

April 21, 2003

Present:

Board: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Michael Jackson and Rex Swain

Alternates: Mark Lyon, and Barbara Brown

Selectmen: Elaine Luckey, Nicholas Solley

Press: David Lombino, Litchfield County Times

Guests: Alan Chapin, Richard Dutton, Valerie Friedman and Peter Tagley

Minutes: Minutes of the March 17 meeting were accepted as submitted. Minutes of the March 31 Special Meeting were corrected to show that the Legislative School Governance Legislative Study Committee will forward their recommendation to the Education Committee and the Planning and Development Committee, which are separate entities.

Treasurer's Report: It was noted the existing debt service on the firehouse could be repaid if it were felt the Town had sufficient cash funds. The current rate on this indebtedness is approximately 4 %, while current interest income rates are about 1%. If it is felt there are sufficient funds available after budget deliberations, the Treasurer will be notified and it would be left to her discretion.

Tax Collector's Report: The Tax Collector's report of March 31, 2003 indicated 2.8% real estate, 4.4% personal property, 6% motor vehicle and 10.9% supplemental motor vehicle tax remain outstanding for the current year as of March 31. She expects these percentages to decrease measurably before year's end as several accounts are in different stages of sale, foreclosure, probate, etc., as well as on tax payment plans. She will be asked to keep the Board updated.

Financials: The Winter Maintenance line item is \$33,000 over budget as of March 31 due to the severe winter. Complete report attached.

Proposed Budget: The Selectmen reported they had further reduced expenditures by approximately \$64,000. They have postponed the position of Building and Property coordinator, and noted the Building and Property Commission will continue to address the many building issues, while finding it very time-consuming. Legal fee line items were reduced. A line item for winter salt had been added a \$21,000 as had been recommended by the Finance Board. This had previously been in the Town Aid Road account. \$3,600 was also added to the pension line item, as well as funds for summer highway help. Sanitation bids have not been awarded but they believe there may be a savings in this area.

The Selectmen eliminated a pickup truck from the proposed capital budget, reducing the total to \$965,025. All recognized the importance of analyzing the capital program and preparing a long-range outlook. This would include not only the spending but also funding. The Selectmen were asked to consider even further reductions. The Board may consider use of the reserve in the capital account to offset capital expenses. This reserve has increased over the past few years due to interest income and state grants received as reimbursement for various town projects.

Long-range assumptions were discussed. Upon review of historic mill rates, it was noted the mill rate has been kept quite constant over the past ten years, mainly by virtue of revaluation and the school population. There had been no increase to the mill rate last year and one-quarter mill the previous year. The Board continued their discussion on philosophies of whether to maintain the current mill rate by decreasing fund balances or to allow an increase, in order to maintain a more constant mill rate and keep an adequate fund balance. Current philosophy is to maintain a fund balance equal to at least one month's expenses.

The use of Town Aid road funds was discussed. Traditionally, these funds have been used for the upkeep of the road system and for emergency repairs resulting from major storms, etc. The Selectmen noted their reluctance in including these funds with the general expenses because it is anticipated that the State will reduce these funds in years to come. It was suggested annual expenditure of these funds be commensurate with the amount anticipated to be received from the State.

Varying opinions were set forth regarding the mill rate for 2003-2004. Budget deliberations will continue.

Fund to Accept Fees in Lieu of Providing Open Space or Easements: Elaine Luckey reported she has received a request from the Planning Commission and the Conservation Commission regarding the establishment of a Town fund to accept fees in lieu of providing open space or easements when developing property. She noted there is a statute that allows the Town to receive such funds' however, it may require a vote at town meeting. The funds would be used to monitor and/or purchase open space, as well as to manage the land. She noted some towns require 15% of open space per lot. It was felt this would be beneficial to the Town rather than having many smaller pieces of land. While questions remained as to the dispensing of the funds and the monitoring of the land, the Board agreed a decision should not be made until the revision of the Plan of Development is complete.

Appointment of Auditor: Jack Field made a motion to appoint Charles Heaven & Company of Waterbury, Connecticut as the Town's auditor for the fiscal year July 1, 2003-June 30, 2004. Jack Boyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Special Meeting: A special meeting was scheduled for April 30 at 5:30 p.m. to continue work on the budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary