

March 29, 2004

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

Present: Board: Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon and Rex Swain
Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown and Mark Lyon
Selectmen: Richard Sears, Nicholas Solley
Press: John Addyman, VOICES; Sarah Sparks, Waterbury Republican/American
Guests: Chris Charles, Planning

Minutes: Minutes of the March 1 meeting were accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's report was accepted as submitted.

Rex recommended the Pension Fund investments be reviewed and suggested the Town Treasurer take charge of these investments. Michael felt the Treasurer's responsibilities lie more in the use of funds for Town on-going expenses, while pension funds require long-term investments. Pension funds have always been kept separate from Town funds and the Pension Committee has directed the bank on the type of investments to be made. Barbara Brown and Michael will contact the investors to discuss investments.

Tax Collector's Report: A comparison of monthly bank deposits to deposits shown in the Tax Collector's monthly income reports was provided by the Tax Collector. The differences that appear from time-to-time seem to be the dates the deposits are put in the computer and the actual date of bank deposit. These may differ by a day or two. Tanya will be asked to attend the next meeting to discuss this further.

Debt Service: Michael reported he had investigate refinancing of the town debt service and found better rates could not be obtained. The rate for the current year is 4.25-4.35%.

Selectman's Report: Dick reported the Department of Transportation has approved a grant toward 80% of the costs of the new police vehicle that is a part of the current year's capital budget. Costs to the Town will be \$6,500, with the federal grant for \$26,000. The Town has received the funding of \$35,000 from the D.O.T. toward the cost of a new Senior bus. Delivery of the bus anticipated for early summer. Dick is working with the firefighters on a grant through Homeland Security for personal protective equipment and turn-out gear. The grant will require a 10% match from the Town for approximately \$70-80,000 of equipment. \$5,000 has been proposed for the upcoming 04/05 town budget, with the fire company agreeing to provide an additional \$2-3,000.

Proposed General Fund Budget: Dick Sears presented the Selectmen's initial DRAFT General Fund expenditures in the amount of \$3,382,219, 4.6% over the current year as follows:

Personnel: Basic cost-of-living and consumer price index figures were considered in determining personnel salaries, since specific job descriptions were not available for all positions for performance reviews. The Selectmen felt a general 3% increase was acceptable. Employees and elected officials had been invited to discuss their job satisfaction, work load, etc. Dick reported very positive feedback was received and employees were very supportive of one another. He felt the employees do their jobs well and accurately and he strives for efficiency. He noted the difference between employees and elected officials must also be considered. While town employees could be reviewed if specific criteria were developed for all positions, it was recognized elected officials are really reviewed by the voters, where their acceptance is reflected at voting time. It was suggested job descriptions be developed for both employees and elected officials for use in an annual review. It was suggested some elected officials/employees have larger workloads and this should be taken into consideration. It was also suggested that officials/employees

could review their own work situations and recommend areas of improvement. It was felt all personnel should receive the same consideration at this time.

The Board suggested reviewing all expenses such as phone, legal, supplies, etc. in the aggregate to obtain better costs.

General Government:

001 - Selectmen: Line item added for 225th Anniversary Celebration - should be separated into its own line item to insure it is a one-time item.

004 - Town Clerk - Added new line for Historic Document Preservation. Costs for this are offset by income in Town clerk's office in accordance with statutes. Also, addition of 70 hours for clerk to complete filing needs. This is a one-time expense.

006 - Building Inspector - Contracted cost is 74% of fees collected. It was suggested line item for this expense remain as is because income offsets this expense. It was noted Building expense last year was \$107,000, while income was \$194,000.

008 - Elections: Increased voting/ hours from noon to 6 a.m. for referenda. Region 12 will cover expenses for a special vote on the study for a consolidated school.

011 - Planning Commission - Chris Charles noted implementation of the Town's Revised Plan of Conservation and Development has begun, as well as a possible study of the Depot. It was felt the expertise of a consultant will be needed.

013 - Zoning Board of Appeals - Legal fees have been increased because of two pending lawsuits.

014 - Inland Wetlands - Increased time for enforcement is suggested.

017 - Town Hall - Increase in fuel and maintenance costs.

018 - Town Garage - Increase in fuel and planting costs.

019 - Surety Bonds & Insurance: Decrease due to 3-year contract with CIRMA for guaranteed pricing.

020 - Accident & Health Insurance: Various insurance plans are being investigated. Maintaining the current plan would require an increase of 11% for the coming year. This is an increase over last year's 10% increase, at which time employees, co-pays were increased. Review will continue on switching from a point-of-service plan to an HMO, as well as other cost reduction measures. The Board suggested Selectmen compare other municipal plans.

021 - Office Expense - Payroll company will provide additional services of direct deposit and tax deposits. Increase for computer support and maintenance instead of always relying on volunteer services.

022 - Social Security/Medicare: Adjustment in accordance with payroll adjustments.

Public Safety:

025 - Fire Company: Increase due to servicing of fire pumps and NRPA hose pressure testing.

026 - Police: New line item of Private Duty - Non-reimbursable. This is for police services for town events such as the carnival and Holiday in the Depot, where the Town will not have to reimburse itself.

Private Duty Reimbursable line item was reduced from prior year due to reduction in request for police services on weekends in Steep Rock and Town services.

027 - Emergency Management: Increase from \$36,377 to \$38,755 for Litchfield County Dispatch services.

029 - Lake Waramaug Authority: Increase of \$2,000 for emergency strobe light and upgrade of radio system requested, as well as increased hours for patrol of lake. These expenses are reimbursable by 60%.

Highway Maintenance:

031 - General Maintenance: Increase in maintenance and repairs of trucks and grader, plus secretarial assistance for 3 hours/week.

032 - Winter Maintenance: This year's budget will be overspent. Increase in winter sand and salt. Spent \$69,815 this year, which is well over budget.

033 - Street Lighting. Increase in electrical costs. Survey of street lights is being reviewed.

It was noted the position for Director of Public Works had been turned down last year since a complete job description had not been developed. The Selectmen noted the importance of the many and varied responsibilities that would be involved with this position but have not included a request for this position in the coming budget.

Sanitation:

035 - Transfer Station: Increases in contracted services, as well as tonnage for municipal solid waste.

036 - Recycling: Increases in contracted services, as well as increase in costs for recycling tires, appliances and electronics. We will be seeing more variations in recyclables. Prices charged at transfer station are reflective of what the Town is paying for removal of items.

Conservation of Health:

038 - Increased need for Sanitarian's services - add 26 weeks @ 8 hrs/week for busier months.

Parks & Recreation:

041 - Parks & Recreation:

Additional hours for grounds maintenance at primary school. Also, increase of \$5,700 is being considered for maintenance of River Walk public facility, which includes the care and maintenance required for the proposed bathrooms.

Other Expense:

Gunn Memorial Library: Selectmen approved as submitted at \$105,000. A complete budget had been submitted by the Library.

Newsletter: Dick suggested the town newsletter be mailed to residents quarterly. Members of the Board felt this quite ambitious and questioned its impact and how it could be evaluated. Dick would oversee the entire process and felt it important to get information to the public about various issues facing the Town, i.e. recycling vs. the cost of solid waste, etc. The Selectmen will review this further.

Capital Budget: Nick Solley presented the proposed capital budget projects at \$1,867,974, with their anticipated net cost of \$898,978. He reported the Town has attracted nearly \$1,000,000 in grants for the coming year and the Selectmen are confident that final approvals will be forthcoming shortly. A recommendation from the auditor will be sought as to whether gross or net expense must be voted on at town meeting. .

The Board agreed that capital funds remaining in the chipseal line may be carried over to the coming season.

Appointment of Alternate: Robin Hirschfield submitted a written letter of resignation that had been circulated to the Board. The Board accepted Robin's resignation with regret. A recommendation from the Town Committee had been anticipated but as yet had not been received in writing. The importance of having a full Board during budget season was noted and it was agreed to proceed to fill this vacancy. Jack Field made a motion to appoint John Allen as an alternate member of the Board. Rex Swain seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously.

Ex Budget Appropriation: Dick Sears requested the Board approve an ex-budget appropriation of \$5,000 toward expenses incurred for the forthcoming 225th Town's Anniversary celebration. Michael Jackson moved to approve this sum. The motion was seconded by Jack Field and unanimously passed. Dick noted the Selectmen may consider requesting additional funds for this project as part of the proposed budget request.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 19th.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary