

December 15, 2008

The following Minutes of the Board of Finance meeting are submitted subject to approval at the next meeting.

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

Present:

Board of Finance: Jack Boyer, Barbara Brown, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon

Alternates: Liddy Adams, A.J. DuBois

Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Jim Brinton, Nick Solley

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Tony Bedini

Minutes:

The November minutes were amended as follows:

Education: Jack Field felt (delete: strongly) the Town should not enter into a 20-year lease unless provisions are made that would allow the lease to be voided if a decision was made to consolidate or sell(add:/use) the building (add:for other purposes.) He felt current maintenance of the building, as well as necessary capital repairs, need to be addressed by the Board of Ed. These costs are currently being estimated. The Board of Ed has the ability to set aside a (delete: percentage add: portion) of the surplus (add: up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1% of the total budget) (delete: from their budget) for this purpose. Rex suggested maintenance of the building should not be budgeted from surplus funds but rather be included as part of their annual budget. Maintenance should be articulated. The State will not provide reimbursement for anything with less than a twenty-year lease agreement, except roofing.

Concern was noted at the high cost per student in the District, currently nearing \$20,000/year – the highest in the State. A significant increase in enrollment in October was higher than anticipated, with 420 students exceeding the 385 forecast. Due to the current financial volatility in the country it was felt that more students may be entering the public schools in the future (add: in K-5). Jack Field noted he would update the town strategic plan to 2010 but was concerned about the difficulty in doing during the current economic state. It may be best to wait a year. This would include going back 5 years and forward 5 years. He felt that consolidation is not out the window and would prefer a one year lease. Minutes approved as amended.

Tax Collector: The Tax Collector's report through December 10th noted 54.84% of anticipated taxes have been collected. The Tax Collector has not as yet seen a noticeable fall-off in collections. She noted many taxes are paid in December but the January receipts will be a better indicator of the recent financial climate. Tax Collection rates from 1980 were reviewed, which ranged from 94.5-98.1% during this time. A change but did not move more than 1.5% from year to year. Report accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: The Board acknowledged while we are not currently making much interest, at least we are not losing funds. Report accepted as submitted.

Financials: Financial reports were reviewed. Overall income seems on track, except for conveyance taxes (24%) and interest income (20%). While more private requests for assistance have been recently received, through the generosity of the Washington Community Fund, residents have been provided the

assistance needed.

Selectman's Report: Mark reported the Selectmen has agreed to enter into agreement with the consortium to obtain fuel oil, diesel and unleaded gasoline from East River Energy for the coming year as in the past. While local prices have recently fallen below this year's contract, prior experience with the consortium has proven well and it was felt this was in the best interest for the Town. It was reported Region 12 will receive a \$12,500 grant from the State to assist with fuel costs.

Education - Building & Property: Mark reported Charlie Boucher has been appointed to serve along with Tony Bedini on the School Building Committee, both of whom are very experienced in this line. This committee has priced necessary repairs to the primary schools. It is suggested these costs should be addressed within the context of the lease. They include major repairs to the drainage system and the repair and replacement of doors and windows. The roof is also over 20 years old, although not leaking. Cost of the backlog of needed maintenance is estimated at \$500-700,000 for this building.

Tony Bedini reported they have audited the outside of the WPS and documented gross negligence to the building, including but not limited to the need to scrape and paint metal doors, continued water seepage into the building masonry and the need to resurface concrete. The primary schools in Roxbury and Bridgewater have also been reviewed and are even more extreme. The Building Committee is working to get the Boards of Finance in all three towns to address these issues with the Board of Education before the buildings are lost. They suggest a plant engineer is needed to address the issues properly and not waste money needlessly. The need for organization, accountability, management and leadership needs to be established and the issue needs to be presented to the public.

Alternate: Discussion on filling this vacancy will continue at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Gollow, Secretary