**Board of Finance**

**November 17, 2014**

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

 **Present:** Members: Jack Boyer, Barbara Brown, Sally Cornell, Michael Jackson, Craig Schoon

 Alternates: Reginald Templeton, Ted Bent, Liddy Adams

 Selectmen: Mark Lyon, Jay Hubelbank

 Treasurer: Linda McGarr

 Guests: Tony Bedini, Board of Education, Town Bldg. & Property

 Jennifer Pote, Michelle Gorra, Region #12 Board of Education members

 Linda Kennedy Gomez

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

**Minutes:** Barbara Brown moved to approve the minutes of the October 20th meeting. Ted Bent seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously passed.

**Board Vacancy:**  Michael suggested the Board consider the appointment of alternate Liddy Adams to the position as a regular member of the Board. Jack Boyer recalled he had originally contacted Liddy in 1994 to consider becoming an alternate on the Board and noted she has been on the Board since 1997. The Board members enthusiastic agreed with this appointment. Michael Jackson made a motion to move Liddy Adams to the position of regular member of the Board. Barbara Brown seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. According to voting requirements, it will be necessary that this position be put on the ballot in the Fall. The Board would consider the vacant alternate’s position at a future meeting, which also would be placed on the ballot in the Fall elections.

**Tax Collector’s Report:** The Tax Collector’s Reports was approved as submitted.

**Treasurer’s Report:** The Treasurer’s Report was approved as submitted.

**Finances:** First Selectman Mark Lyon reported the Town is approximately one-third through the fiscal year and finances are pretty much in line as budgeted. He noted the town garage reconstruction is on schedule, things are moving well, and it is anticipated the project will be completed around Thanksgiving. Stage renovations in the town hall are proceeding smoothly and it is anticipated a new conference room to replace the stage area will be completed in January. The windows in the main hall have been completed and look great! Tony Bedini is working with Polly Roberts on curtains and drapes, etc. and, again, all is moving along well! A final insurance adjustment has not as yet been completed, and there has been no dispute with their replacement values thus far. Mark suggested the Finance Board may wish to consider moving their meetings to another location other than the Selectman’s Office once the reconstruction is complete.

**Guests:** **Education:** The Board welcomed Jennifer Pote and Michele Gorra, two of our Town’s representatives to the Board of Education, to discuss the future of the Shepaug School District. Mark noted the Selectmen and the Finance members had net previously with the Board of Education Chairman to discuss the possibility of adding an Agricultural Science Program to the Region 12 curriculum. All agreed everyone is trying to address the very difficult situation of declining student population and increasing finances.

Concern was noted over the Region’s use of long-term financing and it was suggested the Board of Ed might consider short-term borrowing. Michael suggested the logic of a bond is probably not a sensible solution and suggested the towns should put up the money to solve the problem rather than finance out 10-12 years. The Selectmen and Finance Board will meet again to try to address a solution to the financing problem, as well as the student population.

Jennifer Pote noted the Board of Education is looking at the possibility of including an Agriculture Program in the Region. This could take a few years to accomplish. Michael suggested voters want to know how the problems are being addressed and what the time frame is. All agreed again the continuing problem of declining population must be addressed.

Mark noted much of the Region’s Business Manager’s presentation has been to minimize the growth in the annual budget. He questioned if municipal leaders would be looking toward long-term versus short-term funding. Liddy Adams questioned the costs anticipated to include a Science major. It was noted the Board of Education has extended a bid for an architect to obtain more accurate numbers.

Jennifer and Michelle noted their appreciation that the Town is working with the Business Manager. They noted the Region now has over 450 students; and while this number will most likely drop over the next four years, the buildings must still be serviced. With regard to renovations needed in the Science lab, it was noted students are still using the lab. While the Board acknowledged they understand and support the work that needs to be done, questions remain as to the best way to present something that is palatable for the voters. All agreed it is necessary to look at the problem so they can all learn what is there. Michelle noted the Region is allowed to carry forward a 1% capital fund in their budget; and while they are trying to keep that funded, it is not enough to address all the necessary items. This will all be addressed further as things become sorted out.

Linda McGarr noted the top jobs for the future are Engineering, Science and Math; and she agreed wholeheartedly that we need to be picking up in this area in order to be ready for those jobs. Michael agreed all pieces of this problem need to be integrated; and if approved by the Region, it would be something that we could offer and it should increase the school population.

**Financial Reports**: Financial reports for October for the various Funds were approved as submitted.

**Personnel:** Mark Lyon reported a change in personnel has occurred in the Land Use area. Training new personnel may result in these line items might being slightly over budget.

**Housing Commission:** Linda McGarr reported the Housing Commission and Town Meeting had voted to use $100,000 of their funds for an Assistance Loan Program. Rather than start a new fund, a sub-account will be established within the current Housing Fund and a specific line item will be designated for the Down-payment Assistance Loan Program. There are currently two requests pending.

**Bridges:** Mark Lyon reported that with the assistance of Linda McGarr and Enrico Melaragno, we are crediting bridge grant reimbursements to the Capital Bridge Fund. Question was raised if the Town has enough funds for these projects. Mark noted if we continue to fund bridge construction at $300,000/year in the Capital Fund, he felt we would. Currently, funds have been spent for engineering on the various bridges on Walker Brook Road. These costs are 80% reimbursable from the State and the Town is responsible for 20% of the costs. Work on the Romford Road Bridge has begun. This is a federal bridge program and we have obtained approval for 80% reimbursement.

**Highway Garage Fire Fund** - Mark noted full reimbursement for our expenses has not been received as yet, but is anticipated.

**Health Benefit Fund:** Mark reported the employees’ Health Benefit Fund had been increased this year and may have to be increased in next year’s budget.

**Education:** Tony Bedini noted the funds spent on the elementary schools are prioritized well by the Region’s Bldg. and Property Manager, Don O’Leary, who has reviewed many of the projects.

**New Business**: With regard to the current Alternate vacancy on the Board, Mark has spoken with the Democratic Town Committee and asked the Board of Finance for their suggestions. It was agreed to keep the balance the same. This particular position has historically been for a Democrat or Independent**.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

 Respectfully submitted,

 Kathy Gollow, Finance Secretary