

September 17, 2007

Present:

Regular Members: Jack Boyer, Barbara Brown, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon, Rex Swain

Alternates Members: Liddy Adams, John Allen

Selectmen: Richard Sears, Nicholas Solley

Tax Collector: Tanya Wescott

Guests: Valerie Andersen, Valerie Friedman

John Allen was seated in the absence of Jack Field.

Tax Collector: Tanya discussed her revised report showing receipts and outstanding collections for Grand List years dating back to 1993. She recently foreclosed on property on Revere Road, for which taxes had not been paid since 1992. The lot now reverts to the Town. Much of the lot contains wetlands and is not considered buildable. It was suggested the lot be sold, perhaps to adjoining landowners. Receipts realized from the sale of this property in excess of taxes due would be deposited to the General Fund in accordance with State Statute. The Board of Selectmen will investigate further.

Tanya reported she plans to proceed with foreclosures on properties that are two years in arrears, if the owners have not set up a payment plan with her. She would authorize a marshal to collect taxes on her behalf. Marshals have the authority to put holds on taxpayers' accounts for taxes and fees due the Town. They charge a 15% fee, which is also paid by the taxpayer. This allows the Town to recoup all taxes and fees due, as well as covers the marshal's fees, with no additional cost to the taxpayers. The current interest rate on overdue taxes is 1.5%/month (18%/year). Tanya will include this information in her newsletter report.

Minutes: Minutes of the August 20, 2007 meeting were accepted as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer's Report was accepted as submitted. Linda McGarr will be asked to contact the State to determine if they invest S.T.I.F. funds in the commercial paper market; and, if so, if they have experienced losses and what these losses have been.

Financials: Financials of all accounts were reviewed and accepted. The Building Inspector will be asked to provide information on the value of home building as compared to last year as this could have an effect on anticipated conveyance taxes and building receipts. Liddy reported the market is "normalizing" and the last decade of building has been unprecedented. A net number for financials will be provided to the Board on a monthly basis from now on.

Titus Road Property: Engineering reports indicate the salt content on this property has been reduced measurably through natural attenuation and is very close to being acceptable by D.E.P. standards. The Town will continue the required testing.

Education: A memo from Jack Field regarding school construction had been circulated to the Board and will be discussed at the next meeting. (attached)

Valerie Friedman and Valerie Andersen reported roof replacement at the Booth Free School and repairs

to the Burnham School (approximating \$300,000) had been approved by the Board of Education, both projects which are needed. The importance of a valid twenty-year lease between the towns and the Region was discussed. These projects would be eligible for state reimbursement (31%). However, since neither town has a current lease and is paying on a month-to-month basis, this leaves the Region ineligible for this reimbursement. This would also result in the Town of Washington having to pay funds toward these projects. It was suggested a real estate attorney should have reviewed this prior to the Board of Education giving approvals, as it could be that the Region is actually repairing private properties.

Washington's lease currently extends until 10/5/2008. Michael suggested a short lease might be considered for rental purposes, with a regular twenty-year lease for all other purposes. The State Department of Education will be contacted to determine what would be satisfactory for reimbursement purposes. Concerns were raised about insurance coverage, usage of the buildings without a lease, and if the children could be in jeopardy.

The Board of Ed Finance Committee recommended a referendum be considered to finance \$1.5 million +/- over a five-year period for replacement of the HVAC system and track at the middle-high school. An audit of these facilities will be completed

Selectman's Report:

Boat Launch/Parking: Dick reported boat ramp/parking area bids were higher than anticipated and higher than budgeted. The Selectmen are reviewing these bids with the engineer and the low bidder. The Lake Waramaug Association has committed an additional \$60,000 to assist in the completion of this project. Valerie Andersen questioned the appropriateness of the Town accepting a bid with a letter of commitment for additional funds from an outside source.

Cell Tower Review: Dick reported recent legal fees have overrun the ex-budget appropriation previously approved for cell tower review by \$4,837.47. John Allen questioned if there was a sense of how many people do not want cell service. As the results of the survey have not been received, there was no answer to this question. An engineer had been requested to investigate sites in New Milford and Warren to determine if they could be used but a response has not been received. Considering other possible locations was suggested. Dick noted the Siting Council does not talk about theoretical towers and the phone companies pick out properties of interest to them. A decision on the proposed locations in New Preston should be received from the Siting Council within two months. It was suggested the Selectmen be more aggressive in negotiating lawyer's fees. A meeting for area towns will be held in Cornwall next week. **A majority of the Board supported an ex-budget appropriation of \$4,837.47, with John Allen and Craig Schoon voting against.**

Ex-Budget: \$3,000: E-Waste. Dick reported the Board of Selectmen had resolved to begin an E-Waste program at the recycling station. Residents would be charged a small fee to cover the costs of running the program. Initial funding would be needed to purchase a 40' windproof and waterproof container and pallet jack. **Jack Boyer made a motion to approve an ex-budget expense of \$3,000 for the purchase of the container and the pallet jack. Barbara Brown seconded the motion. All in favor.** The auditor will be asked for a recommendation if this is to be an ex-budget appropriation from the General Fund or Capital Account.

Used Oil Furnace: Dick reported he had begun conversation with the Board of Selectmen and will make a request next month for an ex-budget appropriation of \$14,000 to install a used oil furnace at the town garage. The used oil would be obtained from town trucks and the public. Approximately 375-500 gallons of used oil is disposed of each year by the Highway Department. Dick estimates another 1,000 gallons would be available from the public and lawn companies. There would be a 3-4 year maximum return on

this investment. The furnace would not replace the current town garage furnace, but would be an addition. He will continue to work on the logistics of getting oil to the site without having the public drive into the garage area. Michael requested an analysis for next month's meeting.

Town Hall Offices: Dick reported several offices are being relocated in the lower level of the town hall following the movement of the Police to the old firehouse. The State Probate Administration now requires a separate office for the Probate secretary when clients are in conversation with the Judge. Due to a lack of space, plans are currently being made that the Judge's secretary will be located in the Selectmen's outer office when necessary. A space for the Treasurer is also planned. This may require removal of the large table in the Selectmen's Office where the Board of Finance currently meets. This will be discussed further.

Ex-Budget Requests: John Allen suggested that all requests for ex-budget appropriations be forwarded to the Board in writing the week previous to the meeting in order to have time for consideration. This was agreeable to the Board and the Selectmen.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Gollow

Finance Secretary