Town of Washington

Board of Finance

**September 21, 2015**

Present: Members: Michael Jackson, Sally Cornell, Craig Schoon, Lisabeth Adam,

Jack Boyer

Alternative: Keith Templeton, Peter Arturi

Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Richard Carey

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guest: Donna Alex, Tax Collector

Delisse Locher, Assessor

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

**Minutes:** Minutes of the July 20, 2015 meeting were approved with no changes

**Tax Collector Report:** no questions on the tax collectors report

**Guest:**

**Donna Alex, Tax Collector:**

Follow up on delinquent and Town of Washington tax collection policy. The Town has had some delinquent taxpayers on the books for some time back dating back to 2006. She has been contacting all delinquent taxpayers and has had some success with a phone call. She has also been in contact with Attorney Adam Cohen who handles all “tax sales” in the area. If the town chooses to go with a “tax sale” the property file gets turned over to the attorney and he handles everything. The tax collector would no longer be in contact with the taxpayer. The property at a “tax sale” only needs to be sold for the tax that is due on the property. The taxpayer pays all fees. If the town chooses to take over the property they would pay a discounted attorney fee. There is also a redemption period of 6 months the taxpayer has a 6 month redemption period to pay debt after the sale. The total of delinquent taxpayers including taxes, fees, and interest is $326,538.48. Some she feels will be resolved within the next six months but some the town will have to take action. It will be the Selectman decision to do a “tax sale” on a property. Donna has found an old policy that states, if you were on the delinquent list for two plus years there would be a foreclosure action. Statue states she cannot take a partial payment that is less than the interest due. Sometimes older taxpayers bring what they can and she takes it and makes payment arrangements. A new policy that is fair for all will need to be developed which she will do with the Selectman. There has not been a tax sale in current memory. There was a property that the town did take over and tax was written off. There is new statue that you can now suspend taxes on real estate. The tax collector office now has a program that allows them to locate taxpayers that have moved. The town also has point and pay where tarpapers can pay online which has become very successful. She requested that ordnances also need to be looked at. Overpayments do not get refunded if under $5.00. There is a lot of work to refund, they may consider $10.00 and under not to be refund which is less than state statues. Another thought is with construction permits, they have to have clearance from tax collector before the permit is approved. A thought is to do this for all permits so we can collect delinquent taxes that may be due. It is hard to collect from small business and not much of recourse at this time. The board thanked her for her time.

**Delisse Locher, Assessor:**

A question arose on why income would be greater than the projected budget. Per Delisse sometimes it has to do with new construction proration or permit work. The town has allowed new construction to assess at a percentage of completion. Delisse believes if the construction property is being used for its intended purpose then the proration should be 100%. If it was found that no permit was made then she will go back to the beginning of assessment year. If she felt there is fraud she will go back three years. Sometimes there were things not on the original grand list. A discussion was brought up if it is fraud if street cards do not represent the property and taxes are not being collected on the added value. A question was asked if people look at the street cards. It is not sure. Michael asked how much she thought of untaxed property that was out there. She felt she could not answer that question but could tell him that she has added value of 1.8 million in assessment and another 2 million in prorated value. The personal property audits have made an increase of $18,500 in tax dollars. They thanked her for all she has done.

**Treasurer Report:** No question on the treasurer report

**Selectman:** First Selectman, Mark Lyon reported that there was nothing new

**Financial Reports**: No Question It was reported that the audit by Charles Heaven & Co was started. One note on the audit was it was suggested by the auditor to write all check for Town Aid Road out of that account instead of writing out of Non – Recurring where it is budgeted. He felt it would be easier for tracking purposes if the state came back to review.

**Board of Education:** There was meeting with Town’s Selectman, Finance, and Superintendent about the Agriscience program. It is a program that will put enough students in the high school to maintain a population that makes it feasible to provide for a good high school education. The Agriscience will not change the problem of low enrollment in the elementary school. The state reimbursement cover cost of student so no added expense to run the program. But more analysis needs to be done to see its effect on the current program. They believe that the classes are so small right now it could absorb the increase in student body. They are running their figures on 192 out of district student in the program. At this time Nonnewaug turns away 50-60 qualified students that would be picked up here. The district would collect an average of $10,000 per pupil which will cover the debt and the program. By adding the 192 to the general population a lower the cost per pupil will be created. At this time, there are 20 in-district students going to Nonnewaug. The Agriscience program would bring the student population back to a level that existed in the past. The agriscience program will be finished with its first senior class in 2020. The state has agreed to pay the 80% of direct required expense. That will require that 10.75 million will have to be borrowed by the district. Washington’s share would be 45%. One of the big pitches is that they will be retiring all their debt in the next 6 years so when they take over the bond at construction completion it will have a minimum effect on the budget. The one issue that has not come up is the fact that they have antiquated elementary schools that will have expense. Other talk has been that there is a part of the community that my help fund an equine facility.

**Old Business:** None

**New Business:** It was discussed on hold future Finance meeting in the new conference room but majority vote was to continue the meetings in the selectman office.

The meeting was motioned to adjourn at 6:06

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Kennedy Gomez Financial Administrator