

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
Minutes of 06/01/2009
5:35 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
(Absent with Notice) Brenda L. Vittner

Recording Clerk:

Karin Landry

Call to Order: Chairman Peter Brothers called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. He introduced the Board, Co-Interim Town Managers, 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:

W 09-30 Minutes of the May 18, 2009 Workshop, Regular Meeting, and Non-Public Meeting

Selectman Flanders moved to accept the minutes of the May 18, 2009 Workshop, Regular Meeting, and Non-Public Meeting. Seconded by Selectman Palm. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

INTERIM TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

- The annual benefits fair was held today. The fair provides employees with an opportunity to gather additional information on health and dental coverage, and retirement benefits. Co-Interim Town Manager John Edgar thanked the staff for their efforts in making the fair a success.
- The Meredith Rotary Club has scheduled a clean up of Meredith Bay on Saturday, June 6. Volunteers and Rotary Club members will work for a few hours in the morning to pull debris from the Lake. The Town's Pubic Works Department will assist with disposing of the material pulled from the Lake.
- The Town of Meredith, together with all Towns, has an obligation to provide opportunities for septage dumping. The Town typically contracts with the Plymouth Village Water and Sewer District, as well as the Winnepesaukee River Basin, as an opportunity for haulers that are taking waste generated from Meredith to licensed facilities. A routine renewal agreement with the Plymouth Village District was placed in

each Selectman's signature folder. Mr. Edgar is available to answer questions regarding the matter.

- The Parks & Recreation Department won the photo contest at the annual New Hampshire Parks & Recreation dinner that was held last week. The photograph, by Grace Ainsworth, is entitled "Hands across Generations" and depicts students from the after school program working with seniors to piece together a quilt of their hand tracings. The quilt will be on display in the arts and crafts room of the community center in the near future.

VISITOR'S AND RESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

Resident Jim Hughes reiterated his comments at the previous two Board meetings regarding the placement of portable restrooms at Hesky Park and the Waukevan boat launch ramp. He asked that signage be displayed so the public knows where the portable restrooms are located. In addition, he mentioned that the new bathroom facilities at Lake Waukevan are not always open at their scheduled opening time of 6 a.m. Chair Brothers told Mr. Hughes that the new Town Manager will be investigating portable restrooms at Hesky Park. To his knowledge, the new facilities are closed by the police department in the evenings to avoid vandalism, and reopened in the morning. He would like to be informed if this isn't the case.

SELECTMENS COMMENTS:

Selectman Flanders reported that the Open House at the new fire station was a huge success. The Town has a beautiful facility at a reasonable price. He thanked those who served on the Advisory Committee and the Fire Department for their efforts in making the project a success.

NEW BUSINESS:

09-31 Smyth/Kahn Easement - Action

The Board held an extensive workshop earlier in the afternoon regarding the intricacies of granting the Barbara R. Smyth Conservation Easement. Mr. Edgar gave an overview of his Staff Report for the benefit of those who did not attend the workshop.

In early May, there was dialogue with Lou Kahn regarding the possibility of accepting a conservation easement on approximately 150 acres in recognition of his wife, Bobbie's desire to have land donated for permanent conservation and protection. As a result of an agreement in principle that was developed at that time, Mr. Edgar, with the leadership of the Conservation Committee, worked on the necessary legal documents to effectuate the agreement.

The subject property lies adjacent to the Hamlin and Eames Town Forests. The land consists of two lots which total 150 acres. The proposed conservation easement would encumber a majority of two lots of record located west of Lake Wickwas and South of NH 104:

- Tax Map R-19, Lot 1, 131 acres, undeveloped, in current use

- Tax Map R-19, Lot 13, 19 acres, developed with a single family dwelling, balance in current use.

The public will benefit from the conservation easement through the environmental benefits associated with the preservation of the property. As a result of this conservation initiative, there will be an aggregate of approximately 700 acres of contiguous conserved area, including the Hamlin and Eames Town Forests, together with a previous donation from Mr. Kahn. An additional public benefit is the value of the scenic views. The easement expressly provides for public access that will interconnect the Hamlin trail system to the Eames trail system. Details of the final connection will be set forth in an agreement between Mr. Kahn and the Conservation Commission.

The Conservation Commission appointed Don MacFarland as Chairman, and John Sherman and Ralph Pisapia as point persons to review the drafts and work out the details with Mr. Kahn. Mr. Edgar coordinated the legal review. All recommendations set forth in Attorney Mattson's letter dated May 29, 2009, have been incorporated in the final draft of the Agreement.

The property is to be donated to the Town of Meredith, with no direct acquisition costs to the Town. The monetary value associated with the land has not been determined. According to the Assessing Department, both lots are in current use, so the easement will not have a negative impact on the existing tax base. The Town will absorb the costs associated with the legal review and recording of the easement and mylar documents, which are approximately \$2,750.00

The Conservation Commission will assume stewardship responsibilities for this property, as it has with the adjacent properties.

The Chair summarized by saying that this is a wonderful opportunity for the Town of Meredith, particularly because it will tie together approximately 700 acres into a contiguous conservation easement, rivaling Page Pond in terms of size. It is through the efforts of dedicated individuals that have worked with the Conservation Commission on numerous smaller projects over the past 5-10 years, and the generosity of Lou Kahn and Bobbie Smyth, that the conservation easement is coming to fruition. He thanked Lou and Bobbie for their generous, considerate contributions to conservation and the way of life it will permit in Meredith, and expressed regrets that Bobbie is not alive to share the moment.

Selectman Palm motioned that, in light (1) of the significant public benefits that will be afforded to the Town of Meredith through the proposed conservation easement, (2) the unanimous vote of the Conservation Commission to approve the wording of the Conservation Easement Deed; and (3) a favorable review by Attorney Lee W. Mattson on the Town's behalf, I move the Board of Selectmen vote to accept the proposed conservation easement for the Barbara R. Smyth Conservation Area, so called, and further, that the Board of Selectmen authorize either of the Interim Co-Town Managers to sign routine closing documents. Seconded by Selectman Lovett. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

09-32 Presentation by Belknap County Commissioners

The Meredith Board hosted the first of a series of eleven “County Conversations” with the Belknap County Commissioners. Two of the three Commissioners attended the meeting, Chairman Christopher Boothby of Meredith, and Vice Chairman Ed Philpot of Laconia. A number of the members of the County Delegation were also in attendance. The purpose of the presentation was to offer a primer on county government, and to give the Board and residents the opportunity to express their views on the roll of county government.

The presentation included:

- An overview of the elected officials at the county level
- The relationship between the Delegation, Commissioners, Selectmen, and the taxpayers
- A breakdown of the property tax bill
- Timing of the county budget Process
- County cash flow
- Determination of amount to be raised by taxes
- Apportionment
- Your Town’s share
- Percent of total county valuation
- County responsibilities
- Departments of the county
- Nursing home costs
- HB 2

Chair Brothers opened by saying he believes a good job has been done to control expenses at the town and county level, and that the real issue is a decrease in revenues. Revenue strains must be maintained at the state and federal level, or the opportunity must be given at the local level to make up the difference. Worthwhile organizations such as Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid and Genesis cannot be efficient or affordable without county support.

Selectman Flanders spoke in support of Lakes Region Mutual Fire Aid. The organization provides public health and safety, which trumps everything else. If the program is not funded at the county level, and one community refuses to meet the obligation to fund the program, public health and safety could be jeopardized. The Commissioners do not dispute that LRMFA is a valuable service. They are focusing their energy on attempting to identify the most efficient, economical, and effective way of funding programs deemed necessary by the Commissioners and county. 50% of the program budget comes from Towns outside the county, 100% of the remaining budget is funded by the county. Dialogue ensued regarding alternative levels of funding.

Selectman Palm suggested implementing a similar program for the police department in order to minimize overlapping duties.

Selectman Worsman would like a more intimate knowledge of the county budget. She would like to be able to review the proposed budget earlier in the process, in order to make more knowledgeable decisions. If revenues are down, the budget must be reduced to match the

revenues so taxpayers at the local level are paying no more than last year. She pointed out that services that are available at no cost are often times abused.

Dialogue ensued regarding the impact on county tax dollars over time for the funding of 100% of non-federal nursing care. The funding currently has a very significant impact on the tax bill.

Selectman Lovett suggested a county wide evaluation of human service agencies. If funding of agencies is cut, it will result in greater inefficiencies in the civic system. He asked that communities be involved in identifying the justifiable claims on the county, and how they will be funded. The county must provide leadership in establishing a new paradigm by which county assets will be taken care of. Once a restructuring is complete, the legislature would be approached to make changes.

Dialogue ensued regarding healthcare and the rate at which it is growing. A way must be found to more effectively contain the rising costs of healthcare.

Resident Jim Hughes asked the Commissioners for improved communication with the public.

Resident Don Ewing does not support making long term commitments. He believes that services provided by the county should be paid for by the county, and services provided by the state should be paid for by the state. It is more cost effective to provide for services at a lower level.

Resident John Moulton, who has ties to an outside agency, agrees that the Commissioner's communication fees need improvement, and endorses Selectman Lovett's summation. He urged caution in evaluating the accountability of outside agencies, and how they are funded. Challenging agencies in terms of funding will not lead to efficiencies in their operation.

John Hodsdson of the Belknap County Conservation District asked the Commissioners for the continued support of the District. He highlighted the work of the District and asked the Commissioner not to be penny wise and pound foolish.

Resident Peter Russell, a Board member of an outside agency, pointed out that the county has provided many leadership programs, and asked them not to move backwards. He is concerned that lack of county funding would force agencies to close their doors, resulting in an increase in crime and other undesirable activity. He urged the Commissioner to act now, because it will be too late to solve the problem at that point.

In closing, the Chair thanked the County Commissioners and state representatives from the County Delegation for taking the time to hear the views of the Board and residents and answer their questions.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Selectman Flanders motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Worsman. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board moved into a non-public meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II(e) after a short break.

Respectfully submitted,

John C. Edgar, Co-Interim Town Mgr.

Peter F. Brothers, Chairman

Karin Landry, Recording Clerk

Miller C. Lovett, Vice Chairman

Robert C. Flanders

Charles G. Palm

Colette Worsman