

September 16, 2013

Chairman Michael Jackson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present:

Members: Jack Boyer, Barbara Brown, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon, Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Ted Bent, Sally Cornell

Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Richard Carey

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Tax Collector: Tanya Wescott

Press: Loumarie Rodriguez – VOICES

Tax Collector - Real Estate Tax Delinquency:

Tax Collector Tanya Wescott presented a list of the top 23 property owners who are delinquent with their tax payments at a minimum of \$9,000 in taxes, interest and lien fees. The current total due is \$443,576.41. She noted while this is less than 1% of the taxes due the Town, they are substantial amounts. The delinquent list is sent to the State and a statement is also sent to the State Marshall for collection. These taxes will increase costs by 15%. Tanya noted most taxpayers in arrears work well with her in paying off their debt; however, if they refuse to work with her, she will proceed to the sale of their property. Currently, there is only one property owner in this situation. While the owner does not live on this site, tractors are disintegrating and impacting the wetlands on the property. Tanya noted there is no funding or anything to attach other than a tractor trailer located on the property, which condition would be a greater liability than an asset to the Town. If the Town were to foreclose on the property, the Town would become responsible for cleaning it up, and all DEEP issues would become those of the Town. While Tanya could proceed with foreclosure, she believes it would be extremely costly for the Town to do so. When she has tried to go after him, proving ownership of the equipment is difficult. At this point, the Town cannot prove anything and the marshal has done a lot of checking. While she has other property owners who are in arrears, they continue to pay as often as they can afford to do so. The Board noted their appreciation to Tanya for her diligence. Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Linda McGarr presented her monthly report of all accounts. The reports were approved by the Board. She noted the long-range forecast for increasing interest rates on investments is not looking any better.

Town Employee Benefits - Accumulated Liability for the Town:

Rex Swain noted his concern regarding the current benefits the Town provides for full-time employees and the large liability to the Town. One of the benefits allows the accumulation of unused sick days annually, which are allowed to accumulate up to 100 days. Upon retirement, an employee is allowed compensation for the sick days remaining at the current rate of pay for the first 60 days, plus an additional 40 days at one-half the daily rate of pay. Rex noted this liability continues to increase and is audited as a liability to the Town.

Education Report:

Michael Jackson reported on the continuing dilemma facing the Regional School Board and the three towns with regard to the future of the Region. The decreasing enrollment is not unique to Region 12, but to the entire State. The latest recommendation is a \$23,000,000 package. Rex

Swain noted this would be result in an approximate 4% increase of \$450,000 or another ½ mil per year. No date or decision has been set for a referendum on this matter. At the last B/E meeting, the first selectmen and finance chairs of the three towns were asked to meet as all three must agree. Jack Boyer suggested the Board of Education provide a statement for the townspeople to have something upon which to vote. The State Board of Ed has not given give them any guidance. He noted the current cost/student is over \$30,000.

Old Business:

Town Pension Plans:

Rex Swain reported all parties have agreed to have the pension documents for the EMT and Firefighters Award Program restated. The Trust document will now be executed. The existing Employees' Defined Benefit Plan has been updated, restated and modified. There will be no new entrants into the current Employee Plan, of which approximately 4-6 employees will begin collecting within the next few years. The Pension Committee plans to create a new Defined Contribution Plan for future Town employees. Rex noted his appreciation to the Union Savings Bank representatives, who have been very responsive and helpful with investments.

Nationwide 457 Plan:

Rex reported the Committee has also discussed an updated proposal on the Town Employees' 457 Plan. Funding for this is provided from the employees' wages at their discretion and is deposited with Nationwide on a bi-weekly basis by the Town. Employees choose their own accounts in which they wish to invest. Rex reported none of the employees are unhappy with this Plan. The Committee has requested a detailed proposal from Nationwide and that they "rough out" a planned document. This should be received shortly. Michael questioned the working of the proposed Plan and questioned the risk tolerance for the safety of the employees' funds. It was noted the 457 Plan representative is a salaried employee and has no agenda nor motive. The Committee will compare the Plan with others to determine stability. It was also noted the Committee has had legal discussion regarding these possible changes at an estimated cost of approximately \$6,000 thus far.

Rex Swain made a motion to approve an ex-budget appropriation in the amount of \$10,000 in legal fees for the review of the old and new pension plans. Jack Boyer seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously. Rex also recommended looking at a 401A Plan.

Policies and Procedures Manual:

The Town's auditor has recommended the Town consider revisions to the current Town's Accounting Procedures Manual. This would include the policies and procedures to be followed for Requests for Proposals. It was suggested this cost most likely would exceed the current bidding \$6,000 requirement and would have to be sent out to bid. To update the Policy and Procedures manual an estimated costs could be about \$20,000. An invitation to bid must be extended for this project in accordance with the current Town policies. This was agreeable to the Board and a bid will be extended.

New Business:

Invitations to Bid:

The Board acknowledged that the cost of items and project completions has increased greatly. It

was suggested the current Town Ordinance requirement that any project estimated to be in excess of \$6,000 be put out to bid is both time-consuming, costly and needs to be updated. It was suggested this be increased to at least \$12,000 or \$25,000., which would lower the costs for advertising and enable the Town the ability to complete projects in a more timely manner. Tony Bedini offered to work on the requirements. The matter would require approval at a future town meeting. Jack Boyer suggested we also check with other towns.

The next meeting of the Board of Finance will be held on October 21 at 5 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Gollow, Finance Secretary