

December 18, 2003

Present: First Selectman Richard Sears, Selectmen Harry Wyant and Nick Solley.

Press: Sarah Sparks, Waterbury Republican

Public: Valerie Friedman, Rex Swain, Ron Chute, Rod Wyant, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Burke.

Call to Order: First Selectman Richard Sears called the meeting to order at 4:31p.m.

Minutes: Motion: To approved the minutes of the December 4, 2003 Board of Selectmen's meeting as presented, by Harry Wyant, seconded by Nick Solley and unanimously approved.

Visitors: Dick Sears asked those attending the meeting if they wished to speak now or would they prefer to discuss the revaluation issue which is on the agenda under "Old Business". It was decided to speak later. Valerie Friedman did present a question about Timber Harvesting permits: when does the cutting and clearing of trees require a permit and when is it considered commercial as opposed to residential. Nick Solley explained that for the most part, if a private property owner has trees cut, land cleared for a home site, etc. it does not require a Timber Harvest permit. However, if the selectmen are notified of numerous truckloads of wood being taken off a property and a permit has not been taken out, they would look into it.

Communications: None.

Appointments: Motion: To accept the following appointments and reappointments: **Conservation Commission-Regular Member:** reappoint Kelly Boling to 1/1/07; Alternate Member: reappoint Diane Dupuis to 1/1/07. **Historic District Commission-Regular Member:** reappoint Paul Graney (D) to 1/1/09; Alternate Member: reappoint Jane Boyer (D) to 1/1/09. **Parks and Recreation Commission-reappoint** Tim Cook (D) to 1/1/07, reappoint Ray Reich to 1/1/07, reappoint Louis Magnoli (D) to 1/1/07. **Planning Commission-Regular Members:** appoint from an alternate - Dimitri Rimsky (U) to 12/31/04, appoint from an alternate- Adelaide Roberts (D) to 12/31/08; Alternate Members: appoint from a regular - Robert Buck to 12/31/04, appoint Paul Frank (D) to 12/31/05 and appoint Reginald William Fairbairn (D) to 12/31/06. **Constables:** Ronald J. Dorazio, Caleb Shropshire, John Wyshynski, Herbert Furfman, Patrick Kessler all to 12/31/04, by Dick Sears, seconded by Nick Solley and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

- **Response to Valerie Friedman letter.** Valerie explained for those present that the purpose of her letter was to request the Assessor evaluate results of the revaluation in a formal way. This would involve comparing the reval figure to the sales price figure. Thomas Burke posed the question as to why a sales price could not be considered as it's market value and taxes calculated on that amount. He gave the example of a house assessed at \$500,000 selling for \$2 million. His thought is to have the taxes calculated on the \$2 million as opposed to the \$500,000. It was explained that an assessment couldn't be changed solely on what a property sells for (by State Statute). Mr. Sears stated that many factors go into determining an assessed value and Washington is unique in many ways-no subdivisions, scenic views, water frontage, the "desire"

to live here, etc. Valerie feels there is a pattern in that most modest homes seem to be fairly or under assessed whereas the higher end homes are grossly under-assessed. Dick Sears went on to say he shares the concerns voiced. Rex Swain presented a form he has suggested that would keep track of all homes sold. It would record the date sold, sale price, assessed value and date, acreage, etc. Mr. Sears said such records would be kept for the next 16 months. At the end of that period the data will be evaluated by the Selectmen and a report given to the public. Ron Chute asked if "improvements" to a property could be figured in. Mrs. Thomas Burke felt that our current system favors the wealthy in Town. Mr. Solley explained he had recently done an informal study of 18 homes moderately priced and found that most did not suffer any tax increase and in fact some had a decrease. He also stated the highest end homes in Town incurred a substantial increase in taxes. Valerie Friedman acknowledged this increase but did not feel those taxes had gone up as much as they should have.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Motion:** To accept the **STEAP grant** engineering proposals for the following areas:

New Preston-Stuart Somers for \$13,500

New Town Garage Site-Arthur Howland for \$6,000

Canoe Brook-Land Tech for \$9,500

Depot Sidewalk-Land Tech for \$8,500,

By Nick Solley, seconded by Harry Wyant and unanimously approved.

Dick Sears explained that after the engineered plans are done, will go out to bid for the work that will be done.

- **Motion:** To include business not posted on the agenda regarding an invitation to bid by Dick Sears, seconded by Nick Solley and unanimously approved.
- **Motion:** To publish an invitation to Bid for a new 2004 Ford Explorer Police Vehicle (information available in the selectmen's office), by Dick Sears, seconded by Harry Wyant and unanimously approved.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Anne Greene
Selectmen's Secretary