

BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING
Minutes of December 5, 2011
5:30 p.m.

Selectmen:

Colette Worsman, Chairman
Peter F. Brothers, Vice Chairman
Miller C. Lovett
Nathan J. Torr
Herbert R. Vadney

Town Manager:

Phillip L. Warren

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chair Colette Worsman called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. She introduced the Board and Town Manager and made announcements pertaining to fire exits, listening assisted devices, the use of microphones, and cell phones.

ACCEPTANCE AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:

11 -59 Minutes of the November 7, 2011 Workshop and Regular Meeting.

Selectman Brothers moved to accept the minutes of the November 7, 2011 workshop and regular meeting, as presented. Seconded by Selectman Torr.

A correction will be made to Paula Trombley's name on page 5 of the workshop minutes.

All in favor. 5-0. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was reordered in accordance with the posting of public hearings.

11-60 Hearing - 5:30 - Acceptance of Funds per RSA 31:95-b III

In accordance with RSA 31:95-b, III, a notice of hearing was duly published announcing a public hearing for the purpose of accepting and appropriating unanticipated funds in the amount of \$16,483 through the award of a JAG grant.

Selectman Lovett motioned to open the public hearing at 5:30 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Torr. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Police Chief Kevin Morrill explained that Meredith has been awarded a JAG (Justice Assistance Grant) grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in the amount of \$16,483. JAG grants provide funding to assist state and local law enforcement to improve the functions of criminal justice. The amount awarded is based on crime data provided to the state. The Town was awarded the lowest amount available through the JAG program based on low crime rates. In 2009, the Towns within Belknap County agreed that the Belknap County Sheriff's department would write the grant with the stipulation that they receive 10% of funds awarded, for a total of \$1,648.00. Subsequently, a civil suit was filed by a group of local advocates against the arrangement. Ultimately, the Belknap County Superior Court ruled in favor of the County.

The Town put a proposal together for the purchase of several items:

- Seven computers for the police department.
- Storage area network (an upgrade to the server).
- Trunk organizer for one patrol vehicle.
- Projector and screen for training uses by various departments including the police department.
- One taser and accessories.

The grant proposal included the number of items proposed for purchase as well as their value. The County has informed that while the purchases must be within the general proposed areas, adjustments can be made to the number of items purchased as long as the total amount does not exceed the original estimate of combined value.

The Town Manager explained that the town does not have the level of crime to qualify for funds on its own. In addition, the application process is lengthy and staff time did not have to be devoted to the matter. In making the decision to apply for the grant through the county, consideration was given to the good working relationship the police department has had with the Belknap County sheriff's department. The total amount awarded to the County is \$217,000.

There were no questions from the public or Board regarding the acceptance of the JAG funds.

Selectman Vadney moved to accept the JAG funds as briefed by Chief Morrill. Seconded by Selectman Lovett. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Worsman declared the public hearing adjourned at 5:40 p.m. 5-0. All in favor.

11-61 Hearing - 5:40 - Cable TV Franchise Renewal Ascertainment

The Town Manager recited the hearing notice:

As part of the cable franchise renewal proceedings between the Town of Meredith and MetroCast, the current cable operator, the town will hold a public hearing to ascertain the future cable related needs and the interests of the community on December 5, 2011, at 5:45 p.m. at the Meredith Community Center, One Circle Drive. The members of the public and representatives of local organizations are invited to attend and provide information on the future cable related needs and interests of the community. The record will remain open until further notice following the hearing and written submissions are also welcome.

Selectman Torr motioned to open the public hearing on the ascertainment relating to the renewal of the cable franchise with MetroCast. Seconded by Selectman Vadney. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Chair explained that it is important to do a significant amount of research on the matter because once the town enters into an agreement with MetroCast, it will be bound to the terms of that agreement for a considerable period of time. The purpose of the hearing is to gather information for the negotiations that the town will soon engage in with MetroCast for the renewal of the cable franchise in the town of Meredith. The focus of the hearing is the future cable related needs and interests of the town of Meredith, its administration, public libraries, public schools, PEG access, and police and fire departments, as well as the future cable related needs and interests of the business community, other elements of the community, and the residents of the

town of Meredith. It is hoped that the hearings will create a comprehensive record of the vision as a community to support negotiations with MetroCast.

The Town Manager announced that anyone who is interested in serving on the cable TV advisory committee should contact his office at pwarren@meredith.org or by telephone at 677.4205. A volunteer application is posted on the website. Resident Bruce Reichlin is the sole member of the committee at this time. A questionnaire was presented to various groups in town with a request for written responses. The Town Manager has not received responses from all those solicited at this time.

The questions presented were:

Q: Would the job performance of government, staff, or community social service organizations be enhanced by an ability to provide information to subscribers of cable or other services provided by MetroCast?

A: Yes. The live broadcast is part of the negotiation process and it should be enhanced. Mr. Reichlin has ideas that will be presented to the consortium regarding the availability of PEG access and the expansion of such.

Q: Are we interested in producing video programming for viewing by Meredith residents?

A: Absolutely. It is done at Board workshops and meetings, and at some point the school should become actively involved in the process.

Q: Is there a technology plan in place for town administration that can be shared?

A: Yes. The long range Master Plan will be submitted as part of the record.

Q: Is there any way the administration of the governmental functions or facilities would be improved through the use of the cable system or is there any way to foresee such improvement taking place?

A: One of the Town Manager's personal goals is to see all town boards and committee meetings presented on cable, with the enhancement of some of them to live broadcasting if possible. Doing so would require a robust staff and a commitment to tape the meetings. The Town Manager can work with the school to develop this type of a program.

Q: Are there plans in place to utilize the cable system to provide governmental services, bill paying to the town, or obtaining certain types of licenses.

A: The procedure now takes place through the data system, which is not part of this discussion. The Town Manager is not aware of how that could be done through the cable television system.

Resident Bruce Reichlin, the sole member of the cable TV advisory committee, explained that there has been more of a demand for media and less of a demand for text, and that he predicts the trend will continue. As a result, it is important that school systems get involved in this process. The community he resided in previously had a curriculum in the school system for public broadcasting. He reviewed ways that teachers can incorporate the use of public broadcasting programs in assignments. For this to work, cable must be available to almost everybody in town,

or be made available at public places such as the community center or library. He believes that cable must be available to all residents for the betterment of children and the community.

The Town Manager commented that there is a concern regarding properties in town that don't have ready access to cable TV and the wiring and infrastructure for such. Mr. Reichlin explained that under the existing franchise agreement, if there are less than ten houses in a one-mile distance, MetroCast is not required to offer cable service. In addition, it is the responsibility of residents to solicit the interest of others in their area for cable access. The Town Manager suggested that as the cable committee evolves, it may wish to offer assistance on a yearly basis to those without cable service who wish to organize homes in their area.

In addition to complaints regarding access, many complaints are received about programming and rates. The Town Manager informed that there is absolutely nothing a municipality or franchisee can do related to public programming and rates.

Selectman Brothers suggested working with other communities to include language regarding the expansion of service areas over time. The Town Manager explained that is one of the reasons a consortium was formed, and that at this point the contract language is similar among the various communities who belong to the consortium. There is a common theme of concerns and extension agreements are among them. The consortium benefits from the retention of counsel that has represented many communities with cable franchise licenses.

The Chair pointed out that being able to work from home is becoming more and more critical, and there is a growing movement for home education. If those needs can be fostered, the community has gained.

Dialogue ensued regarding options for providing access, such as WI-FI or dish service. The Town Manager explained that the technology that exists at this time is costly or inefficient.

Resident Mark Abear lives in Chamung and has no cable service, but would like to. This is partly because MetroCast will only lay cable along the road, as opposed to cutting across open land. He suggested modeling the contract after the contract negotiated by the town of Sanbornton with its cable provider, which includes a requirement that cable service be provided to all homes in the contract area that desire service. He urged the Selectboard to negotiate for the same verbiage in the contract, and pointed out that the standard contract is an attempt to keep costs as low as possible. The Town Manager explained that Sanbornton is not part of the consortium, and that the consortium will move forward to model its own contract.

Resident Mel Lesburg has cable service, but inquired if it is possible to introduce competition into the system because the town is served by a provider that is not user friendly. The Town Manager explained that there is nothing in the current franchise agreement or the future agreement that would preclude competition, but that what is precluding competition is market share. The infrastructure that is in place is owned by MetroCast, and other providers cannot use that equipment. A much denser population would be necessary in order for another provider to consider wiring the entire town.

The Town Manager submitted questionnaires to the public and private school system and will follow up on the status of their replies tomorrow. Once they are received, they will become part of the record and a copy will be made available for the Board.

The concerns of the police and fire department are similar to the administrative concerns previously shared. The common goal is shared technology among all town departments. The ability to originate programming through LRPA out of the police and fire stations at some point in the future would be a plus, but would inquire an infrastructure upgrade. An inquiry was made as to whether there are plans at this time to construct a new police or fire substation. The answer is no.

Library:

A questionnaire was submitted to the Library Director.

- Plans exist in exploring the cable system.
- Currently, the distribution of library materials such as downloadable audio books, eBooks, and online magazines and newspapers is done via the cable internet system.
- The library provides access to online language learning software, health resources, and a genealogy database.
- Encyclopedia Britannica access will be soon be available online.
- There are digitally scanned books that are available through the state library.
- Plans exist for providing a dedicated space within the library which can be used to broadcast meetings, books, clubs, and presentations of a similar type or gatherings.
- A dedicated space is provided for accessing the internet via high speed internet on eight public terminals.
- The library pays for its wireless access connection, and receives the wired access free of charge.
- While it is hoped that the origination of local programming can be implemented in 2012, there is no dedicated space to do so in the library so another town facility might have to be considered.

Q: Has the library identified either through the technology plan or otherwise specialized telecommunications services or products they would like to see provided?

A: The library wishes to expand the ability to provide wireless access to the community throughout the building. The current system crashes frequently and there are certain parts of the building in wireless dead zones.

Q: Is there any way the administration of the library, functions, and facilities would be improved through the use of the cable system?

A: The library relies on cable access to run the integrated library system which is now hosted and maintained offsite. All staff and patrons must access the system via the internet, and at times the access can be slow, so a speedier connection would be helpful. At this time, a standard home connection is being provided free of charge.

Q: Do plans exist, or is there any interest in exploring the distribution of the UNH resources through the cable system?

A: Meredith public library is interested in all ways of providing education to the community. UNH is such a program, and the Library is interested in exploring it.

Q: Are there plans to acquire training for the production of programming for the public access channel?

A: The library may be interested in learning how to record programs for public access such as computer workshops, book talks, and early childhood education classes.

The Town Manager thanked Ann Butler of the Library Board of Trustees for responding to the questionnaire and providing the technology plan to assist in the ascertainment process.

Chamber of Commerce and GMP:

There were no representatives of either group in attendance. The Town Manager will contact each to inquire whether they are interested in submitting written comment before December 30. Any comments will be inserted into the written record.

The Chair solicited additional input from community members and reiterated that it is an important part of the ascertainment process. The Town Manager informed that the record will remain open until December 30 and written comment received until that time will be included as part of the record.

Dialogue ensued regarding the avenues being used for generating interest in the Cable TV advisory committee, including the use of the weekly message and personal telephone calls. There are no technical background requirements to serve on the committee, just an interest in the community. The committee is in the formation phase at this time and has not met as an entity or with other towns in the consortium. The Town Manager and Mr. Reichlin will attend the consortium meeting scheduled for January 26. The charge for the community is to submit questionnaires before that time so those discussions can be an integral part of the process.

The Chair summarized by thanking those in attendance and clarified that the goal is to get the best product possible for the citizens of Meredith and that their input is very important in accomplishing that goal.

Selectman Brothers motioned to conclude the public portion of the hearing and to keep the record open until December 30. Seconded by Selectman Torr. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Town Manager made a recommendation to appoint Bruce Reichlin as Meredith's representative to the LRPA Board of Directors with the stipulation that there will be a six-month time limit on the appointment. At this time, the concerns are more administrative than with programming, and Mr. Reichlin is well qualified for the position. The Board accepted the recommendation and appreciates Mr. Reichlin's service to his community. An individual is being sought with experience in programming to serve as an alternate, with the assumption that the individual will be Mr. Reichlin's successor. The Town Manager will get the word out in the Weekly Message.

The Chair thanked the public for its input, and especially Mr. Reichlin for his assistance.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

- It is anticipated that the docks for Cattle Landing will arrive this week and installation can begin.

- The Childs Park project is nearing the winter shut down. A wood carpet is being applied to the playground area and the ice skating rink will be used this winter. A water heater was installed to resurface the ice rink. Fencing for the playground and baseball field was installed, and old fencing that is not needed was removed. The baseball field will be finished and the basketball court resurfaced in the spring.
- The annual holiday open house and tree lighting was held last night. All holiday lighting is with LED bulbs.
- MetroCast has asked for a 30-day extension in returning the recent questionnaire that was submitted to them. The Town Manager is inclined to grant the request to ensure the responses are complete and thoughtful. Other communities and the consortium have received similar requests, and no one has voiced an objection to the extension.
- There was a bloom of blue-green bacteria on Lake Waukegan in the area of the boat ramp, which is not the area of intake. A further study of the cause needs to be done. Selectman Torr solicited the public's help in identifying the source of the problem

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

The Chair announced that the Board held budget discussions at the workshop preceding the meeting, and is now ready to finish deliberations and put the finishing touches on the budget so it can be brought to the budget hearing.

Selectman Vadney announced that the water committee is meeting on Thursday, and will hopefully be very close to the approval of the final report. In addition, the dedication of the memorial trees in Meredith Center was well attended and executed, particularly by resident Holly Tetreault who organized the project.

Selectman Torr announced that the Waukegan Watershed Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday at 8 a.m. and the Energy Committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday at 7 p.m. In addition, he complimented the town crew on the trimming of trees around town and pointed out that doing so will prevent electricity interruptions when wires go down.

ADJOURNMENT:

Selectman Brothers moved to adjourn the meeting at 6.30pm. Seconded by Selectman Vadney. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Phillip L. Warren, Town Manager

Colette Worsman, Chairman

Peter F. Brothers, Vice Chairman

Miller C. Lovett

Nathan J. Torr

Herbert R. Vadney