

November 18, 2002

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

Present:

Board: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon, Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown, Mark Lyon

Selectman: Elaine Luckey

Guests: Washington Community Housing Trust: Dick Sears, Peter Talbot, Valerie Friedman

Press: David Lombino, Litchfield County Times

Riverwoods Senior Housing: Dick Sears updated the Board on the Riverwoods Housing complex on River Road. The project had come in on-time and on-budget at a cost of approximately \$1.3 million. It is essentially complete. Revenue received toward construction included a Town grant of \$250,000, a grant/loan from the First Congregational Church for \$240,000 at 0% interest, with repayments of the principle beginning after two years for a period of 40 years, private donations of \$64,400, and a New Mil bank loan at a rate of 7.5% for \$750,000. The Housing Trust is currently renegotiating with the bank to borrow an additional \$75,000 for operating capital and transition expenses from construction. Their operating revenue budget is estimated on eight one-bedroom apartments at \$625, four 2-bedroom apartments at \$725 and three garages at \$75 each for an annual total of \$97,500. Members of the Board noted their concern that only four of the twelve units are currently occupied. Dick reported applicants must complete a thorough qualifying process through Elderly Housing Management, which could take three-five weeks. Some may not qualify for a variety of reasons. He felt the town newsletter, news media, etc. had spread the word about the availability of the apartments; however, a sense of timing and lifestyle must also be considered, as well as an age restraint. Apartments cannot be held until people turn 62, nor can people be excluded because of federal housing laws. He feels that the waiting list that will ultimately develop will primarily consist of Washington-based people. Liddy noted housing is of a cyclical nature. It is not when the housing is available but rather when people need it. Dick felt the remaining units will be filled by the end of March 2003, if not before. The Board noted the Trust must make every effort to communicate with the public, as it was the Town's implicit intent that this housing be developed for the residents of Washington. The Trust has scheduled a meeting of the town clergy as well as a seminar at the Senior Center to raise the awareness of the complex. It was also suggested that the Housing Trust contact town residents over the age of 62 to let them know the housing is available and that it is the first alternative they might consider.

Minutes of October 21st meeting were approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Interest rates all low. Report accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector: Report accepted as submitted.

Financial Reports:

- It was reported the C.A.M.A. grant had been received in the amount of \$27,500 and our application for a S.T.E.A.P. in the amount of \$450,000 has been approved. We are awaiting further information from the State. Engineering, architecture and design work will be needed for various aspects of this grant, as well as approval for capital funding before application may be made for actual grant reimbursement.
- The Board agreed to return \$50,700.07 to unappropriated status in the capital fund in accordance

with the attached list of projects determined essentially complete.

Discussion:

- Monitoring continues at the former town garage site as required by the D.E.P. salt abatement order placed on the Town several years ago.
- The Board accepted the Town's audit report as submitted by Charles Heaven & Co., Inc. There were no outstanding recommendations. Jack Boyer made a motion to retain Charles Heaven & Co., Inc. of Waterbury, CT as auditor for the ensuing fiscal year ending June, 2003. The motion was seconded by Jack Field and unanimously passed.
- The Board agreed to move the Town Debt Service line item in the General Fund budget from the Fire Co. area to a separate line item as most state filings, etc. require this budget item to be reported separately.
- The Board discussed payments made by the private school in lieu of taxes. It was assumed agreements were reached to compensate the Town for providing public safety and other services for the schools. The Assessor will be contacted for specifics.
- Jack Field reported on the State Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee's hearing on Regional School District Governance that he had attended. He noted testimonies presented by various First Selectmen and Board of Finance chairmen indicated uniformly they were having problems in that a line has been drawn in the middle of their strategic plans, which separate education from the towns' other resources. Options included:
 - Living with the current set up in the hope that good will would result in cooperation.
 - Using a non-regional school system as a model. This would require a First Selectman or Board of Finance chairman to automatically serve as a voting member of the Board of Education. This may require one representative to represent all three towns in a Regional situation.
 - The First Selectman or Mayors would be charged with understanding the strategic character of the towns and the taxpayers' ability to pay taxes. Would require Boards of Selectmen and Finance's involvement in hiring of key administrators and personnel, as well as contracts with teachers and administration.
 - They must approve and endorse the school budget to the public before the referendum. Jack felt that should be done.
 - A vote would be held on the school budget and the town budget simultaneously.
 - Other suggestions included making the Region a separate taxing authority. Jack was not in favor of this.

It was noted the three towns would all have to have a town meeting on the same day, which was the case in former years. It was felt having a local school board would not remedy the situation but rather good communication between the towns and the Board of Education were most important. This would depend on the administrators and elected officials involved. It was felt that the additional duty of serving as a member of the Board of Education would be an enormous task for the First Selectman to taken on as an additional duty. Elaine agreed, also noting the enormity of responsibility and the huge time commitment required of Board of Education members. It was hoped the local Board of Education members would express their opinions. The Board of Finance is pleased with the degree of cooperation and the directness of communication with the new administration and the business manager. It was felt the willingness of people to change would result in change. It was agreed the Board of Finance should have a very tight idea of what the mill

rate will be and provide this information to the public. More information to the voting people is the best answer.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow
Secretary