

March 16, 2009

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

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

Alternate: Liddy Adams

Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Nick Solley

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Susan Payne, Tony Bedini, Peter Tagley

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

The Board immediately entered Executive Session to discuss a matter regarding possible real estate acquisition.

The Board re-entered the Regular Meeting at 5:32 p.m.

108 New Milford Turnpike:

The Board discussed a proposal set forth by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen to purchase a 30+/- acre parcel at 108 New Milford Turnpike in New Preston financing the purchase through the Open Space Acquisition Fund. This property is the only substantial undeveloped property with extensive frontage on Route 202 in the Village of New Preston that is contiguous to densely populated residential and commercial areas. In addition to preserving open space, the property also meets another objective of the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development to enhance village centers. (See attached report from Chairman of the Conservation Commission.) Funds currently total \$652,700 in the Open Space Acquisition Fund. Proposed purchase price of the property is \$500,000.

Following discussion, Michael Jackson made a motion that the Board approve the project as to its fiscal feasibility and forward it to a town meeting with the Board's endorsement. Jack Boyer seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Minutes:

Minutes of the February meeting were accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report:

The Tax Collector's report noted 97.22% of this year's taxes had been collected. The Report was accepted as submitted. The Grand List was filed at \$1,280,000,000 +/- but remains subject to changes received from the revaluation company, as well as the Board of Assessment Appeals. Rex Swain raised concerns about the necessity to check the revaluation work provided to the Town by Total Valuation. Whether to go on record with these concerns will be investigated further.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Linda McGarr reported she had moved funds as requested. Actual transfers will be shown in her next report. Treasurer's Report accepted as submitted.

Financials:

Financial Reports were reviewed.

- * Winter Maintenance costs will exceed budgeted numbers by the end of the season due to the many storms this past winter season.
- * Funds remaining in the Boat Launch Fund, in addition to LoCIP grant funds anticipated for this project, will be transferred to the Capital Fund once assured that the project is complete.
- * The Town has recently received an Aa3 rating from Moody Investors.
- * First Selectman Lyon reported he had submitted a list of “shovel ready” projects as part of the federal stimulus plan. He would be pleasantly surprised if we actually received the funding as it seems the bulk of the funds will be made available to more urban areas.
- * While Educational Cost Sharing and Local Capital Improvement Program grants are scheduled to remain the same, the Town may lose 20% of other state grant funds in the next fiscal year. These would include 1/3 of the Town Aid Road grant, while Bridge grant funds may not be available at all. Currently budgeted funds are intact.

Education:

Jack Field reported the Region 12 budget is a work in progress, apparently headed toward a 1.5% increase as recommended by the Superintendent. Repair projects will be included with \$100,000. earmarked for the three elementary schools. The Superintendent’s ad hoc committee of Tony Bedini, Andy Engle and Charlie Boucher continue to work with the Superintendent and the three First Selectmen to enumerate repair needs in the three elementary schools. This Committee feels it is critical that the issue of school maintenance management be addressed immediately, as well as the structure of the school maintenance budget. Jack will investigate to determine if project estimates and bids could be sought directly from qualified contractors, which would shorten the time for work to begin by eliminating the issuance of RFP’s. Projects to be completed while the building is empty could then begin as soon as the children are on vacation and hopefully be completed by start of the 2009-10 school year.

Tony will attend a meeting of the Roxbury Boards of Selectmen and Finance to discuss these issues. He felt it imperative that the management issue be straightened out and that proper direction is given to accomplishing these tasks. The three towns should meet together with the Region in an effort to stop the poor building maintenance practices and the costs associated with it.

Pension Contribution:

In accordance with the recommendation received from the Town’s pension consultant, Jack Boyer made a motion to approve an ex-budget appropriation not to exceed \$6,000 for contribution to the Town’s pension fund. The motion was seconded by Barbara Brown and unanimously passed. (The suggested contribution for the 2008-09 contribution to the pension had not been received prior to the vote on the town budget in May, 2008.)

Alternate Vacancy:

This position will be discussed further.

Board of Education:

Mark Lyon reported four of the Town’s six seats on the Board of Election will expire on June 30, 2009. The Selectmen are considering holding elections by a referendum vote on the same date as that scheduled for the Region #12 budget, rather than at a town meeting. This will be offered for consideration at a special town meeting scheduled in April prior to the referendum scheduled for May 5th.

Preliminary 2009-2010 Budget Considerations:

First Selectman Lyon reported the initial proposal for the Town’s General Fund budget indicates an increase of 1.3%. The following items continue to be discussed:

- * Reviewing options and programs in health insurance and payroll costs. Consideration is being given to an increase of 0%-1.5% in employees payroll, as are responsibilities for health insurance costs, etc. These

numbers are not yet available. Total employee compensation will be reviewed.

- * Increased clerical staff in the Land Use area is required due to change in personnel duties.
- * A possible increase in the Town's share of Resident Trooper's costs from 70% to 85% is being suggested by the State. This will be discussed further at the State level.
- * Increase in Winter Maintenance material costs.
- * Costs for Transfer Station and Recycling.
- * Reductions in VNA, Library, Annual Repairs and Newsletter line items are being considered.
- * Capital: All areas are under review.

Michael Jackson suggested a 15% reduction in income should be anticipated due the country's current financial turmoil.

Peter Tagley agreed the Region's current maintenance positions should be reviewed. He also noted his support of the proposed purchase of the former Moore property by the Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Gollow
Secretary