

August 4, 2008

Chairman Michael Jackson called the meeting to order at 4:55 p.m.

Present:

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

B/F Alternates: Liddy Adams, Arthur DuBois, Jr.

Board of Selectmen: Mark Lyon

Treasurer: Linda McGarr

Guests: Valerie Friedman, Tony Bedini

Minutes:

The minutes of the 6/16/08 meeting were approved as revised.

Treasurer's Report:

Linda McGarr reported interest rates in the FNBL Trust accounts are currently at 1.37% for the General Fund and 1.57% for the Nonrecurring Capital Fund. Funds had been invested in these accounts in the interest of safety. Report accepted as submitted

Tax Collector's Report:

The percentage of tax collections as compared to the anticipated budget collections for the previous fiscal year was discussed. While 95.1% of the current real estate, motor vehicle and personal property taxes were collected, an overall total collection rate of 101.4% was realized, which also included all prior outstanding taxes, interest and liens, overpayments, etc. A collection rate of 98% on the previous year's Grand List was used for long range assumption calculations. Report accepted as submitted.

Financial Reports:

Year-end figures were reviewed. Certain expenditures that exceeded the budget were offset by income in these areas. i.e. Building, Police, etc. As had been discussed during budget deliberations, Rex Swain made a motion to transfer surplus funds from the 2007-08 Dental Insurance and Health Insurance Deductible line items to the Health Benefits Fund. Jack Boyer seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed. Transfers for approved Nonrecurring Capital projects and the Housing and Open Space Funds will also be made to their respective accounts. Details on Town Aid grants, etc. will be provided for the next meeting. Report accepted as submitted.

Education/WPS Lease/Reimbursement:

Options involving the Washington Primary School lease were discussed. Currently the lease is being continued on a year-to-year basis. The Board agreed they would not want to see a lease signed without a unanimity of purpose.

Tony Bedini reported it was unlikely that reimbursement would be available for renovations to the Washington Primary School since the building is situated in a floodplain and is too large for the number of students according to State guidelines. Whether a 20-year lease is signed or not would not reflect on reimbursement for the Roxbury and Bridgewater buildings. Any reimbursement would go directly to Region 12.

Jack Field reported the State has specific items that do not meet the criteria for reimbursement unless they

are included as part of a package. Roofs are eligible. He did not feel it would be in the Town's best interest to go forward with the same situation of a failing school building or older schools in need of repair and suggested all three towns should complete the minimum repairs and spend funds immediately on the worst problems as this has continued for the past six years. Question was raised if a 20-year lease was actually needed for these repairs to be made.

Mark Lyon reported the First Selectmen from the three towns and the Lease Committee have a conditional agreement on a lease that addresses various maintenance issues; however, he has not received anything in writing from the Lease Committee or the School Board. He was concerned that a 20-year lease would be construed as acceptance of the facilities as they exist and felt that the school board may be willing to address the maintenance issues without a lease. The Lease Committee has not accepted the complete list of maintenance issues the First Selectman presented for inclusion in the Lease. Mark will continue to talk with the Region's Facilities Committee about these concerns. A decision must be made whether to put money into an old or new school. Latest population projections are a stunner and all agreed it is critical that the Board of Ed recognize the enormity of the problem and provide the impact of these numbers to everyone. He noted his appreciation for opinions received from the concerned and well-informed individuals who have done a lot of work on this matter. Many unresolved issues remain which continue to be addressed. Options need to be preserved and the issue of having a vote of choice must be provided.

It was noted Bridgewater has gone before the Board of Education to investigate deregionalization of K-5. Comment was made that Washington may be interested if it becomes clear that consolidation is not possible.

Consultant:

Following interviews with consultants regarding financial responsibilities in the Selectman's Office, Michael Jackson, Mark Lyon and John Allen recommend Linda Savitsky of Essex, CT as providing the best value for the Town. Ms. Savitsky has experienced working in municipal and state government for many years.

The purpose of the project would be to review operational procedures for efficiency and space allocations and to document the findings in order to lead to more efficiency of operation. Jack Field noted this should be done with the understanding that recommendation would be followed, which may require extra funding. Costs were estimated at \$7,000, but would not exceed the \$9,000 already approved for this project. The Board agreed and Ms. Savitsky will be contacted.

Mark Lyon reported the Land Use Office organization and functions will also be considered for a separate review as to their efficiency and functionality between Land Use officers and Town planners.

Fund Balance:

A recent newspaper article regarding concerns over a neighboring town's fund balance was discussed. It has been the Washington Board's philosophy to maintain a fund balance equal to 1 ½ - 2 months expenses. While expenses may have exceeded income over the past few years, the Town has been able to use reserve funds due to this long-range planning. It was agreed that this will continue to be reviewed annually for future years.

Transfers:

Transfers to various Funds were discussed. Concern was raised that certain Land Use Boards may be receiving pressure that the funds be spent. It was noted that the Open Space Plan recommended funds be set aside annually for the purpose of obtaining open space land and that particular pieces of property are not always available. It was agreed to review this annually.

Michael Jackson made a motion that the transfers be made to the Nonrecurring Capital, Open Space and Housing Funds for projects as approved in the Capital Budget. A.J. DuBois seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Webmaster:

The Selectmen and Finance Board expressed their sincere appreciation to Rex Swain for his services as Webmaster for the Town. Rex voluntarily set up the Town website and continued its daily update since 2002. Rex's diligence and knowledge have provided the Town with an outstanding website. Rex reported Steve Wadelton has agreed to take on this volunteer position for the Town. Thank you, Rex. Thank you, Steve.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Gollow, Secretary