

November 21, 2005

[revised 12/10/05]

Vice Chairman Jack Field called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the absence of Chairman Michael Jackson.

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

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown and John Allen

Selectman: Richard Sears

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Valerie Friedman

Minutes:

October 17 Meeting: Rex Swain made a motion to approve the minutes with the following amendments:

Employee Compensation: Change: "**thirty**-party" to "**third**"-party."

STEAP Grant Project: Add clarification that the appropriation approved in the previous fiscal year for proposed STEAP grant projects was engineering, legal notices, etc. required for estimating project costs. Expenditures made have been submitted for grant reimbursement. Jack Boyer seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

November 17 Special Meeting: Craig Schoon made a motion to approve as submitted. Mark Lyon seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Treasurer's Report: Linda reported she will sign a Corporate Resolution Agreement with the First National Bank of Litchfield for use of a computer to access the Town's accounts. Treasurer's Report approved as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report: Tax Collector's Report approved as submitted.

Mr. Jackson arrived at 5:10 p.m.

Financial Reports: Items reported included:

- Unanticipated town hall boiler repair costs. Parts were under warranty. Labor extra.
- Town debt service on the firehouse is paid semi-annually, with principle and interest payments made in November, and interest-only paid each May. Payments are scheduled to continue until November of 2013.
- Accounts maintained separately from the General, Capital and Town Aid Funds include Parks and Recreation, Senior Center and Judea Cemetery. All are audited annually.
- Grants: Small Cities Grant funding is being received in a timely manner for the Town Hall Elevator and Handicap upgrade project, which is nearing completion. The Church Street Improvement project is also nearing completion. Expenses submitted to DECD for STEAP grant reimbursement for this project have been approved and funding has been activated. Dick noted unanticipated costs that exceed the bids for these projects, include asbestos and lead removal in the town hall and additional processed material

needed for Church Street. These will also be submitted for reimbursement through the grants. Grant income will be outlined in more detail.

Audit Report: A DRAFT audit report was previously submitted for review. The Board questioned one item on page 10 noting property taxes had decreased by \$23,081 from the previous year. It was felt this was possibly due to an unusually high collection of Prior Taxes in the previous year. This will be clarified. Audit was accepted as submitted with minor typo changes.

Pension Contribution: Rex Swain reported that the Pension Committee recommends the Town make the increased pension contribution as reported by Pension Consultants, Inc. While the Committee recognizes this contribution is higher than the budgeted line item, it continues to feel the changes made to interest and compensation assumptions are more in line with actual numbers. They had been comfortable changing the assumptions as they had been told the change would not make a measurable difference in the deposit. Pension contributions as a percent of payroll are over 15% and prior contributions have resulted in approximately \$30,000 in arrears from previous years. Discussion was held as to reasons for this increase. The inclusion of overtime, employees reaching eligibility, increased number of employees were all additional considerations. Police overtime was discussed at length. Rex noted much of this overtime is reimbursed to the Town through fees charged for services. He suggested some of these fees could be deposited to the Pension fund. Jack Boyer suggested it would not be fair to remove all overtime, but a cap could be considered. It was agreed to request a complete analysis of the reasons for the increase. Michael will contact Pension Consultants.

Education: Jack Field reported the Inter-municipal Agreement presented to and approved at the 11/15/05 town meeting was intended to procure and pay for professional consulting needed to get to the point of referendum on the issue of school buildings. Several items in the Agreement were subsequently amended, as provided for in the agreement, to clarify and limit the agreement to the objective of the Agreement of the Towns' jointly procuring and paying for consulting services. An additional amendment to the agreement as approved by the Washington Town Meeting was to clarify the understanding between the towns that the allocation of all costs associated with the school facilities projects being developed would continue to be allocated to the towns according to the Region formula for prorating shares in proportion to the total number of Region students from the towns. There had been discussion of changing that method of allocation, short of de-regionalization, so that each town would pay for the costs of its own school. However, the Region believe this would not be possible legally, and Roxbury and Bridgewater opposed the idea as well. Our conclusion was that this change could not be implemented short of formal de-regionalization. So it was concluded that the best thing to do was to accept that amendment and to proceed with the project.

The Steering Committee has been impressed with S/L/A/M Collaborative as a consultant, who has been engaged by the Region to assist in compiling and checking for consistency information needed by voters to make the choice for a consolidated building or separate school buildings. They will work with the Steering Committee and the teams up to the final vote. A meeting has been scheduled for November 22nd at the high school, at which time SLAM will kick off its involvement in the process. While there is a great sense of urgency, it is agreed that it must be done right. Following the kick-off presentation, there will be an intensive period of meetings with the teams. It is anticipated this challenging schedule will be completed with a referendum on February 7. SLAM will initially review Ed Specs with the Region, then size the schools for the programs needed and the student populations anticipated and develop site plans. They will get a sense of the problems, seek clarification on questions and remain impartial. They will attempt to produce information needed by an informed public that will go to a binding referendum. They will look at all avenues of state aid. Mark Lyon noted the original plans had been drawn up to get state reimbursement. He questioned if S/L/A/M will look at these differences. Jack felt they absolutely would. The public will be provided both construction and operating costs, plus non-financial pros and cons, for

the choices of maintaining separate town schools or building one consolidated school for the Region.

Rex questioned how the amended agreement voted on at town meeting would be handled. Mark Lyon reported that individual towns paying for their own renovations had been explored by the Region in the past. It had been found that this was illegal if done through the Region.

Judea Water Company: John Allen reported that the Judea Water Company will be offered to the Town for sale. After a thorough review with engineers and contacts from various towns, he reported he had received no encouragement. While the initiative to investigate this matter had been for control of the water company by the Town, it was felt this should not be pursued because of the lack of knowledge of running a water company, its affect on a very few people, and the poor state of the infrastructure. John felt that one of two reputable water companies will be put in charge by the State and that this change would not be a problem for users.

Appointments/Resignations:

Mark Lyon, who was recently elected to the Board of Selectmen, submitted his resignation as a regular member of the Board of Finance. The Board unanimously moved Barbara Brown from an alternate's position to fill this seat on the Board. Recommendations will be sought from the Republican Town Committee to fill the now-vacant alternate's seat. They will be requested to provide recommendations prior to the next meeting.

Election of Officers: Mark Lyon made a motion to re-elect the current slate of Michael Jackson as Chair and Jack Field as Vice-Chair of the Board. Craig Schoon seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m. (A record!)

Respectfully submitted, Kathy Gollow, Secretary