

• **October 17, 2005**

Present: Board Members: Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Mark Lyon, Craig Schoon and Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown and John Allen

Selectmen: Richard Sears, Nick Solley

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Rico Melaragno, Charles Heaven & Company, auditor

Valerie Andersen, Valerie Friedman

2004-2005 Audit Notes: Mr. Melaragno discussed the audited figures with the Board. The Board agreed to make transfers and additional appropriations as follows:

• **General Government:**

Building Department: Transferred excess revenue over budget in the amount of \$78,363 to Building expense.

Authorized additional appropriation of \$18,000 to the Building Department budget to cover additional expense.

Public Safety:

Police: Transferred excess revenue received from Private Duty Coverage in the amount of \$84,489 to Police expense.

Highways:

General Maintenance: An over-expenditure in General Maintenance is due to unexpected costs that include culverts and catch-basins. Transferred excess revenue over budget in the amount of \$38,744 (FEMA grant received for unusual storm expenses) to General Maintenance expense. Authorized additional appropriation of \$16,000 to General Maintenance budget to cover additional expenses.

Winter Maintenance: Authorized an additional appropriation of \$2,000 to the Winter Maintenance budget to cover additional winter storm cleanup.

Other Expense:

Assessment Appeals: Additional unforeseen legal and appraisal costs were not anticipated in this Board's original budget. The Board confirmed the recoding of these unusual expenditures to "Other Expenditures" and authorized an additional appropriation of \$12,705 to cover costs.

Additional appropriations had also been approved during the fiscal year for an electrical upgrade to the town hall in the amount of \$4,730, pavilion bathroom project expenses in the amount of \$20,000, and additional duties by the Zoning Enforcement Officer in the amount of \$2,565.

STEAP Grant Project: It is expected expenditures will be reimbursed by the State of Connecticut and this should be accounted for as a separate department on the approved budget. An additional

appropriation of \$20,000 had been approved during the fiscal year.

Excess revenue in the General Fund of \$4,791 was realized for the year. Jack Field made a motion to approve the above stated adjustments to the General Fund. Michael Jackson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

It was also noted the funds approved for Open Space Acquisition had been transferred to a newly-established Open Space Fund. Housing funds will remain in the Capital account as a vehicle has not been set up to transfer funds to a separate Housing Fund.

Minutes: Motion made by John Allen and seconded by Mark Lyon to accept the minutes of the September 14 meeting as submitted. Motion unanimously passed.

Treasurer's Report: Linda McGarr reported she had closed out one CD due to the low interest rate. Treasurer's Report accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Primary Schools Task Teams: Jack Field updated the Board on the continuing efforts of the various teams. Renovating Washington Primary, building new schools in Roxbury and Bridgewater, and constructing a consolidated school at Shepaug are all still being studied. A proposal for a combined school for Bridgewater and Roxbury seems to have receded since the Booth School property is not large enough and the distance to the only new property available is too great for Bridgewater students to travel. The study teams are aspiring to hold a referendum near the end of the year for direction toward either maintaining three separate schools or one consolidated school. Additional referendums would be required to give the authority to develop a specific project and to construct. The committees are seeking a joint agreement from Board of Education and the three towns to support a final decision that would fulfill the required specifications and objectives of all. Counsel will be sought to determine if construction costs would be paid on a regional or individual town basis. The latter could allow each town to choose items they deem important to their building. Jack noted there are still some big issues to be addressed but the volunteer teams continue to put much time and effort so that all avenues will be considered carefully. A series of meetings will be scheduled for each town to present the proposals. Valerie Friedman commended Jack Field's exemplary efforts on behalf of this project. The Board wholeheartedly agreed.

Judea Water Company: John Allen reported that he and Michael Jackson will pursue less costly engineering estimates to review the Judea Water Company than those they have received. He reported the water company owner has notified the State of his intention to abandon the system. When this takes place, the State will assign another company to run the system. The owner will entertain offers from the Town, but John reported he has thus far not received positive reactions to this possibility due to the liability involved, the need for a superintendent, etc. It is estimated approximately one week/month of employee services would be required to run the system. They will continue to examine this proposal.

Employee Compensation Committee: Dick reported the following had been appointed to the Committee: Valerie Friedman, Larry O'Toole, Roger Cannavaro and Kathy Gollow. He requested an appointment from the Board of Finance. A comparison of employee compensation, insurances, pensions, vacations, etc. with other towns and the private sector, as well as long-range assumptions about growth in costs in each category, goals and achievement had been requested. Valerie Friedman reported after reviewing the task as presented by the First Selectman, she felt it would require the expertise of professionals and was beyond her scope. The Board recognized the difficulty in comparing job classifications from town-to-town-to-private industry and the need for a non-biased committee, etc. It was agreed the task could be too far-reaching for this committee. Valerie felt it would be a great opportunity to have it done by a third party and the scope could be enlarged to see if we are heading in the right

direction. Rex noted it is difficult to compare to the private sector. While the Town's benefits are better, the wages are lower. He felt if we had a problem now, he thought we would know it. Mark Lyon felt a thirty-party analysis would be a good idea, as we are not competing with other municipalities for good employees, as you may be in the private sector. Liddy Adams suggested the Board remember some employees are not hired but are elected officials. John Allen will discuss this matter further with the First Selectman.

Pension: Rex reported a teleconference had been held with Pension Consultants, Inc. Their recommendation included a larger deposit to the Pension Fund be made than had been anticipated in the budget. While the Pension Committee had suggested revisions be made to the assumptions used to more correctly reflect current salaries and interest for the 05/06 year, the actuary had not felt this was cause for the increase. In addition to being somewhat under-funded already, the income as reported on the employees' federal tax forms was higher than anticipated and included overtime. It was agreed the Pension Committee would meet to discuss this further and the Chairman of the Board of Finance would be asked to attend.

Selectman's Report:

CHORE Service: Dick explained the Chore Service is a program that matched trustworthy workers with resident who needed help with housekeeping, shopping, yard work and minor home repairs. Recently, due to the success of the program, the service had to be reduced from thirteen to eight town in the northwest corner, leaving five towns without this well-reputed service. The First Selectmen from Morris, Goshen, Warren, Litchfield and Washington recognized the need for this program to continue, and are working to begin another program for these towns. While, plans are being made for the program to be self-sustaining, there may be need in the future for some financial assistance. He will report further at the next meeting.

Health District: Dick reported the State is pressuring smaller towns to join health districts. We currently contract with the Town of New Milford for these services, which has worked very well. New Milford is considering establishing a health district, as are other areas in the vicinity. The State has forwarded a \$5,000 grant to the Town as an incentive to begin investigating this. Dick will investigate various available programs.

Retirement Incentive: Dick reported the Selectmen have requested the Board consider an offer to employees who have reached retirement age in appreciation for their years of service to the Town. This would include a one-time offer to employees whose retirement age and number of years of employment equal 85. An amount not to exceed \$2,000 would be paid by the Town toward one year's supplementary health insurance. There are currently five employees eligible, but it was anticipated that not all would take advantage. Craig Schoon made a motion to accept this proposal. Discussion continued as to whether a precedent was being set, if something more comprehensive should be considered, or whether it should be made a policy. As there was no second to the motion, the matter was not continued.

Transfer Station: Elizabeth Gugel has been hired by the Town to replace Warren Tompkins at the transfer station. Mr. Tompkins has recently retired. The Selectmen notified the Board that this line item will exceed the budget due to additional coverage that was required prior to Mr. Tompkin's retirement.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Gollow Secretary