

# July 27, 2005

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

**Present:** Board Members: Jack Boyer, Jack Field, Michael Jackson, Mark Lyon, Craig Schoon and Rex Swain

Alternates: Liddy Adams, John Allen and Barbara Brown

Selectmen: Richard Sears

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

**Minutes:** Minutes of the May 5 hearing, May 5 meeting, May 19th and June 20th meeting were approved as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Linda reported she had recently closed out three money market savings account and shifted funds to STIF and TRIM funds for a higher return. It was noted STIF's percentage had increased from a 1.84% to a 3.27% interest rate in six months. The Board noted their appreciation. Treasurer's Report approved.

**Tax Collector's Report:** The Tax Collector was commended for the excellent job she had done in collecting overdue accounts, as well as current taxes. Tax Collector's Report approved as submitted.

## **Financials:**

**General Fund:** Year-end cash-basis figures resulted in higher than anticipated Income and Expense of approximately +\$700,000. Historically, if a positive net balance occurred, it has been used to cushion the impact on the mill rate. This has resulted in the mill rate remaining at 11 for the past three years. Specific areas that exceeded budgeted income included: Interest, taxes, building inspection fees, police private duty fees, ECS grant and town clerk. Specific areas that exceeded budgeted expense were: Building, Police and Highways, some of which income offsets expenses. It was agreed that transfers would not be made until discussing these with the auditor.

**Nonrecurring Capital:** Jack Boyer made a motion to transfer \$980,004 from the General Fund to the Nonrecurring Capital Fund to cover capital expenses approved at the May, 2005 town meeting. The motion was seconded by Michael Jackson and unanimously passed. A surplus in the Capital Fund over the past several years has resulted from interest, grants and completed projects. Specifics will be identified. The Board will determine what can be transferred back to the General Fund. All remaining funds have been committed for particular projects and are not available.

## **Selectman's Report:**

**Depot Study Phase I:** Dick Sears reported on the positive public engagement and dialogue received at the recent Depot Study charrette. The study is proceeding well and addresses traffic concerns, parking, the Plaza, and future development in the Depot area. The Planning Commission will follow through and present the final results to the Town. This will assist in providing proper controls for future developers at a point when development may become imminent. Phase II would encompass a major DOT study of traffic, speed, and infrastructure studies of pedestrian transportation and septic.

**Primary School Construction:** Dick, Michael and Jack Field reported on the positive reaction received

for future planning for the primary schools. After meeting with First Selectmen and Finance chairmen from the three towns, the Board of Education chairman and the Superintendent, it was agreed that the First Selectmen would each establish a task force from their town to gather data needed for this project. An additional task force group will also be established to study the possibilities of consolidation and to consider various options, including the relocation of certain grades, a review of the Shepaug campus, an independent site, and the Washington Primary School. These committees will then meet with a school committee on July 27, 28 and August 2 to discuss the best solution for meeting the required educational objectives, as well as the financial objectives of the towns. They will try to pull together as much information as possible prior to meeting on September 20, 21 and 22. Their objective will be to have a proposal finalized for consideration at the time of the November elections. Thus far, all are cautiously optimistic and encouraged. Michael noted they would also like to involve the people who recently worked on the Washington Montessori School building to get the benefit of their advice. Ball park numbers and the resulting increase in taxes will be studied. Jack Boyer reminded the Board that public money may not be spent on advocating the outcome of a referendum. The Board agreed.

**Other Issues:** Jack Field suggested the Board review other issues also:

1. Building inspection fees and police private duty. Dick will review the Building Inspection contract and the private duty fees this summer. It was noted building rates have risen since the last contract was written.

2. Tax abatement on community housing projects. Jack will continue to work with Bill Fairbairn will represent the Housing Trust for further work.

3. Employee Benefits: Jack suggested the total compensation package be reviewed to determine the cost of all benefits per employee. This should include salary, health and dental insurance, pension, co-pays, deductibles, share of premium costs, savings plans, etc. and would be compared to neighboring towns. It was suggested consideration be given toward changing certain elected positions to appointed positions, as well as a part-time comptroller.

**Pension:** Rex reported the Pension Committee had received a letter from former First Selectman Alan Chapin suggesting the Town contribute more to the pension fund on behalf of the employees. He noted 1993 had been the last time the retirement plan had been amended and recommended increasing the annual benefit from 1.5% to 2% of the average monthly compensation and developing a buy-out option. The Pension Committee was asked to advise Dick Sears on their thoughts.

**Judea Water Company:** The Judea Water Company, who currently owns three separate sites in Washington (Wykeham Road, the Depot and Quarry Ridge), has been offered for sale. Their only responses have been from very large water companies. The Board voiced concern about local control by a major utility and felt this may not be in the best interest of Washington. The purchase would include the land on which each well is situated. The Board will investigate this matter further.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow, Secretary