

March 31, 2003

Present:

Board: Jack Field, Robin Hirschfield, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon, Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Mark Lyon, and Barbara Brown

Selectmen: Elaine Luckey, Nicholas Solley

Press: David Lombino, Litchfield County Times; Sarah Sparks, Waterbury Republican

Guests: John Allen - Building & Property Commission Chairman; Sheila Anson, Tim Cook, Joe Fredlund - Parks & Rec Commission; Valerie Friedman

Guests:

Building & Property Commission: John Allen detailed the growth of the Building & Property Commission's responsibilities since its inception and commended his co-members, Dave Showalter and Reese Owen, for their efforts and time spent in reviewing current and long-range plans for Town buildings and properties. The Commission had originally recommended a part-time handy man be hired to complete maintenance on buildings that did not warrant bidding and contracting. Over the past year, through their review of building conditions and preparation of specifications, the Commission found that several projects that had been approved had not been addressed due to lack of staff and lack of direction. While highway department workers have assisted with repairs, these often have to wait until their primary responsibilities are met. They felt it would be in the best interest of the town to employ a full-time person to be a "hands-on worker, as well as coordinator of projects, bids, etc. The Commission felt continuity is extremely important in this position, as administration does change, and the Town would be a better-quality person by hiring full-time. Nick Solley noted the Board of Selectmen has differing opinions on this position but he feels very strongly about it. Much of the maintenance of the buildings has been deferred for some time and gone unchecked. The Selectmen noted their appreciation of the Building and Property Commission's efforts and expertise, as well as the time they have spent on many issues.

Parks & Recreation Commission: Proposed Bathroom/Storage Building: Chairman Sheila Anson also thanked the Building and Property Commission for their assistance. She reported that after receiving input from the public, modifications had been made to the Commission's original plan for a bathroom and storage building. These include attaching the bathroom/storage area to the south side of the current pavilion and installing a well and septic system. Percolation tests had previously been completed by Underwood Services, and Wyant & Co. has offered their time, machinery and services for septic installation. She felt this would be an approximate \$15,000 in saving. The Commission has met to discuss their fund-raising strategy and was asked to continue with these meetings in order to present a budgeted plan to the Selectmen and the Finance Board. Elaine reported she would also like the Commission to pursue the availability of grant funding. The Commission would like to begin the project in July of this year. This will be considered further if the information is received prior to the budget hearing.

General Fund Budget: The Selectmen presented a General Fund budget of \$3,272,624, which is a 6.4% increase over the current year, as well as a \$1,000,025. Capital budget. The following items were discussed:

- Proposed merit raises for current Town employees equated to 2.5% over the current payroll. The addition of two new positions would increase the overall payroll by 9.9%. Discussion of various Town positions and their duties was held. The Selectmen were asked to reduce the current payroll by another .25% in keeping with the increase in the Grand List. This was agreeable. The payroll area will be discussed further at the next meeting.

- It was recommended that a line item for "winter salt" be added to the Winter Maintenance budget. Expenses for winter salt have been covered through the Town Aid Road account, which has historically been used for this, as well as unanticipated road projects that occur during the year. A recent example of this was Gunn Hill Road. Due to an increase in the number of residences on this road, drainage work, etc. had to be done to keep this road passable. It was suggested a line item for Town Aid Road funds be added to the Long-Range Planning Assumption Sheet.
- A "tax refund" line item will be deleted and this will be offset in tax income.
- Under Elections, a line item for "canvassing of voters" will be added. It had been deleted from previous budgets, but upon further review, it was agreed it was necessary and is mandated by the State.
- The Selectmen were asked to consider a reduction in various legal, consultant and monitoring fee line items. While the importance of the commissions having access to legal opinions was recognized, it was felt that this would be an area that could be considered for reduction. As an example, the area of Meeker Swamp was discussed. It was noted the Steep Rock Association has been charged with the management of this area and, therefore, responsible for monitoring this area.
- Building and Property Management position. Further discussion as to the responsibilities of this position would be held. If approved, a capital item for a vehicle would also be included. This will also be discussed.
- Health insurance plans and deductibles are being reviewed with agent, as are property and liability insurances.
- It was suggested that the Selectmen review the reimbursement rate for private duty police coverage to insure that the Town's expenses are being covered.
- Emergency Management: Elaine reported the Council of Governments is investigating the increased costs for our 911 contract and is putting leverage and pressure on the company to get this reduced. The Selectmen feel the responsibilities and time needed for the position of Emergency Management Coordinator has increased measurably. This was discussed in detail. They feel this is an extremely important position and have suggested this position be compensated for eight hours/week.
- Lake Waramaug Authority: Selectmen will review need for boat storage and charges involved.
- Tree Work: Increase in number of trees that have been taken down with respect to public safety. A large number of trees stumps need to be chipped and removed from the town transfer station.
- Question was raised as to what is a reasonable amount of money for the Town to spend on Parks and Recreation. The Selectmen did not feel there was extreme expense anywhere. The budget mainly includes expenses to cover payroll for recreation, summer program, beach and boat ramp employees, as well as maintenance of fields, the beach, etc. The Commission runs many programs that pay for themselves.
- Gunn Library: It was noted this item was part of their long-range plan presented previously to the Board.
- The Selectmen had reassessed Capital items since the last meeting and felt the \$300,000 originally included for the next year's Capital budget would be postponed until the 2004-05 fiscal year to

better align it with anticipated grant income for this project. Nick noted the Trustees might want to proceed with installing the elevator, in which case the grant would only address handicap upgrade of the building. Discussion will continue.

The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Selectman's Assistant