

November 17, 2003

Chairman Michael Jackson called the meeting to order at 4:55 p.m.

Present: Board: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon and Rex Swain
Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown and Mark Lyon
Selectmen: Elaine Luckey, Richard Sears and Nicholas Solley
Press: John Addyman, VOICES; Sarah Sparks, Republican-American
Guests: Tanya Wescott, Tax Collector

Minutes: Minutes of the September 15, 2003 meeting were accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: The addition of a new account with Fleet Bank was noted. It was surmised this was established for a higher interest rate, as well as to diversify funds in various banks. The Treasurer will be asked to comment.

Copy Machine: The Board approved the purchase of a Minolta Di351 copy machine for use in the Town Clerk's office for \$4,858 as an ex-budget appropriation. This had been discussed at the previous Finance meeting and referred to the Board of Selectmen, who reviewed and recommended its purchase.

GASB-Governmental Accounting Standards Board - Consultant: Rex and Kathy reported on meetings with Douglas Gardner of the Pioneer Consulting Group and Michael Belden, Chief Financial Officer of the Town of Middlebury to discuss the procedure needed to implement the financial reporting required under GASB Statement 34. The establishment of a fixed asset inventory would include all Town buildings, machinery, vehicles, land and equipment, as well as infrastructure assets of roads, bridges, the transfer station, etc. A threshold of \$5,000 for fixed assets had originally been considered; however, Mr. Gardner recommended a \$1,000 threshold to include computers and smaller items for the initial inventory. The Board agreed this inventory would be a useful tool for long-range planning and agreed upon the \$1,000 threshold. Rex agreed to chair a Steering Committee for this project and various Town departments will be asked to assist in completing their areas of inventory. Jack Boyer made a motion to contract with Pioneer Consulting Group, Inc. of Woodbury, CT for the sum of \$5,800 to provide their services for this project. Rex Swain seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Tax Collector: Tanya Wescott reported new State legislation requires the Town to submit a 50-cents fee for each motor vehicle that is reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles for delinquent taxes. This will be an additional unbudgeted expense to the Town for services previously supplied by the State. It was anticipated this would cost the Town approximately \$500 during this fiscal year. Tanya also noted additional legislation would allow the Town to establish an Ordinance to charge delinquent taxpayers a \$5 fee to recoup this expense; however, she recommended waiting on this latter issue until it is further clarified. Michael Jackson made a motion to approve an ex-budget item not to exceed \$750 to cover the DMV costs. Jack Boyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed. Tanya will seek the names of the legislators who passed this legislation.

The Board reviewed the tax collector's reports. A tie-in with the financial totals will be requested for the next meeting as has been provided in the past.

Financial Reports: Reports for all funds were reviewed. Rex requested the Pension Committee receive copies of the quarterly statements on a regular basis.

A list of grants currently received by the Town was provided for discussion. (Attached) Included were annual Town and Education grants received directly from the State, as well as grants for which separate

applications must be submitted for specific projects. Discussion was held on the merits of obtaining the funding from the State on a timelier basis as opposed to letting the funds accumulate in the State treasury for larger projects. While the accumulation of larger sums gives the Town more flexibility over larger projects, the Selectmen were encouraged to review all the grants and projects. Most of the grants were noted in the long-range capital budget as available once projects are completed, but it was not anticipated this income would be available during the current fiscal year. The Town is in various phases of the application process for the STEAP, Small Cities, Handicap Van, etc. grants. A suggestion was made that a generator be included in the Small Cities grant application for the town hall elevator and handicapped access. The LoCIP grant will be reviewed also.

In Lieu of Taxes: Elaine reported on her memo regarding CCM's investigation of towns receiving donations from non-profit institutions in lieu of taxes. According to information received thus far, CCM reported Watertown receives \$93,000 per year from the Taft School. This donation was made using no specific formula and at the discretion of the school. Both the towns of Kent and Wallingford do not receive anything from their private schools. Middlebury does receive a donation from Westover of \$30,150, which they donate to various Town departments. The Northwest Council of Governments is surveying the nine northwest corner towns. The Board agreed to continue to request funds from the Town's private schools for buildings not used for education, and agreed this seems to be working well. The donations equal about 10% of what would normally be due from taxes if they were for-profit organizations.

Revaluation: Rex Swain suggested the Assessor be asked for an update on the current revaluation in progress. Discussion ensued as to the means used to calculate the value of homes, especially those at the higher end of the scale. Some felt most recent sales prices should be considered; however, it was noted that the State mandates that towns cannot rely totally on recent sales. It was felt the current "up" market would drive these sales and the assessor does not feel a high sales price should automatically direct the assessed value of a home and that it is difficult to base an assessment procedure on that sort of data. As the revaluation is progressing, it was felt this should be investigated and the Board kept advised. Our local situation is unique in that our assessor is assisting with the gathering of information in order to keep the costs to the Town lower. It was agreed to wait until the four-year preliminary results are available. The assessor will be consulted.

Future Planning: Jack Field reminded the Board that they must consider how the revised Plan of Conservation and Development and future Education costs will reflect on the Town's budget. The importance of addressing these concerns early and establishing structure for the budget process was recognized. Members of the Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Education have been meeting to address the budgets. Michael reported they had shared their forecasts with the Board of Ed in order that they might better understand the Town's long-range planning strategy. It is hoped that two members from each Town's Board of Finance would be able to meet with the chairman of the Board of Ed, the Superintendent and the Business Manager of the Region on a regular basis. We are awaiting word to set a date for the next meeting.

Election of Chairman: Rex Swain reminded the Board that they are required to elect a chairman on a bi-annual basis according to the Board of Finance handbook. Rex nominated Michael Jackson to serve as the Board's chairman for the next two years. Jack Field seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Selectmen's Report: Elaine Luckey expressed her appreciation for the Board's assistance during her tenure in office. The Board noted their gratitude for her efforts and wished her well. Dick Sears was welcomed to his new position as First Selectman, as was Nick Solley as a continuing member of the Board of Selectmen.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary