

• March 20, 2006

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

The Board welcomed Jim Brinton as a new alternate member of the Board.

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

Alternate: Liddy Adams, John Allen (6:20), Jim Brinton

Selectmen: Richard Sears, Mark Lyon

Guests: Fire Co.: Dick Murchison (Chief); Duncan Woodruff (2nd Ass't. Chief)

Gunn Library & Museum: Jean Chapin (Director), Phil Farmer (Board Chairman)

Ralph Averill, Tom & Betsey Burke, Ron Chute, Bonnell Lombardi, Betty Mullin, Mary Anne Rimbocchi

The regular meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m.

Budget Requests:

Washington Volunteer Fire Department: Chief Dick Murchison presented the Fire Company's capital requests for the coming 2006-07 fiscal year, as well as their long-range plan through 2013. Their General Fund request had previously been submitted to the Board of Selectmen Included in this request is:

- Replacement of Engine #7 - \$250,000. (To replace '83 Int'l. tanker – used life.)
- Blitzfire personal monitor nozzle - \$2,775. Capable of delivering up to 500 gpm of water on a fire with one person. Essential due to the limited amount of manpower available at times.
- Life Safety belts (4) - \$1,000. Used when operating above grade on a ladder, roof or above the first floor. Also part of Rapid Intervention Team used for firefighter rescue.
- Portable radios (15 radios, 7 chargers) - \$12,010.96 Communications are an important link to personnel accountability and scene management during an emergency, whether it be a fire, accident or traffic control for same. Duncan noted while they have some older radios, the life expectancies of these are reduced.
- Personal protective gear (5 complete sets) \$10,000. Complete gear to insure every firefighter will be "combat ready" with all essential protective gear required. Currently no size available in stock with current gear. Limited "shelf life" of approximately seven years.

The Department's long-range plan was discussed in detail. Historically truck replacement has averaged approximately every 2 ½ years, with an anticipated use of 25 years per vehicle. While these vehicles may not have high mileage, they stand fully loaded with water at all times, which is wearing on the chassis.

The vehicle proposed for consideration is a tanker/pumper. It is smaller than the truck previously included in their long-range budget as it is felt it would be more useful on smaller roads and driveways. Dick suggested the possibility of spreading the cost over a two-year period in an attempt to maintain a cap on capital requests. Duncan reported to delay the actual purchase until next year could affect a cost difference of approximately \$13,000. Vendors have recommended the Town secure the chassis of the vehicle as soon as possible in order to prevent delays and to complete construction prior to additional federal regulations that will take effect in July of 2007 since it usually takes over a year to complete construction of a fire vehicle. Michael noted the fire company has a history of contributing toward the purchase of a new vehicle. Duncan reported they would be able to donate \$50,000 toward the purchase of the new truck. Including two SCBA @ \$4,000 each, the truck would total \$285,000. Trade-in of the current vehicle chassis could also provide a reduction of about \$15,000. The vehicle would be housed in

New Preston.

Other long-range planning items include budgeting personal protective gear annually or for one large-scale purchase, as well as hose. A commercial vehicle to be used by officers on duty, as well as firefighters attending educational courses, etc. is also listed. It was suggested it would be less expensive to reimburse these firefighters for mileage. A set of the fire company's financials will be made available to the Board. They are also working on a FEMA grant for the 09/10 year, which could eliminate SCBA Replacement estimated at \$200,000 for that year. (The complete budget request is on file in the Selectman's Office.)

Regarding the Town's pension contribution and tax reduction for the firefighters, Duncan felt these do assist those who meet the requirements. Those who do receive the benefits are pleased; however, not all younger firefighters own property that is taxable by \$1,000. Duncan suggested the Pension Plan could be 'fine-tuned' to clarify some questions. He has been reviewing benefits in other towns; some offer a \$1,000 tax reduction, a donation to a pension plan and a stipend of \$5/hr for service. As an example, Duncan reported had attended 120 calls with 7-mile round trips from his home last year. A benefit such as the latter would be appreciated by all. Dick Sears commended the leadership of the WVFD and the great job done by all the firefighters.

Gunn Memorial Library and Museum: Phil Farmer and Jean Chapin presented the GML&M's budget request for the 2006-07 fiscal year in the amount of \$111,500. This is the second year of their five-year plan, which increases annually by 3%. The Town's contribution represents 23.7% of this year's overall operating expense of \$456,200. Remaining funds are raised through an Annual Appeal, the Antiques Show, the Festival of Trees and a Book Sale, while endowment funds are used to balance the budget. In addition, a major capital expenditure was made this past year to paint the exterior of the building. Income from Library Luminaries has been dedicated to capital expenditures and Town funds are not requested for capital expense.

The Library and Museum provide an important service to the Town in terms of education and use. Open to all, some patrons contribute, while others do not. It is extremely difficult to forecast revenue. Volunteerism has saved them from large expenses. Phil reported the GML&M had reviewed the employee compensation and benefits over the past few years. He feels they have done well in raising lower income salaries for people who were making just above the minimum wage. A defined contribution pension plan has been instituted, as well as a health plan. They have been fortunate that the antique show and the annual appeal have exceeded their expectations for the past several years. The Board requested an historical analysis of their investment earnings, how Town tax funds used for the operating budget compare to those in contiguous towns and a comparison of their operating budget with other towns. This information will be provided. The Board thanked Jean and Phil for their efforts.

Guests: Guests addressed the Board regarding the recent referendum decision recommending the renovation of the three primary school buildings. Questions and concerns raised included:

- Why many who supported the renovation of the schools in the referendum are now suggesting costs are too high.
- The renewal of the leases on the three buildings, which are scheduled for renegotiation by October. (It was noted the leases must be approved at town meeting and prior to applying for grants.)
- What impact the renovation costs will have on future mill rates and long-term projects that have been planned by the Town, i.e. Funding for open space, housing, etc.
- What impact the higher cost of operating the four schools and the debt service will have on the mill rate and long-range planning.

With regard to the long-range impact, the Board noted long-range assumptions are prepared annually during the budget process for review. Due to the major funding impact of the renovation project, the public in attendance felt it is the Board's responsibility to provide longer-term information to all taxpayers. It was suggested the Board provide a mailing with this information. The Board discussed this at length. They agreed the information provided by the Steering Committee in conjunction with the effect on the Town's long-range projects and expenses could be used. The Board agreed to send an informational mailing to all taxpayers and that this mailing should not advocate a position on the proposed vote.

Treasurer's Report. Accepted as submitted. (attached)

Tax Collector's Report. Accepted as submitted. (attached)

Financials. Accepted as submitted. (attached)

Selectman's Report:

Dick reported information received from area towns indicates that income received from private duty employment is not used in the computation of pensions since this is the employee's right to choose this additional work as opposed to overtime work, which is required by the Town. The Pension Committee will review this further..

Dick reported federal regulations will soon require that large diesel trucks be fitted with additional equipment, which could cost the Town an extra \$6-8,000 per truck. He requested authorization to proceed investigating the purchase of a vehicle as had been outlined in the long-range plan. Costs would be included in next year's capital expense. The Board of Selectmen will pursue this further.

Dick reviewed the history of the Town's police coverage. The Selectmen have recommended two full-time and one half-time positions for a total of 12 ½ shifts. These shifts would be offset by part-time officers to include coverage for vacations, sick days, etc. as well as private duty assignments. This will result in savings in this area of the budget.

Dick reported the Selectmen had voted to appoint Lee Levesque as a permanent part-time police officer. Lee currently serves as the Town's Building and Property Coordinator for twenty hours/week. His twenty years of experience in police work and full training would benefit the Town. Dick commended Lee's efforts as Building and Property Coordinator.

In order to better serve the public, Dick reported some changes are being considered in the physical locations for town personnel, especially in the land use and police areas.

Ex-budget: An ex-budget appropriation of \$5,000. was unanimously approved to replace the fuel pump at the town garage.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary