

# November 18, 2013

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

## **Present:**

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

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Ted Bent, Keith Templeton

Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Richard Carey, Jay Hubelbank

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Tony Bedini, Member of the Town's Bldg. & Property Committee and Region 12 Board of Education

## **Welcome:**

The Board welcomed Sally Cornell as a regular member and Keith Templeton as an alternate member to the Board. Both have served previously on the Board.

## **Education:**

Tony Bedini reported he is prepared to make a recommendation to the Board of Education to spend \$150,000 to obtain a project from the architectural firm of Fletcher Thompson. The three architects interviewed have all had a very big part in the pre-work; however, he suggested Fletcher Thompson has had a 95% score on getting things done the first time. The complete cost for the architectural work is anticipated at \$26,000 and the project has been estimated at \$1,003,000 for the work to be done to the high school building. This would include any work to be done on the high school. As project manager, Fletcher Thompson's job would include choosing an architect, completing all the necessary paper work, obtaining all required permits and overseeing the project. They would serve as agents of the Board of Ed or by whomever is hired to oversee the project to insure the Region is getting its money's worth. Fletcher Thompson was chosen because of their impressive employees. They would run the public forums and face the public, as well as work directly with the project manager to approve work.

Tony noted when a referendum is called the question presented would be to change the original plan and build a pre-school/elementary school on the Shepaug campus or to repair the high school, which would determine the costs of \$10-20,000,000. Tony is also trying to move forward to begin the work and to allot \$1 million per year specifically for repairs to the high school. The amount of time is questionable because of summer time and class time. To borrow \$10-15 million dollars, he suggested the Region would be paying on something that should be able to be included in their annual budget.

Tony also reported the Superintendent of Schools has explored regionalization with New Milford, Brookfield and Litchfield; but at this time, there doesn't appear to be interest. There is also no indication whether Bridgewater would consider a regional elementary school, unless it comes from the silent majority when a vote is taken. Michael suggested a vote should not be taken without knowing the full costs involved. Tony agreed the entire issue must be addressed. The Board agreed the Board of Ed members have put in a huge amount of time addressing the educational issues for which the Boards of Finance and Selectmen are extremely grateful. Liddy Adams also

noted the Town is extremely grateful for the time and effort Tony Bedini has spent as a member of the Board of Selectmen on behalf of the Town. The members of the Finance Board wholeheartedly agreed.

Jack Boyer noted the total budget for rehab could still be reworked. There is no indication from Bridgewater that it will be approved, and the outcome will not be known until a vote is taken.

### **Town's Purchasing Ordinance Requirements:**

Tony Bedini suggested the Board consider amending the Town Purchasing Ordinance to increase the bid level from the current \$6,000 to \$10,000 or \$20-\$25,000. As a member of the Building and Property Committee, he suggested there is much work to be done in the town hall; and while some of the jobs are small, compromising and raising the level required would really help to move projects along. All larger purchases and projects would continue to be put out to bid. A town meeting vote would be required for this approval.

### **Tax Collectors Report:**

Rex noted discussion had been held at the previous Board's meeting with the Tax Collector whether to send Birch Hill Run to the State Marshal for collection. He requested an update on this and suggested while this is at the discretion of the Tax Collector, the Board might suggest some guidelines. These guidelines might include that if no attempt for payment is being made by the taxpayer, the tax collector may proceed to forward this to the Marshal as a matter of course. Jack Boyer suggested it would be prudent to recommend a specific amount or age of delinquency, and that the decision should not be at the tax collector's discretion. The Board would strongly recommend that when this exceeds a certain amount that it be referred for collection. It was noted other towns do not seem to have a set policy either. It was suggested policies and procedures could be established; and the Town should check with the State to see what is allowed.

### **Tax Collector's Retirement:**

Tax Collector Tanya Wescott anticipates retiring December 1st. She has agreed to come back per diem to assist the new Tax Collector. An ad hoc committee will meet with her. She has indicated she will be available work with the new Tax Collector.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Approved as submitted.

### **Financial Reports.**

Income and expenses are where they are anticipated to be at this point in time. We have been very fortunate so far with the weather.

### **Minutes - Pension:**

Rex Swain suggested the minutes of the October meeting be amended to report that new employees will be covered under a 401A Defined Benefit Plan, which has now been fully executed. The Pension Committee has reviewed the current Defined Benefit Plan, as well as the Fire Company and EMT Award Programs. The new 401A Plan would become effective as of June 1, 2013 for new employees. Rex noted while the paper work has been signed for the new Pension Plan, he is unsure when a contribution would be required for the new employees, as new employees will not qualify until they are here for a year. He noted the Town must budget for two additional employees the following year as the new 401A Plan will be a separate account. The Town will now have three plans: the existing defined benefit plan, the new defined contribution plan,

and the firefighters/EMT plan. Legal fees are not to expected to exceed \$10,000. An ex-budget appropriation will be required and funds would be transferred into the permanent budget line. It was noted investments for the current Pension Plan were up about 8% for the year.

The Board thanked the members of the Pension Committee for their efforts on behalf of the Town.

**Nonrecurring:**

Michael Jackson noted approximately \$1,200,000 has been set aside since 2006 for bridge repairs in the Nonrecurring Account. Mark Lyon reported the Shinar Mountain Bridge is currently being repaired for \$75,000, while the Walker Brook Road Bridge will be eligible for a 80% reimbursement from the State. The Town will be responsible for approximately \$225,000. The Romford Road Bridge is estimated at \$3,000,000, of which the Town will be responsible for 20%. Spring Hill Road Bridge will cost approximately \$150,000. Mark suggested specific lines for anticipated bridge grant funds be designated in the Capital Fund budget for income from State grants. He was unsure if additional grants are available for property. These could be set aside for possible property purchases, but he is unsure if they will still be available.

Mark noted \$600,000 in road construction is available, plus approximately \$40-450,000 in other Capital Fund line items, much of which has been from previous capital budgeted. He noted Highway Director Kevin Smith has been working aggressively. The work that has been done is very thorough and a step above of what we have done in the past. We are still paying an escalation fees on asphalt.

Mark also noted the Town Hall basement is being redone. The Town is working with CHK architect on plans for the staff areas to be used as a conference room with a handicapped ramp. Site work may be needed. The will be proposed as the Land Use Meeting Room. There may be some exposure on the stage, but the trustees are willing to discuss this area. Negotiations with the insurance company have been positive and everything has been covered. We will be close on the budget; and if we run into a small overrun, the BMTH trustees may consider assisting the Town.

**Revenue:**

Ted Bent suggested the Board consider asking the private schools in Town for a more generous donation than what they currently offer to the Town. Rex also suggested donations from the Washington Community Housing Trust should also be discussed in detail, noting that all of these entities require Town services and are very integrated parts of the community.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathy Gollow, Secretary