

## • April 19, 2004

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

**Present:** Board: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Mark Lyon, Craig Schoon

Alternates: John Allen and Barbara Brown

Selectmen: Richard Sears, Nicholas Solley

Press: Sarah Sparks, Waterbury Republican/American

Guests: Tanya Wescott, Tax Collector; Bill Fairbairn, Elaine Luckey, John Millington, Peter Tagley

**Appointments:** Michael Jackson made a motion to appoint move Mark Lyon as a regular Board member and John Allen as an alternate. Jack Boyer seconded the motion, which was unanimously passed.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the March 29 meeting were accepted as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Tanya Wescott reported four taxpayers have been turned over for collection. They have owed taxes for multiple years and have not responded to her inquiries. Other taxpayers who are in arrears have worked out payment plans with her. She explained the Suspense List as accounts that are not considered collectible, nor an asset to the Town. Most of these payments are from motor vehicle taxes of former residents. The funds do remain collectible.

### **2004-2005 Proposed Budget:**

**General Fund:** The Selectmen presented the General Fund budget at of \$3,331,892. Dick reported the Selectmen had reviewed all areas and outlined the following changes:

- Newsletter line reduced from \$12,000 to \$9,000 to allow three yearly issues instead of four.
- The 225th Anniversary line was reduced from \$20,000 to \$10,000. \$5,000 had been allotted as an ex-budget appropriation to cover current expenses.
- Health Insurance was reviewed in depth with the Town's agent. An HMO plan to replace the current point of service plan is being considered. This would not adversely affect the employees since most of their doctors are included under the HMO plan and their co-pays would remain the same. Changes will continue to be made in the future to maintain minimal costs and services and town employees will need to become partners with the Town in this area.
- Pension was estimated at \$73,000. Pension Consultants will be contacted.
- Gunn Library was maintained as requested. They will be asked to discuss future budget consideration in June or July.
- It was suggested that phone service be reviewed further and possibly renegotiated.
- Field fertilization, weed prevention, clay, etc. for town ball fields will be reviewed further.
- Costs for Sanitation were discussed. These are based on tonnage at contracted prices for hauling and burning. Increasing tonnage for recyclables while decreasing solid waste would be the major way to decrease costs. A Recycling Committee meeting has been scheduled for the coming week to address these concerns. Current recycling charges at the transfer station will be compared with Town costs.

Michael noted the General Fund Proposed Expenditures, not including the debt service, amounted to a 4.2% increase. After further discussion, the Selectmen agreed to review expenditures further.

**Capital Fund:** Nick Solley presented a capital budget of \$1,877,974. Anticipated grants of \$994,920 would result this to a net figure of \$883,054. Several projects had been held from the previous year and included with this proposal because the Selectmen knew they would not be started during that year. The Selectmen are now ready to proceed.

**The Road Program:** Projects are consistent with the continuing long-range road program. It was suggested that Town Aid Road funds be used to reduce the net demand on the capital budget. Nick reported the Selectmen consider this fund, in part, a rainy day fund to be used for emergency road repairs such as those required after the summer storm in 1995 that amounted to \$500,000. The balance in this Fund is currently about \$220,000. While this balance higher than usual, Nick noted there are no road material reserves and he sees more road expenses than usual. Jack Field questioned if an estimated balance had been established for this rainy day fund. Nick felt \$100,000 should be the minimum balance. He noted prior to the former administration, this Fund had been used to offset annual expenses for salt. Since then, the salt line item has been added to the General Fund budget to accurately reflect all the costs of running the town. The Selectmen agreed to review this area again.

**Fire Vehicle:** Mark Lyon was to have discussed the financing of this but left on an emergency fire call.

**Land Acquisition Open Space/Land Acquisition Housing:**

Proposals to include \$25,000 to acquire open space land and \$25,000 for land for housing were discussed. Opinions differed. Some felt the Town's support, both financially and philosophically, could serve well as an aid in obtaining additional grants. However, they felt the amount should be higher than proposed. Others suggested it would be premature to set funds aside before having a specific piece of property in mind, and that an ex-budget appropriation could be made if funds were needed to begin. The purchase of land by the Town for open space was also questioned as being contradictory to the issue of housing. It was felt the Town's purchase of land for open space could retire a significant amount of available land, thus increasing the price for remaining land and becoming exclusionary to younger people. Discussion had been held on these issues prior to budget deliberations; however, this discussion stimulated further debate. It was suggested these two items remain as part of the capital budget but the Selectmen organize a separate town meeting to discuss these issues.

The Board of Finance will hold a special meeting on May 3rd at 5 p.m. to continue discussion on the budget.

The annual Town budget hearing is scheduled for Thursday, May 6th at 7:30 p.m. and the Town meeting is scheduled for May 20th at 7:30 p.m

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary