

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
Minutes of 07-20-09
5:45 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 5:45 p.m. He introduced the Board, Co-Interim Town Managers, and the Recording Clerk, and made announcements pertaining to fire exits, listening assisted devices, microphones, and cell phones.

ACCEPTANCE AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:

09-40 Minutes of the June 22 and June 29 Workshops, July 6 Regular Meeting, and the June 29, July 2, and July 6 Non-Public Meetings.

Selectman Palm motioned to accept the minutes of the June 22 and June 29 Workshops, the July 6 Regular Meeting, and the June 29, July 2, and July 6 Non-Public Meetings. Seconded by Selectman Flanders.

Selectman Palm proposed the following changes:

The June 22 Workshop minutes, page 2, paragraph 3, sentence 7, should read: "Selectman Worsman wants to be certain that there will be snowmobile access *on* the property."

The signature page of the July 6 Board meeting should include a signature line for the Co-Interim Town Managers. The signature line for the former Town Manager should be deleted.

Selectman Worsman seconded the proposed changes.

Selectman Lovett abstained from voting on the minutes of the June 22 Workshop because he was not in attendance.

June 22 Workshop, as amended. 4-0-1. Motion passed.

June 29 Workshop, July 6 Regular Meeting, and June 29, July 2, and July 6 Non-Public Meetings. 5-0. All in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

INTERIM TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

- Resident Kay Kennelly passed away today. Kay served as a checklist volunteer at many of the Town Meetings. Chair Brothers expressed condolences to Kay's family, and conducted a moment of silence in her memory. He expressed thanks to Kay for her service to the Town of Meredith.
- The new Town Manager and Executive Assistant will be located in the Town Hall, where they will be far more available. The GIS person and Conservation Commission will be moved to the Town Hall Annex.
- The Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day is this Saturday during the a.m. hours at the Public Works Department. The exact hours are posted on the website and calendar. Collection ceases once capacity has been reached.
- The Antique and Classic Boat Show will be at the Town Docks this weekend.

VISITOR'S AND RESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

None

SELECTMENS COMMENTS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:**09-41 AMC Dock Agreement – Approval**

The Board held two workshops regarding the Appalachian Mountain Club's (AMC) request. A draft agreement was reviewed at the workshop prior to this meeting. Co-Interim Town Manager John Edgar highlighted the matter. The Town has had public dock regulations since 1984 that prohibit commercial use of the docks. The current ordinance allows the Town Manager to grant permission for commercial operations or enterprises to use public docks and notes that "permission is granted for good cause shown." Article IV, Section 26-201. The AMC owns 3-Mile Island and two adjacent smaller islands in Lake Winnepesaukee. They approached the Town with a desire to acquire mainland property for the purpose of establishing parking for the camp. Doing so will help alleviate congestion issues at the existing public boat launch and parking area. AMC acknowledges that although they are not-for-profit, the Town may consider the activities at the camp as being a commercial operation or enterprise in that they provide access to the camp for the general public as well as AMC members.

Following the June 15 Workshop on the matter, a written permission document was developed and shared with the AMC. Once a few minor changes were incorporated into the document, it was forwarded to legal counsel for review. A few minor changes suggested by legal counsel were incorporated into the document.

Selectman Palm moved that pursuant to the provisions set forth in Town ordinance, specifically, Article IV Section 26-201, the Board of Selectmen grant to the Appalachian Mountain Club permission for their camp at Three-Mile Island to use the public docks at Lovejoy Landing based upon good cause shown, and further that the Board execute the document entitled "Permission for the Appalachian Mountain Club to Use the Public Docks Located at Lovejoy Landing" dated 7/15/09 to memorialize this decision. Seconded by Selectman Worsman.

Selectman Palm pointed out that AMC's intent to acquire additional land for its own parking facility should help to eliminate problems in the existing area and provide additional parking for Shep Brown's workers and boat storage. Doing so will provide long-term benefit to the congested area.

The Chair added that the AMC has a long established historical fact pattern of unique usage. Part of the Board's consideration for entering into the agreement is their demonstrated ability over time to be good neighbors and be considerate of the amount of traffic, parking, and other impacts on the public facility. He thanked the group for coming forward in the spirit of cooperation and hopes to go forward with good faith attempts and standards in dealing with issues of public facilities at Lovejoy Sands.

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

The Agreement will be placed in the Board's signature box for signature.

09-42 Six Month Financial Update

Co-Interim Town Manager and Director of Administrative Services Brenda Vittner presented the six-month financial update. Revenues continue to be the biggest issue. The revenue estimates were lowered when the 2009 budget was prepared. The Governor's budget provides for a block grant in the amount of \$190,000, no revenue sharing block grant, and rooms and meals taxes that will be held at what the Town received last year, \$259,508. The Board has control over what can be spent. Over \$450,000 worth of items are on hold at the present time.

The Conservation Commission applied for a scenic byways grant when the Longridge Farm property was purchased. The Town has been notified that it has been awarded that grant in the amount of \$84,500, which will improve the bottom line for 2009. Motor vehicle registrations have had an impact. \$1,225,000 was budgeted for 2009. As of the end of June, \$608,000 has been collected, less than half the amount budgeted. In 2008, there were approximate revenues in the amount of \$1,250,000 for motor vehicle registrations.

Ms. Vittner believes that the estimates for 2009 are accurate and that everything is on target to make the estimates when the tax rate is set.

Every department has held on spending. A few items including general assistance and debt service are at more than 50% as of the end of June. Debt Service and municipal insurance payments for the year were due July 1 so they are expended at more than 50%. Salaries and wages are at 46% spent. This is a reflection of holds on part time positions and savings in the Town Manager and Administrative Assistant positions, as well as various items related to those positions.

There will be a change in the way the New Hampshire Retirement System is budgeted. The Town received a notice from LGC regarding a proposed lawsuit regarding downshifting of the state's retirement to municipalities. The Town will have to cover an estimated \$7,500 - \$10,000. In addition, medical subsidies must be factored into original estimates made in October. The Town is making their payments under protest. The new rates for the Retirement System have been incorporated into the budget.

Ms. Vittner provided the Board with an updated list of potential budget savings.

Salaries and Wages: Some department heads chose not to take a COLA, and there were savings under the Town Manager and Administrative Assistant salaries and seasonal hires, amounting to \$91,000 in savings at year end. Savings in that amount should be realized if the current path is continued.

Municipal Administration: A contingency of \$30,000 is on hold. The janitorial and flower contracts have been renegotiated at \$5,000 each.

Equipment: A police cruiser and solid waste trailer are on hold.

Highway: \$250,000 in supplies and paving are on hold.

Additional added costs identified: Retirement System and repair to retaining wall at Town Hall Annex (appropriated \$25,000).

Winnepesaukee River Basin: Notice was received that we will get a credit in the amount of \$10,871 based on administrative costs and operations and management. That amount will be a savings to the Water & Sewer Department.

Ms. Vittner recommends that funds be released to purchase the police cruiser. The cruiser that will be replaced has 140,000 miles and is experiencing significant mechanical problems. Now is the time to begin any paving that will be done this year. The Board must identify the paving priorities.

Ms. Vittner recommends keeping \$200,000 on hold through year end in the event revenue estimates bottom out at the end of the third quarter. If 2009 estimates come in as projected, the tax rate should be between \$4.00 and \$4.01, a three to four cent increase over 2008.

Selectman Lovett stated that the goal of the Board is to have the average tax bill no higher than last year. Assessments will be a major factor driving the tax rate. It is important in this time of recession to fulfill the Board's promise to keep the tax bills level. He prefers to see a lower tax bill than last year's rather than higher. The budget must be managed well as we move forward in order to do so. He solicited comments from the other Selectmen regarding the matter.

Ms. Vittner pointed out that the County portion of the tax bill will go up, and that the Town has no control over that increase. There is no control over school and state education monies. If the municipal tax rate is kept the same or less, the Board will have met their goal of keeping that portion stable.

Mr. Edgar believes that the issue is how much is spent, and how much of that amount can be offset by non-property tax revenue. He agrees with Ms. Vittner's suggestion to continue to put a hold on \$200,000 in expenditures and monitor revenues through the end of the third quarter. The focus should be on the amount of the tax bill, not the tax rate. While the tax base cannot be projected, the appropriations can be managed.

Selectman Worsman agrees. The Board must keep an eye on the amount raised by taxation and other forms of revenue, minus expenses. The revenue estimates appear to be coming in close to projections.

Selectman Palm suggests cutting back on the release of funds for paving. There are a couple of potential looming problems that include general assistance. He suggests cutting the suggested amount of \$100,000 in half at this time. He is not comfortable with the way the utility projections are lining up with the original budget, and would like to review the details in a workshop. In addition, paving priorities should be discussed at a workshop in order to begin the work a little sooner. He supports releasing funds for the purchase of a new police cruiser.

Dialogue ensued regarding the collection of boat taxes. They are \$15,000 below projected estimates. Ms. Vittner told the Board that while the collection of boat taxes might slow down for the remainder of the season, they will continue to be collected through August or September.

There was a general consensus among the Board that the road projects should be reviewed at the workshop scheduled for August 3. The cost benefit analysis for Batchelder Hill Road will also be reviewed at that time. Although Selectman Worsman prefers to review the criteria for selecting road projects before authorizing any road projects, all the information will not be available until the September workshop. Public Works Director Mike Faller will be part of the conversation regarding road projects.

Selectman Flanders would like more information on how road projects will be chosen, even if the details of the entire system have not been worked out.

The Chair acknowledges the concerns of the Board members, and is particularly sympathetic to having prioritizations laid out before moving forward. He is concerned that if some funds for paving are not released, an opportunity for cost savings will be lost because there are pricing benefits to the current market. If the Board is comfortable moving forward on the road projects

that have been identified at the workshop, they will have the option to do so. Any questions that the Board would like to have addressed at the workshop should be forwarded to Mr. Edgar as soon as possible.

There was a general consensus among the Board that the funds for the police cruiser should be released.

The Chair requested more information on utilities, including electric, propane and diesel.

Dialogue ensued regarding the interim bonding rate, which is a 3.3%. The long-term bonds are at approximately 4.25%.

The Chair reiterated that it is important for the Board to become familiar with the county, school, and state portions of the budget, and to share the information with others. The next County Commissioners meeting will be a follow up to the meetings with municipalities. It is scheduled for Wednesday, August 12, at 6 p.m. at the county complex. He thanked Ms. Vittner and her staff for their efforts on the budget update.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

Resident Jim Hughes suggested that a letter of thanks and commendation be sent to all those who worked on the Hazardous Mitigation Report. It is a comprehensive, simplistic explanation of many technical items. The Chair agreed that a letter should be sent.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Board will move into a non-public meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (b) and (c) to discuss matters regarding personnel and reputation after a ten-minute break.

Selectman Flanders moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:40 p.m. Seconded by Selectman Lovett. 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

Colette Worsman