

• **March 17, 2008**

Present: Regular Members: Barbara Brown, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon, Rex Swain

Alternates Members: Liddy Adams, John Allen, Arthur DuBois

Selectman: Mark Lyon

Guests: Peter Tagley

Sheila Anson, Town Clerk

Appointment of Alternate: Michael Jackson had received recommendations from the members of the Board for the appointment of Arthur J. DuBois, Jr. to fill the vacancy as an alternate member of the Board.

Barbara Brown made a motion that Arthur J. DuBois, Jr. be appointed as an alternate member to the Board of Finance. Craig Schoon seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed. Town Clerk Sheila Anson swore Mr. DuBois into Office and the Board welcomed A.J. as their new member.

Minutes: Minutes of the February meeting was accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Michael is awaiting an opinion from Town Counsel that will determine if Town funds held in a custodial account by the FNBL are separate from the Bank's assets. It was suggested an opinion might also be obtained from the State's Attorney General's office. The Treasurer will be asked to update the Board as to the CD interest rates and ending dates. Report accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Financials: Mark updated the Board on the current finances:

- A refund had been received from Region 12 from the previous year's budget.
- Winter Maintenance materials and overtime may exceed budget line items due to the many weekend and evening storms.
- The Selectmen's budget planning process continues with higher costs anticipated in the Elections area due to additional voting supplies required. He has registered his first complaint with the State on these additional costs.
- Options for reducing energy costs are being reviewed. Jim Brinton is working with Alliance Energy, WEC and the Energy Task Force in collecting data, in addition to contractors through CL&P to complete an energy audit. The Town currently purchases electricity through CCM at a reduced rate but other avenues are being investigated.
- The WCHT has requested additional rental assistance for senior renters. They will be asked to present financial information for review.
- Health and dental benefits are being reviewed. The Board was questioned whether the dental line item balance at the end of the fiscal year should be transferred into health account. History and experience will be provided. It was agreed this had been the plan.

Old Business:

Education: Jack Field reported the Board of Education had promised in 06/07 they would work toward a balanced presentation on a consolidated and three-school presentation; however, they are running out of time to get the question before the towns before the 6/30/08 deadline for reimbursement due to Bridgewater's possible appeal to the Court. Bridgewater may choose to hold a town meeting in April on this matter. If they decide not to appeal, we could proceed to referendum as planned. If they do appeal, we cannot bond. It is hoped there will be a referendum **of choice** between three schools and a consolidated school rather than on one item. Mark reported he had not heard further on the lease situation since the Board of Ed had rejected the proposal from the Lease Committee. The main issue is to get the three school package resolved in the event that Bridgewater appeals.

Mark reported at the Town Forum question was raised as to how costs compare for renovating the current school and a new building at the Shepaug site. The Board of Selectmen has had this reviewed by the S/L/A/M Collaborative, who has been directed to proceed using the Shepaug campus as a hypothetical site for the Washington School, as the site had been previously evaluated for a consolidated school. They have provided a plan for \$18.8 million, which includes \$2.5 million for septic for the entire system, if required. Favorable reimbursement would allow a minimum of \$13.6-14 million cost net to the Region. Mark suggested it would be prudent to have a town discussion to vote on the choice of renovating the current school or building a new school. The result of this would be presented as Washington's choice with the 3-school package. Michael suggested the impact of having the WPS building available should be quantified. Jack Field suggested an appraisal of the building should be done, asking opinions on the best use of the property and the market value of this 50,000 s.f. building on 5 acres. Michael suggested this could be coupled with the Titus Park site. While it would take time, this could be a real opportunity for the Town and it could be determined if the Town would look at it as an asset or a liability. It was also noted if a building were situated at the Shepaug site, it would provide another facility in that location in the event of a surge in school population. It was noted this would not preclude the choice on a regional primary school.

Town Hall Office Review: Michael reported a discussion had been held with CONNSTEP regarding the overall work force and tasks relating to general office work. They have reported they have not done municipal work in the past. They have also met with Linda Savitsky, formerly of the State's Office of Policy and Management, who is very conversant with the workings of municipal government. She has been asked to provide a cost to review task responsibilities and the way they are conducted and to provide suggestions for a smoother organization. The committee is awaiting her reply.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

^ Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary