

SELECTMEN'S WORKSHOP
Minutes of 01-26-09
4:00 p.m.

Selectmen:

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman
Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman
Robert C. Flanders
Charles G. Palm
Colette Worsman

Co-Interim Town Managers:

John C. Edgar
Brenda L. Vittner

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He introduced the Board, Co-Interim Town Managers, and the Recording Clerk. He asked those in attendance to silence their cell phones. Selectman Flanders arrived at 4:10 p.m.

The purpose of the Workshop is to allow the Board the opportunity to review the draft 2009 Warrant Articles.

ARTICLE 1: To bring your ballots for: Selectman – Two (2) for Three (3) years; Trustee of Trust Funds – One (1) for Three (3) years; and Library Trustees – Four (4) for Three (3) years.

ARTICLE 2: Are you in favor of the adoption of Amendment No. 1 as proposed by the Planning Board for the Meredith Zoning Ordinance.

Article 2 will clarify a provision in the Ordinance that sets forth what to do when a zoning line bisects a piece of property. Minor textual changes suggested by counsel at a recent hearing are being incorporated in the Article. John Edgar will provide a copy of the Article to the Board once it is available.

ARTICLE 3: Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB 2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Town of Meredith on the second Tuesday of March?

A petitioned Warrant Article to adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13, known as SB 2, was received five days after Town Meeting last year. SB 2 allows for the official ballot voting on all issues before the Town on the second Tuesday of March. Chair Brothers suggested reviewing an updated handout prepared by Lou Kahn setting forth the pros and cons of SB 2 at the upcoming candidate's night.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to donate or sell a .27 acre piece of property located on the corner of Westbury Road and Neal Shore Road and identified in the Town's tax maps as Map U1-Lot 1A, on such terms and conditions as the Board of Selectmen may negotiate.

The Town has been approached by at least two non-profit agencies interested in developing the property at the corner of Westbury Road and Neal Shore Road for affordable housing. Although the Town identified the property as a site for affordable housing, it has the option of selling the property on the open market. A Warrant Article must come before the voters in order to convey the property to an organization specializing in affordable housing. If approved, the governing body (Board of Selectmen) will determine the terms and conditions of the conveyance. The assessed value is approximately \$40,000. The Board would like additional information regarding the cost of developing the property, including relocating power lines. The Town identified affordable housing as a priority, but there are concerns that it is not a good time to donate property that could generate additional revenues.

Leonard Campbell, President of Habitat for Humanity explained how the organization operates. Families in a designated income bracket are selected to purchase a modest home based on ability to pay, willingness to partner, and need for affordable housing. Habitat serves as the developer, builder, and lender for the property. He explained the terms of the mortgages, including mechanisms to completely recapture the value of the building in the event it is sold within a certain time span. The family buying the house pays taxes to the Town.

Chair Brothers spoke in favor of delaying a decision on the disposition of the property in order to further consider the alternatives. There was a consensus among the remaining Board members that the wording of the Article should be broadened so the Board has more options in disposing of the property. Dialogue ensued regarding the wording of the Article. The final Article will be crafted by the Co-Interim Town Managers.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b) to authorize the conservation commission to expend funds for contributions to ‘qualified organizations’ for the purchase of property interest, or facilitating transactions related thereto, where the property interest is to be held by the qualified organization and the Town will retain no interest in the property?

Conservation Commission members John Sherman and Don McFarland explained the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(b) to the Board. If authorized by the Town, Article 5 will allow the Conservation Commission to expend funds to a qualified organization within the context of the IRS Code for the purchase of property where the Town will not retain stewardship of the property. Qualified organizations such as the Lakes Region Conservation Trust charge in advance for monitoring an easement and paying future legal fees. The fee for a 50-acre piece of property is typically \$10,000. Towns do not assess a charge for monitoring an easement, however, there are some donors who do not feel that a Town has the same resources or experience as a qualified organization. If a donor does not wish to grant an easement to the Town, or pay the qualified agency, the property could be in danger of not being conserved. Passage of Article 5 will allow the Town to contribute to the costs of acquiring conservation land without being responsible for monitoring the property. A public hearing is required prior to the use of the funds. Selectman Worsman is in favor of deferring the adoption of the Article until it can be implemented for a specific conservation easement. There was a general consensus among the remaining Board members to include the Article on the Warrant.

ARTICLE 6: Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a,I(a) to authorize the conservation commission to expend funds to purchase interest in land outside the boundaries of our municipality, subject to the approval of the local governing body?

Conservation Commission members John Sherman and Don McFarland explained the provisions of RSA 36-A:4-a, I(a) to the Board. If Article 6 is authorized by the Town, it will allow the Conservation Commission to expend funds for a project in another community. The purchase of land outside the jurisdiction of the Town of Meredith would be subject to approval by the Board of Selectmen. As an example, the Article will allow the Town to invest in properties outside its jurisdiction that are relative to the health of the Lake Waukewan. Selectman Worsman is opposed to investing in a property that does not lie within the Town's boundaries. She is concerned with the cost of ongoing maintenance, as well as hidden and legal costs. There was a general consensus among the remaining Board members to include the Article on the Warrant.

ARTICLE 7: Leavitt Trust Fund Expenditures

Awaiting language from legal counsel.

Article 7 designates the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend funds from a trust established under the terms of the will of Thomas Leavitt in 1923. The trust is funded with proceeds from timber cuts on property that was owned by Mr. Leavitt. The trust dictates that funds in the trust can only be used for relief for the poor and maintenance of schools, excepting Meredith Village. The cemetery lots of John and Sarah Leavitt have been maintained in accordance with the will.

Selectman Flanders motioned to adjourn the Workshop to move into a Regular Meeting at 4:50 p.m. The Workshop will reconvene at the conclusion of the Regular Meeting. Seconded by Selectman Lovett. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Workshop reconvened at 6:12 p.m.

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to modify the previously adopted provision of RSA 72:62, the solar energy exemption from property tax, to adjust the exemption so that it is equal to the cost, including installation of the solar energy system up to \$20,000 in value.

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to modify the previously adopted provision of RSA 72:66, the wind energy exemption from property tax, to adjust the exemption so that it is equal to the cost, including installation of the wind energy system up to \$20,000 in value.

Solar and wind power energy systems exemptions were adopted by Town Meeting in 1978. The 1978 Article allows for an exemption in an amount equal to the increase in assessed valuation resulting from installation of said system. Properties in Meredith are not assessed for an increase in value for solar powered water systems at this time. The exemption is currently based on the cost of installing the new system. Article 8 reflects the current method of applying the

exemption. In order to deter large scale wind or solar operations, Assessor Commerford recommends a cap in the amount of \$20,000 that will be reviewed on a periodic basis.

ARTICLES 10: To see if the Town will vote to create an Expendable Trust Fund under the provisions of RSA 31:19-a, to be known as the Groundwater Source Study Expendable Trust, for the purpose of studying the possible alternatives for water sources within the Town of Meredith, and to appropriate the sum of Twenty Six Thousand Dollars (\$26,000.00) toward this purpose and to appoint the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend.

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to create an Expendable Trust Fund under the provisions of RSA 31:19-a, to be known as the Parks & Recreation Facilities Improvements Expendable Trust Fund, for the purpose of improvements to the Parks & Recreation Facilities within the Town of Meredith, and to appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000.00) toward this purpose and to appoint the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend.

Articles 10 and 11 provide for establishing two new Expendable Trust Funds. The funding of the ETF for the groundwater study will be funded by the water department (\$39,000) and the general fund (\$26,000). The funding reflects a 60/40 split for one half of the first phase of the groundwater study. The cost of establishing the two ETF's are included in the budget.

ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to withdraw One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) from the Downtown Parking Expendable Trust Fund to be returned to the General Fund as a revenue.

Withdraw \$100,000 from the Downtown Parking Fund ETF, to be returned to the General Fund as revenue for 2009. The balance of the Fund will be reduced to \$250,000. The wording of Article 17 will be reviewed by the Department of Revenue Administration and counsel. Dialogue ensued regarding utilization of remaining funds in the ETF. The Board agreed that it is critical to convey to the public that the transfer of the funds is paramount to the projected budget.

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000.00) to be added to the Water Improvements Expendable Trust Fund previously established. The Board of Selectmen are agents to expend.

Although water system has significant needs, the Water Committee has not identified specific needs. The recommended amount is to fund an ETF in anticipation of the priorities that will become more clearly identified in the months ahead.

ARTICLE 14: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Five Thousand Dollars (\$35,000.00) to be added to the Waterfront Infrastructure Trust previously established. The Board of Selectmen are agents to expend.

Cattle Landing has been identified as a priority for the Waterfront Infrastructure Trust.

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000.00) to be added to the Main Street Rehabilitation Expendable Trust previously established. The Board of Selectmen are agents to expend.

The contribution to the ETF will bring the balance to \$50,000. The Board agrees that it is appropriate to fund some of the soft costs for the project. It is not known when the work on Main Street will begin.

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000.00) to be added to the Employee Benefits Expendable Trust Fund previously established. The Board of Selectmen are agents to expend.

The Employee Benefits ETF is utilized for retirements and unfunded liabilities for the Town. The funding represents approximately one-half of the total unfunded liability for this year.

ARTICLE 17: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Sixty Thousand Dollars (\$60,000.00) to improve various town roads that are eligible for 2:1 matching funds from the State Aid Reconstruction Program, contingent upon the receipt of Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) of that amount from the State, with the balance of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) to be raised by taxation.

\$60,000 worth of roadwork throughout the Town is eligible for 2:1 matching funds from the state aid reconstruction programs (\$40,000 from the state, \$20,000 to be raised by taxation). The Board agrees that it is important to leverage our money with state money to fund road projects. Mr. Edgar will investigate the State's ability to provide matching funds for road projects. The balance of the fund is roughly \$300,000. The Board posed questions regarding the state's ability to fund the reconstruction program. Mr. Edgar will investigate the matter.

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Four Thousand, Eight Hundred and Five dollars and fifty six cents (\$24,805.56 for the necessary expenses from the Cable Franchise Fee Special Revenue Fund. RSA 31:93-c allows municipalities to appropriate from a specific source for specific purposes.

The special revenue fund was set up to receive funds from the cable franchise fee to cover expenses including Lakes Region Public Access and upgrades to broadcasting equipment.

ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twelve Million, Four Hundred Forty Three Thousand, Eight Hundred Sixteen Dollars and ninety seven cents, (\$12,443,816.97) for the necessary operational expenses of the Town for the ensuing year's budget. This amount does not include all of the amounts raised and appropriated in previous warrant articles.

The 2009 budget is \$250,420 less than the 2008 budget, for a 1.94% decrease. Ms. Vittner reviewed the changes made by the Board that had a significant impact on the bottom line of the budget.

Dialogue ensued regarding how the budget will affect the average tax bill. It is imperative that the public is aware that expenditures have been limited in an attempt to keep the average tax bill more or less level. The Board has been cognizant of reducing the budget as much as possible without unduly affecting the budget in the upcoming years. If revenues are lower than projected, additional changes will have to be made to keep the tax bill level. Selectman Lovett requested a quarterly update on revenues over the course of 2009.

A public hearing on the budget will be held on Monday, February 2, at 5:30 p.m. at the Community center.

Selectman Flanders motioned to move into a non-public meeting under 91-A:3 II(c) at 7 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. Selectmen polled. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Edgar, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

Brenda L. Vittner, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Robert C. Flanders

Charles G. Palm