

Minutes: Town Meeting

May 18, 2006

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TOWN MEETING

TOWN OF WASHINGTON

BRYAN MEMORIAL TOWN HALL

MAY 18, 2006

WILLIAM FAIRBAIRN, MODERATOR

JANET M. WILDMAN, CLERK

The Town Meeting was called to order by First Selectman Richard Sears. Mr. Sears asked everyone to wish his secretary, Kathy Gollow, a happy birthday. First order of business was election of a Moderator. William Fairbairn was nominated, seconded and elected.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Good evening, everyone. Quick housekeeping rule before the meeting. We want to make sure the transcript is accurate and so I would ask you that when you are recognized to speak, that you would identify yourself and use the microphone. If you can't come up for any reason, we'll have someone bring the microphone to you. I would ask Janet Wildman to read the Call.

JANET WILDMAN : Warning: Town of Washington Town Meeting. The voters and electors of the Town of Washington are hereby warned that a Town Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 18, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut to consider and act upon the following:

1. To approve the proposed General Fund Expenses for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.
2. To approve the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

3. To approve an expenditure from the 2005-2006 General Fund to the Town of Washington Pension Fund.
4. To amend the Town Ordinance regarding the convening of future town meetings.
5. To amend the Town Ordinance regarding building fees.
6. To amend the town Ordinance regarding Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled Homeowners

Dated at Washington, Connecticut this 9th day of May, 2006. Richard C. Sears, Nicholas N. Solley, Mark E. Lyon, Board of Selectmen.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Thank you, very much. Dick

MR. SEARS: I move to approve the General Fund Expenditures Budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year be approved in the amount of \$3,677,320.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Okay. Is there a second to that motion? Mrs. Johnson. Barbara Johnson seconded. Do you want to make a presentation, Michael. No? All right, we'll go right to the questions. Anybody have any questions on this year's general fund? Hop right up to the microphone. I love it. Millions of dollars. No one has any questions on the general fund? Yes, okay. Peter Tagley. Come right up, you're no stranger to it. It looks like it still has some DNA of yours on it.

PETER TAGLEY: The General Fund budget which we're approving. It is higher than last year. We will have to raise the mil rate, correct?

MICHAEL JACKSON; Okay. Typically what we do at this point is say nothing and try to fudge the whole subject. This year it is pretty clear given the fact that we have - the year ending in July - we're going to have a deficit of about \$800,000 in the General Fund budget and next year it looks like we're going to have a 7% odd increase in the total budget and so we're going to have to have an increase in the mil rate. This comes as a surprise because as you all know from the last ten years with the revaluation the mil rate has come down across the board. This will be the first time the increase will probably be in the range of 1 to 1 1/2 % mil and we will, the Board of Finance, basically decide after this meeting and the resolution passed to have something to work with this is concrete. The second part of the question, Peter, is the future, and, depending upon the outcome of the school referendum and depending upon the timing of those expenditures were there to be school expenditures of new buildings, you are going to have another increase in the mil rate as a result of that. How much that is going to be we set out our best guess as to what it is going to look

like. So you've seen all the arithmetic. What the timing of that is going to be we just don't know because we don't know whether the referendum is going to pass, what's going to happen, so there's no point in speculating on it. And expenditures which would be incurred as a result of that referendum passing probably wouldn't be incurred for another twelve months. So it's that sort of timing that we're looking at.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Anybody else with questions? All right, if not, are we ready to go ahead voting on the motion. Does anyone want the motion re-read? If not, we'll go ahead and vote. All in favor of the motion as given, please say aye. Opposed ?

MOTION CARRIED.

MR. SEARS: Resolved: That the Nonrecurring Capital Expenditures Budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year which totals, now we accept the gross amount and plan on a number of grants to reduce that to our final cost. But the gross amount that we would be presenting tonight is \$1,296,050.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Is there a second to that motion? Any questions on this motion?

MR. SEARS: I would like to make one comment about these grants. Last year we had \$300,000 - \$400,000 in grants and we presented net amounts. And the reason we presented net amounts is because we won't spend the money under the grants unless we get the money. So it isn't going to come out of our pockets - it's coming out of the State's pocket. And I just wanted you to understand that's the way we look at it. We haven't done it, historically, netted grants, but the last few years we've had large grants. We won't spend the money unless we get the grants and so we feel comfortable presenting the net amount.

MRS. WILDMAN: The Call and resolution that I have indicates a figure of \$927,050. Is it supposed to be the \$1,296,050 figure?

MR. FAIRBAIRN: What is that, the net amount?

MR. JACKSON: You are only voting on the net amount.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: The net is \$927,050. All right, so we need to amend that motion?

MR. SEARS: I change my motion.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: So the motion should read that the net amount appropriated here is \$927,050, is that right? Anybody? Valerie, you have a question?

VALERIE ANDERSEN: Valerie Andersen, Blackville Road. I have a question about the \$50,000 allocated this year to Housing Commission. That was established by ordinance My question is this: The Housing Commission, I have a copy from the website, (NOTE: Some of this was difficult to understand because she spoke very fast and I couldn't slow down the machine any more than it already was) and they are set up to study and analyze housing needs and make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen concerning housing policy, to establish housing priorities, long range housing goals and to provide forms for housing issues. There is one mention here to make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen expenditures from affordable housing fund. My point is this: we have a Housing Commission set up and they do absolutely wonderful work. It is well run but nowhere does it specify how this money will be spent and there will be \$100,000 in the fund after tonight's vote sitting in this fund and we don't know who controls that fund, where it is going and for what purpose.pattern of an ordinance that perhaps the Housing Commission ordinance should follow regarding the disbursement of funds which is an ordinance to establish land acquisition of \$150,000 going into that and there will be \$300,000 in it after tonight. It is very well organized, well written, what goes into the fund, what goes out, who has control and to what purpose. The Housing Commission has none of that. As far as I can see as a taxpayer, we are funding something that has no outlet for. So I want to know, first off, who has control of this money and for what purpose?

MR. JACKSON; This is the same question you asked at the hearing, right? Well, I've answered the question before, so I'm getting good at it. Fundamentally, there is a procedure for spending that money is the same as spending any other money. And what happens, the selectmen would make a recommendation based on the Commission's recommendation. They would come to the Board of Finance and the Board of Finance would approve the expenditure of the funds out of a separate account.

MRS. ANDERSEN: Where is that set up by ordinance?

MR. JACKSON: I don't know. But that's how it works.

MRS. ANDERSEN: My question is

MR. JACKSON: would you like it written in the ordinance, is that what you want?

MRS. ANDERSEN: either correct the ordinance and make it clear.

MR. JACKSON: we don't - nonrecurring capital expenditures fund - not what we spend every year. We don't have a written procedure in an ordinance that says how we do it. But we've been doing it for some considerable period of time. We're going to

follow the same methodology. So if it would make you feel better if we had it written into an ordinance we'll certainly try to do that.

MRS. ANDERSEN: Oh, no, it's not that it will make me feel better it's about the law.

MR. JACKSON; We haven't violated any law, Valerie.

MRS. ANDERSEN: We haven't any money, either.

MR. JACKSON: There's no law that's been violated.

MRS. ANDERSEN: My question to you, is this ordinance that describes how money is to be disbursed as relates to open space and land acquisition fund, you don't have the same thing with the Housing Fund. What's the purpose of the fund? For the Housing Commission? No idea as to how these funds are being disbursed.

MR. JACKSON; Valerie, I can't do any more than explain to you how it works. If you would like a procedure written, we'd be glad to write it. But how it is going to work is the way we expend all funds - particularly all capital funds and it has three levels of review. It comes from the Commission, it has their recommendation, it goes to the Selectmen and they have to vote, pass on it and send it to the Board of Finance to approve the expenditure out of a particular account. That's the procedure. That's how it is always done and that's how we will always do it. Nothing has changed.

MRS. ANDERSEN: That's not written and that's not the procedure.

MR. JACKSON: We will be glad to get it corrected, Valerie

MRS. ANDERSEN: I would suggest that the \$50,000 that would have gone into this fund that cannot be spent any time soon for purposes that you are not sure of, go to offset any property tax rebate for seniors or those who qualify instead of having it go into a dead end account.

MR. JACKSON: Thank you.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Any questions? If not does anyone want the question read before we vote on it? All in favor of the motion say aye. Opposed? MOTION CARRIED

MR. SEARS: Resolved: That an expenditure of \$83,000 be approved from the 2005-2006 General Fund expenses for contribution to the Town of Washington Pension Fund.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Second?

KATHY GOLLOW: Second.

VALERIE FRIEDMAN: Valerie Friedman, West Morris Road. Can you explain again, Mike, how that funding works?

MR. JACKSON: There are three variables in a pension fund calculation that we work with and there is a Pension Committee that reviews this and they found that on the salaries that we were forecasting what our contribution was had changed from what the original forecast was. Second, they were unhappy with the rate of return used in the original forecast of what the pension contribution should be and so they raised that. And third variable, which I can't remember, but it comes from a changing the variable - it will change from time to time as the interest rates change and amount of salaries applicable change. The other thing that the Pension Committee did isn't in here, we had gotten ourselves in a position where there was a lot of overtime being incurred by non-basic town employees in certain instances and it was being included in the pension calculation and it was decided - and the Pension Committee made the recommendation -to exclude that for those individuals and make it your basic salary. It does not exclude overtime for people who are working on the winter road crew and go out and plow all night. They will get their overtime and it will be included in their pension. But this was a quirk we missed.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Any other questions on this motion? Do you want it re-read? All in favor of the motion say aye. Opposed?

MOTION CARRIED.

MR. SEARS: Resolved: To amend the Town Ordinance adopted October 6, 1980 as follows:

"The annual Business Meeting of the Town shall be held on the first Monday in October at Town Hall at (delete 8:00 p.m.; add 7:30 p.m.) except on those dates where it shall coincide with a religious holiday. It shall then be held on the first Tuesday of October. Add: "All Regular and Special Town Meetings shall be held at 7:30 p.m. unless deemed an emergency by the Board of Selectmen, who may schedule said meeting at an alternative time."

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Second?

MR. MARK LYON: Second.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Anyone wish to speak to this? If not, we will go ahead with the vote. All in favor say aye. Opposed?

MOTION CARRIED.

NICHOLAS SOLLEY: Resolved: That the town Building Fees be amended as follows:

First \$1,000 Value or minimum fee Current Fee is \$20.00. We are proposing it go to \$30. Each Additional \$1,000 or part thereof -now \$6.00 and go to \$9.00 per thousand. File Review letters for Banks, Realtors, etc. \$25.00 will stay the same increment. File close out with inspections as needed. Minimum \$100.00 and stay at \$100.00 And tent permits stay the same. This will be effective July 1,2006.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Okay, is there a second to this? (Voice seconds) Obviously someone who isn't planning any building. Any questions or comments on this?

MR. SOLLEY: We have not amended this since 2000 - six years - compared with other seven or eight towns within the northwest area and we are on the low end. So we are coming in line with other towns.

MR. PETER TAGLEY: And what do you do with the money?

MR. SOLLEY: The money is income to the town of which we pay an inspector who we contract. He pays all the people who work for him out of that fee.

MR. TAGLEY: So he pays out of the money....

MR. SOLLEY: Ultimately, the money comes to the town.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Any questions? No questions, at all? Okay. All in favor, please say aye. Opposed? MOTION CARRIED

MR. SEARS: Our Tax Assessor has made these recommendations to us tonight. Amendment to Ordinance Regarding Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled Homeowners. Resolved: To amend the Town Ordinance regarding tax relief for the Elderly and Disabled Homeowners as follows:

Under applications: To delete the words "of each year" and to add "Applicants who qualify for the State Program may reapply Biennially for both programs. Under "Total Tax Relief Allowed: Section F: To delete "July" and add "October." Said amendment Ordinance shall become effective July 1,2006.

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Okay, is there a second to this?

BARBARA JOHNSON (Our assessor) SECOND!

MR. FAIRBAIRN: Mrs. Johnson, our Assessor. That's nice. Any questions on this? Anyone want explained the nuances of this? Okay. If not, anyone want the motion rebefore we vote on it? All in favor please say aye. Opposed? MOTION CARRIED

I believe there is no further business, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn. MEETING
ADJOURNED AT 7:58 p.m.

I, JANET M. WILDMAN, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the Town Meeting of the Town of Washington held on May 18, 2006, is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge belief.

A complete copy of the minutes, along with attachments, is available in the Town Clerk's office.