

• April 16, 2007

Present:

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

Alternates: Liddy Adams, John Allen, Jim Brinton

Selectmen: Richard Sears, Mark Lyon, Nicholas Solley

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Minutes: Minutes of the March 9, 2007 meeting were reviewed.

- Regarding the correction to the February minutes on the issue of purchasing procedures, Rex noted he neither agreed nor disagreed on the purchase made, but was concerned that correct procedure had not been followed.
- Regarding School Construction, Jack Field suggested the following sentence be amended. "They found that (delete: "this") (add: "special legislation on reimbursements") is no longer available and that reimbursement would have to be sought through the normal channels, which require Board of Education approval, (add: "sponsorship and control."). Minutes accepted as corrected.

Treasurer's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Tax Collector's Report: Accepted as submitted.

Financials: The Capital Budget includes a total of \$600,000 for bridge repairs over a five-year period. Nick Solley reported these costs have been budgeted over several years as part of the Board of Selectmen's long-range planning. He also noted an environmental review will now be required in 2008 for the Sprain Brook Bridge on Nettleton Hollow Road. Funding for the bridges will be complete by the time construction on the second bridge is complete.

School Construction: Jack Field reported the School Building Committee had been asked to address three pieces of work: a single school, evaluate separate proposals for local plans, and to update the master plan for the three schools. It was anticipated this would take until September or October, which could result in a possible 5% loss in state assistance for construction. Thus, the Board of Ed agreed it would be best to hold a referendum in the current fiscal year. They investigated the possibility of presenting a referendum on two issues: a three-school or a consolidated building project. This was turned down as it was not clear it could legally be done according to state legislation. The Board then voted to proceed to a single-item referendum on June 19th - a single school in Roxbury - for a specific cost. If approved, the number would be forwarded to the Building Committee as the budget number. Jack noted this will be a serious vote and an opportunity to vote on a binding decision. He also reported an additional 2% reimbursement is available from the State for an environmental high performance school. The Board of Finance felt it is necessary to communicate the facts to the voters in a non-advocacy manner.

If the single school option were to be chosen, the issue of costs involving the future of the current building must be addressed. It was felt these should be quantified. Nick reported raw costs for fuel, electricity and insurances are being sought. These would have to be woven into future plans for this facility and there would be many issues to address. Some research has been done. It has not been found that any school in this situation has been abandoned.

PROPOSED 2007-2008 BUDGET:

Dick Sears presented the following preliminary budget figures:

EXPENSE:

2006-07 2007-08 Increase %

General Fund \$3,677,320 \$3,824,175 \$147,000 4.0%

Capital Fund \$1,296,050 \$1,926,603 **Grants** \$ 369,000 777,000 **Net** \$ 927,050 \$ 1,149,603 \$222,553
24.0%

Education \$8,464,512 \$8,942,718 \$478,206 5.6%

Total: \$12,810,321 \$13,650,728 \$840,407 6.6%

REVENUE:

Grand List: \$ 966,566,340

Increase: \$ 16,257,010 @ 12 mils = \$195,084.

General Fund Budget: Dick presented the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget, which equates to a 4% overall increase in the General Fund of \$147,000. The following are reasons for changes:

- One-third of the overall increase is attributed to a \$35,669 increase in payroll. While the general increase to employees is 3.5%, this equates to an overall payroll increase of 2.7%.
- Increased costs in the areas of electricity, petroleum, and petroleum-related projects.
- The number of referenda has been increased from 3 to 4.
- An increase in town hall costs is due to the increased use of the building. This increased use has also required the custodian to inspect the premises on weekends for which he has not previously been compensated.
- Health insurance costs: The Selectmen will continue to review various means of reducing costs, including increasing deductibles, self-insuring dental, capping costs, etc as compared to the current coverage. The cost difference resulting from reductions in premium due to these changes will be transferred to the health insurance reserve account.
- All individual phone line items involving town hall have been moved into the Office Expense area.
- A central phone system is anticipated for next year, which will cut down the number of lines needed for the building.
- Increased computer support is needed. This support and memory upgrade of current computers will reduce the need to purchase as many new computers each year. A firewall box will be installed linked through the internet.
- Fire company utilities, vehicle, and equipment costs have increased, as have physical exam costs required by OSHA. Reimbursement for training sessions and mileage to attend classes is included. The

need for this was questioned, noting that people are forgetting they are volunteers. Dick suggested this is a move in the area of supporting the volunteers. It was suggested half of the costs be paid by the Town and the remaining half be paid by the Fire Company from funds they received from the public. The Board requested a copy of the Fire Company's financials as they have of other organizations.

- Increased hours for a groundskeeper at the Pavilion River walk has been requested by Parks and Rec for a longer season.
- **Capital Requests:** Original requests to the Selectmen of \$2,147,508 have been reduced to \$1,926,603. Anticipated grants of \$777,000 will result in a net expense of \$1,149,503. Again, the increased cost of fuel-related projects, as well as transportation of materials, is a major impact.
- **Road Program:** The need to step up the road program was noted. Fuel costs are up 25%, materials are up 40%. The need to replace guard rails, culverts and pipes is included. Increasing Town Aid Road funds from \$100,000 to \$200,000 to offset these projects is planned. The Selectmen's policy has been to maintain a minimum balance in the Town Aid account for emergency situations
- **Vehicle & Equipment:** The second payment of \$100,000 toward a 2007 International Model 7600 fire vehicle is included, while a request for a fire command vehicle was eliminated. In addition, the WVFD reduced their original request for additional equipment from \$58,000 to \$35,000 at the request of the Selectmen
- **Building & Property:** The installation of a water cistern to service the residents of the Church Street area in New Preston was discussed. An increase in the size of the tank and the price has increased the original estimated price. It is the understanding of some that the Housing Trust would split the costs with the Town; however, since price and size of the cistern has increased since the original plans were drawn, this will be further clarified.
- **Materials from the former town garage site on Titus Road** will be removed and the property will be regraded, topsoiled, seeded, and a walking path will be installed. An area will still be required for sweepings. A separate committee will address the future of this area.
- Further detail was requested on cost for computer/printer upgrade, as well as the decrease in the Inland Wetlands legal fees line item and increase in electricity for the Pavilion.

A special meeting to continue discussion of the budget was scheduled for April 30th at 5 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary