

June 17, 2002

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

Present:

Board: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Robin Hirschfield, Michael Jackson, Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, Barbara Brown, Mark Lyon

Selectman: Elaine Luckey

Press: David Lombino, Litchfield County Times

Guests: Peter Tagley

Guest Comments: Peter Tagley suggested the Board make an effort to recapture some of the funds the school board is now holding. He believes these include approximately \$321,000 - \$134,000, \$117,000 and \$70,000 from prior year's budgets and anticipated track construction. He suggested the Board review legal parameters as to how long the Board of Education is allowed to hold funds before returning them to the towns. It was noted Bill Stuart, First Selectman of Bridgewater, had previously written to the Region regarding funds (attached). The Board of Finance will verbalize their concerns.

Superintendent Search: The Board noted a consultant has been hired by the Board of Education to assist in the pursuit of a new Superintendent of Schools. In addition, the current business manager of the Region will also be leaving the District. The First Selectman had been requested to suggest a representative from the Town for a search committee, which she did. Thus far, however, no further contact has been made. It was felt an open meeting should be held in all three towns to get input from the citizens as to what they are looking for in a superintendent. It was recognized that only the Board of Ed members are eligible to vote on this position.

Minutes: Minutes of the May 20 and 23 meetings were accepted as submitted. Future minutes will be e-mailed to members to save on postage and paper.

Tax Collector's Report: Accepted as submitted.

'98 Suspense List: The Board reviewed the Suspense List in the amount of \$46,985.80 submitted by the Tax Collector. It was agreed to notify the Tax Collector that the Board felt certain names on the list should be pursued further for payment. Concern was noted over the large number of students on this list from the International College of Hospitality Management who have not paid their motor vehicle tax. It was agreed to have the tax collector prepare a list of the students and notify the school of the high percentage of students. It was suggested the school might require an additional fee from students to help offset costs. It was suggested this list be put on the website or in the press. Jack Boyer moved to approve the Suspense List. Robin Hirschfield seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

Financials Reports: Reviewed and approved.

Ex-Budget Appropriation - Work Zone Signs: Jack Boyer made a motion to approve a ex-budget appropriation of \$7,000 to purchase municipal safety signs for improved highway safety. This expenditure would be reimbursed through a Federal Highway Work Zone Safety Program grant. It was noted these signs are used only in the work zone for safety purposes and no additional permanent signage would be erected in the Town from the use of these funds. Robin Hirschfield seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Small Town Economic Assistance Plan Grant (STEAP): Elaine explained that an application for this grant had previously been submitted by former First Selectman Alan Chapin to assist with purchasing the

Washington Montessori School building in New Preston for possible housing. Since funds were no longer needed for this purpose, the grant application had been withdrawn and an amended application was submitted for improvements to the road, sidewalk, etc. in this neighborhood. It is not sure if the water lines would be eligible since they are owned privately. It is anticipated this funding will be available in the Fall of 2002.

Auditor: Michael Jackson made a motion to appoint Charles Heaven & Co. of Waterbury as the Town's auditor for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2002. Jack Boyer seconded the motion. Michael felt the auditors are doing an excellent job and the cost remains approximately the same, except for an increase to cover additional requirements in accordance with GASB regulations. The motion unanimously passed.

Assumptions: Michael explained while tax collection receipts and other sources of income have historically resulted in higher receipts than budgeted, it has always been the Board of Finance's policy budget conservatively with regard to income. This has resulted in a fund reserve and a very good Moody's rating. The reserve funds have assisted with such items as fire equipment, senior housing and open space land. While the Board agreed to maintain a 15.75 mill rate for the coming year, Michael cautioned that with the Shepaug lawsuit still unsettled and an increase in project costs expected once the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development is complete, the Town could be facing higher expenses in the future. He felt the agenda for the July meeting should include discussion of the Board's policies in budgeting and the education of the new members as to how they have proceeded in the past. He suggested a ten-year history be reviewed and discussed in conjunction with anticipated future costs. He felt the Board should consider how they will manage these demands and how they will be presented to the townspeople for consideration.

Jack Field provided a reformatted assumption sheet, which offered information in an easier-to-follow format. He noted all education income, whether credits from the school or income received directly by the Town for state education grants, have been netted with the Education expenditures. This, in turn, has reduced the estimated amount of Town income but he felt this was a fairer way of presenting actual Education figures. Jack explained his presentation, noting per pupil percentage is a very sensitive number in this presentation, as are capital expenses. It was noted the Town continues to apply for state grants that will help to offset capital expense.

The Board noted the townspeople have many decisions to make for the future of the Town - the need for housing, open space, the river, a sound budget. Sound planning and innovative ideas to maintain the Town's character will be important. Jack hoped the Board of Finance would help in these decisions on future town issues because of costs involved.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow
Secretary