. Without the individual efforts, the last two to three years would have been much more difficult.

Selectman Brothers continues to see a reduction in revenues as a continuing challenge going forward. All departments were asked to look at ways to identify enhancing the revenue stream in

2010, and will continue to look at ways to do so during 2011. In addition, there has been a greater level of involvement in taxation at the school, county, and state level, because their decisions have a significant impact on municipalities and the total amount to be raised by taxation. The impacts of operating budgets and revenue streams from the county and state will require a lot of coordination and cooperation, and the public is invited to get involved.

Selectman Lovett makes an attempt to avoid talking about the tax rate because there are variables such as total valuation of property that are factored into the tax rate. The goal of the Board is to have the average tax bill the same. He inquired if tax revenue is coming in on time, and expressed appreciation to the taxpayers for the revenue the town needs to operate. The Town Manager told the Board that to date there has been no decrease or increase in the collection flow, and there has been no increase in the number of tax liens.

Selectman Torr motioned to close the public hearing at 6 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

- The first Energy Fair was an extremely successful event. The Energy Committee, volunteers, and staff members put a lot of time into planning the event. The Town Manager has received good feedback from residents that attended, including a very complimentary e-mail from Carol Gerkin, who has considerable experience in preparing events of this type.

- The license with Metrocast is up for renewal in two years, and the process for doing so begins now. The Town can take the informal track, in which they notify Metrocast they wish to keep them as a provider once a few details are worked out; or the formal track, in which the Town issues an RFP for the services. The Town Manager recommends that (a) the Board authorize him to pursue the formal track; and (b) the Board authorize him to engage counsel versed in telecommunications issues because the process is specific, and there are deadlines of a technical nature that must be met. The Town Manager will investigate the cost of engaging counsel, and update the Board on the findings. There was a general agreement among the Board that going through the formal process is in the best interest of the community, and that the Town Manager should proceed in that direction, subject to a cost estimate for legal counsel.

- The Board previously addressed a request from resident Brendon Morrison to improve the quality of the roadway at Huber and Drake Roads, which abut the Town of Sanbornton. Director of Public Works Mike Faller worked with his counterpart in Sanbornton to resolve the matter. It was agreed that the section in question will be overlaid by the Town of Sanbornton while they are performing roadwork on an intersecting road next year. Mr. Morrison will be notified of the solution in writing by both towns.

- The Winnepesaukee River Basin Project will meet on Wednesday morning at 8:30 at City Hall. The Town Manager will be attending as the municipal manager of one of the towns affected by the project. The discussion will surround the funding of the proposed UV system. The Town Manager and Water and Sewer Superintendent Dan Leonard maintain the position that the system is not needed at this time. The Director of the Program has asked each Town to confirm their representative on the Advisory Board. The Town Manager held the position informally during the time the Town was without a water and sewer supervisor. He supports the appointment of Dan Leonard as Meredith's representative on the Advisory Board. Chairman Palm suggested that the Town Manager be appointed as an alternate representative.

Selectman Lovett moved that Water and Sewer Superintendent Dan Leonard be appointed as the representative on the Winnepesaukee River Basin Advisory Board, and that Town Manager Philip Warren be appointed as an alternate. Seconded by Selectman Brothers. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

- Snow removal will begin tonight. There is no capacity for storage in the downtown area, so it will be transported out elsewhere. Snow accumulation will be reassessed after the next weather event. The Pond Hockey and Fishing Derby events will be considered when scheduling the next snow pick up.

- A public hearing to present the Warrant Articles for Town Meeting is scheduled for the February 7 Board meeting.

VISITOR'S AND RESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

Maggie Pritchard, Executive Director of Genesis Behavioral Health, thanked the Board for the support it has shown to the organization. Last year, 155 people from the Town of Meredith, 17 of which were in crises, accessed its services. The services provided to the residents of Meredith represent approximately \$12,000 in charity care.

SELECTMEN COMMENTS: (Reports on Committees 2nd meeting each month)

Selectman Brothers reported on the Local Energy Committee. The Energy Fair was the first attempt at local outreach, and exceeded all expectations. The event drew 300-400 visitors, 30 vendors, and 9 presenters. Those who attended were able to learn about immediate and long term opportunities to improve their energy efficiency and reduce costs. The prize winners were from near and far, demonstrating that there is widespread interest in the event. He thanked the staff for the wonderful work they did in creating the first event. An exit questionnaire was circulated in an attempt to gain input in terms of the direction for next year's event.

Selectman Brothers reported that the Planning Board is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, January 25. There appears to be an increase in activity since the lull of 2009. There are a number of projects in the area, including the downtown area that has come before the Board on a conceptual and planning approval basis.

Selectman Torr reported that the Waukegan Watershed Advisory Committee will meet on February 2 at 9 a.m. at the Town Hall Annex.

In her capacity as a state representative, Selectman Worsman updated the Board on the Finance Committee. The committee spent two weeks hearing from economists from the federal, state, and private sectors on the state of the economy, and where they see it heading for the next few years. In addition, she updated the Board in her capacity as a Belknap County delegate. She commended the County for the direction they have taken with personnel changes, including reducing positions in the nursing home, and reallocating positions for increased efficiencies, resulting in a decrease in salaries over a two year period of approximately \$400,000. Approximately \$200,000 was added back to this year's budget for step increases and COLAS. Selectman Worsman is having difficulty reconciling the 2011 budget proposal of \$32 million. She can generously come up with a \$29 million budget. At the county level, the budgets are considered department by department, and adjustments must be made by department. She is hoping for additional information that will explain what comprises the difference. She is not convinced that \$700,000 in federal stimulus money should be used to renovate the County

Complex. She supports the use of those fund for roof repairs, and mechanical work at the courthouse; however, it is her understanding that stimulus money can be used at any time in the future for any capital project, and knows that there are major repairs to the County Correction Facility on the horizon. A public hearing on the proposed budget is scheduled for February 7 at 1 p.m. A formal hearing on the finalized budget is scheduled for February 28 at 7 p.m.

Selectman Palm reported that the Water Study Committee recently met. It is compiling information to present to the Board of Selectmen on long range planning. The groundwater study is making good progress, and the consulting firm of Emory and Garrett will make a presentation to the Committee at its next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

The tentative date for the school roundtable meeting will be rescheduled for Wednesday, February 23, at 6 p.m. Selectman Worsman will invite Representative Bob Greenmore and Senator Jeannie Forrester to attend the meeting. If neither is available to attend, the meeting will be rescheduled. The goal of the roundtable meetings is to encourage dialogue between the school board, towns comprising the district, and the state House and Senate. The meetings will afford an opportunity to express to state representatives that local government does not need revenue cuts at the state level that will result in raising local taxation. The Town Manager will prepare an agenda for the meeting, which will include an update from representatives and senators on bills that will affect school funding or operations; and the goal at the local level to stop funding push downs from the state.

ADJOURNAMENT:

Selectman Brothers moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip L. Warren, Town Manager

Charles G. Palm, Chairman

Colette Worsman, Vice Chairman

Peter F. Brothers

Miller C. Lovett

Nathan J. Torr