

## **Minutes: Town Meeting May 19, 2005**

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TOWN MEETING  
TOWN OF WASHINGTON  
BRYAN MEMORIAL TOWN HALL  
May 19, 2005

To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

To consider and act upon the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.

To discuss and consider the establishment of a Housing Commission.

To discuss and consider a permanent tax abatement for Washington Community Housing Trust's property at 16 Church Street, New Preston.

To elect representatives to the Shepaug Valley Region #12 Board of Education.

NICHOLAS N. SOLLEY, MODERATOR  
KATHLEEN GOLLOW, CLERK  
SANDRA JENNINGS, TRANSCRIBER

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*[transcript received 1/27/06]*

Sears: Now we've made 100 copies of the handout so, if you didn't get any or you just came in, we'll have sharing time 'cause we know sharing is caring.

Welcome to the Town Meeting at the Town Hall of Washington, May 19th, 2005. I'm glad you're here tonight. Thank you for coming out, for being part of democracy in action.

I'm going to call this Meeting to order and our first order of business is the election of a moderator. Do I have a nomination for moderator?

Unknown: Dick Sears.

(Laughter)

Sears: I decline. Thank you.

Jackson: Here, I'll, I'll nom. . . . Nick Solley.

Sears: Michael Jackson nominates Nick Solley for Moderator. Is there a second to that nomination?

Jack Field seconded the nomination per Gollow's notes taken at meeting.

Sears: Second? Are there any other nominations for Moderator? All in favor of Nick Solley serving as Moderator say "Aye."

Audience: Aye.

Sears: Opposed by. . . . I won't even ask that.

(Laughter)

Vote was unanimous for Nick Solley per Gollow's notes taken at meeting.

Sears: Nick Solley.

Solley: Thank you, Richard. It's nice to see such a nice turnout tonight.

I have, in effect, one basic rule that when you get up to speak to any one particular Motion that you come to the microphone that you take this stand. . . you can move it back . . . I'd just as soon that the microphone stay with the stand because if you drop the microphone it would be rendered worthless. So, you must stand. . .state your name, state your street address, and then state your business. If that's understood by all, we will proceed. . . .

The first item on the agenda tonight. . . . I would ask Michael Jackson, Chairman of the Board of Finance. . . .

Gollow/Sears: Don't you have the read the Warning?

Solley: Oh. I'm sorry. I will ask Kathy Gollow-getting a little ahead of myself--the Recording Secretary to read the Call to Meeting.

Following boldface text copied from Gollow's notes taken at Meeting:

Gollow:

**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 19, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington, Connecticut, to consider and act upon the following agenda:**

- 1. To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.**
- 2. To consider and act upon the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2005-2006 fiscal year.**
- 3. To discuss and consider the establishment of a Housing Commission.**
- 4. To discuss and consider a permanent tax abatement for Washington Community Housing Trust's property at 16 Church Street, New Preston.**
- 5. To elect representatives to the Shepaug Valley Region #12 Board of Education.**

**A copy of all information pertinent to this meeting is available in the Office of the Town Clerk.**

**Dated at Washington, Connecticut this 9th day of May 2005.**

**Richard C. Sears  
Nicholas N. Solley  
Harry H. Wyant  
Board of Selectmen"**

Solley: Thank you, Kathy.

I will now ask for the first resolution which will be given by Mike Jackson.

Jackson: Good evening.

It is resolved: To approve an amount not to exceed \$3,437,636 for expenditures from the 2005-2006 General Fund Budget.

Before we vote on it, we had a Hearing. . . .

Solley: Have a Second first.

Jackson: Is there a Second to this Motion? (Inaudible.)

Solley: Nobody wants to second. . . .

Jackson: Is there a Second to this Motion?

Friedman: Second.

Solley: Okay, okay.

Jackson: We had a Hearing which was actually much less attended than this. We had maybe ten people at the Hearing. But, we'll be glad to answer any questions with respect to the General Fund Budget that anyone has at this time.

Peter? What a surprise. . . .

Gollow: He has to go to the microphone.

Jackson: You have to go to the microphone. The microphone. People can line up at the microphone if they want. . . they could if they want.

Peter Tagley: Is it on?

Jackson: It's on.

Tagley: (Inaudible.) The last question number one and number two (inaudible).

Gollow: I can't hear him. Can't hear him.

Tagley: If we include Resolution #1 and Resolution #2 and there is no money taken from the General Fund to help underwrite any increase in the Budget, what will the

1. Whole percentage of increase be, including Resolution #1 and #2? and

## 2. What does that mean for our village?

When we went to the Budget Hearing, (inaudible. . .) gave us a scenario on a variety of buildings based on how much allocation there would be for whatever projects you decided to do. Now I don't know (inaudible. . .) separate from the (inaudible). Maybe you can explain from your (inaudible. . .) various scenarios. (Inaudible for an extended period of time.) I'm not sure exactly how you're going to do that because you don't have a lot of (inaudible. . .) available. The only thing I have (inaudible. . .) is the fact that if the Hearing (inaudible for an extended period of time).

Jackson: I'm not certain that I know the exact mill rate, I've got it somewhere, but I don't have it in front of me.

The reason we have done for the last. . . oh, I don't know. . . fifteen or twenty years, set the mill rate after we had the vote (chairs scraping, audience crosstalking, etc.), excuse me. . . I have to speak into the microphone? Is this better?

Audience: Yes.

Jackson: You can hear me now?

Audience: Yes.

Jackson: Alright.

So, for the last fifteen or twenty years what we've been doing. . . and, it's been done intentionally. . . is to set the mill rate after we voted on the Budget so we knew what we were doing. We had a Budget that had been approved, generally we had at that point in time, with a couple of exceptions, a school budget that was approved and we knew exactly what we needed. So, when we went to vote, we knew what we were doing and we would set the mill rate. And we've done that consistently.

Peter, I'm not sure what (inaudible. . .) set at the (inaudible. . .), but maybe they do. We have never done that just by virtue of wanting to be certain of what we were doing each year.

If we. . . I don't think I have. . . well, maybe I do, hold on.

(Inaudible-chair scraping, papers being shuffled, etc.)

Part of the problem, Peter, is we have certain things that have not been determined yet. One is the School Budget which is going to have to go through another

referendum. There is also coming a referendum with respect to the School Construction Budget-everybody will have their own view as to what they think will happen to that.

So, our job is not a science at all. What we try to do is basically, as I've explained before, is we look at what's coming, we look at what we've got-that is, as you know, the Town Budget, is (inaudible. . .) at about 3.8 percent. The Non-recurring Capital Budget is at about 37 percent. The School Budget, before any cuts, grew at about. . .our share, grew at about 5.8 percent. The Grand List grew about. . . almost 2 percent. So, the calculation you'd make is. . . you'd say, your Grand List went up 2 percent, so maybe your mill rate might go up about 1 percent or 2 percent, something in that order, but we haven't set it yet. It shouldn't be a very substantial increase in the mill rate, if any. What we're trying to do is judge what's coming, trying to judge what we have, and make a determination. We've always done it, as I said, after we approve the Budget.

Tagley: Okay, then, you mentioned you don't know what's coming and I guess (inaudible. . .).

Jackson: None of us know what's coming.

Tagley: So, I (inaudible for an extended period).

Jackson: It's very hard to get because 70 percent of our budget, as you well know, is the School Budget. And that is something that the town officials exercise no control over. By law, we have no control over it. We have no control over the Construction Budget. So, we're basically in the hands, in that instance, of the School Board and the Town. If you pass the Budget, we have to fund it, we have to find a way to fund it.

Now, historically what's happened to our town is we have been for the last six or seven years, very fortunate in having a declining population--student population in place of an increase in operating budget for the school district. So, our share has not grown very substantially at all. So, it has let us keep the tax rates that we had over the last four or five years. What's going to happen in the future with regard to school population and what our share might be. . . we have forecasts from the State that say our share is going to stay about the same. But, I've got to tell you that forecasts that we've had from the State in the past haven't proved to be very accurate. So, it's a little bit of a guessing game on our part.

Tagley: (Inaudible. . .).

Jackson: Speak up Peter. . . .

Tagley: (Inaudible. . .) scenario. . .

Jackson: Which one are you looking at?

Tagley: (Inaudible for an extended period of time. . .) H, I, J, K, L (inaudible for an extended period of time).

Jackson: That number was a number that we just backed into, assuming the following things:

Assuming that we had the growth in the School Budget as proposed, assuming that we had the growth in our Town Budget as proposed-what mill rate would generate a balanced budget? That's what that number is. It isn't. . .if you'll look historically you'll find that we have run in various years deficits in the General Fund, because we build up a surplus in the General Fund over time and got as high as almost \$3.5 million. And we've been drawing it down over the last four or five years and that let's us even out the tax rate and divert things a little. And also provides us a cushion so that if there's a mistake made that we don't anticipate and we don't understand, we've got some money to cover it. The cushion we've typically strive for is about one month's revenues.

Tagley: So, are you saying that the (inaudible.. .) scenario (inaudible. . .) is really much higher than the (inaudible)?

Jackson: It may turn out to be. The other numbers that we've been using to forecast and the cases (inaudible. . .)we made adjustments to our forecast for this fiscal year and try to estimate what sort of surplus we're going to have, or deficit, and then we try to anticipate what sort of surpluses or deficits we might have in next year. Take those things into consideration and come up with a mill rate. Typically, what we do is we budget very conservatively because we don't want to get caught short.

The best example of how we budget conservatively would be with regard to the collection rate on taxes. We always assume that we're going to collect something like 97 to 98 percent of what's sent out in the way of tax bills. In fact what we collect is much closer to 100 percent. At certain times and in certain instances, it may reverse and you don't want to get caught short. So, we do it as conservatively as we can so we don't want to get caught short.

So, I think 12/1, the number that you're looking at, would be the outside high side.

Tagley: Well, I'd like to express my opinion (inaudible. . .) and I think that (inaudible. . .).

Jackson: You're more than welcome. . . .

Tagley: (Inaudible for an extended period of time. . .).

Jackson: As I said, the original numbers that we looked at before the Hearing, when we were looking at cases for just this year and Jack Field was kind enough and Kathy was kind enough to run us numbers where we did analyze quarter-mill increments in the rate. Didn't seem to suggest that we were going to get over twelve.

Tagley: So, that's (inaudible. . .).

Jackson: I didn't say that.

Laughter.

Jackson: I want to make sure you knew I didn't say that.

Tagley: (Inaudible. . .) because the other person (inaudible for an extended period of time) part of the fund. And we can't go by line and by line. . . .we can't stop requesting to reduce or increase (inaudible. . .) support the entire resolution or (inaudible. . .).

So, I would hope that. . . .and I think many people here (inaudible) would be willing to support the entire resolution. (Inaudible. . .) I'm trying to get that point across.

Jackson: It's a legitimate point to hear and I think if you'll look at the history you'll find your Board of Finance hasn't been profligate (inaudible. . .). They've (inaudible). . .essentially, it hasn't been too bad and they haven't done anything that's been sort of extraordinary over the last ten or fifteen years, and I don't think we'll ever do anything extraordinary unless we're forced to.

Solley: Any other questions? Okay.

(Inaudible-may be asking for a second. Gollow's notes taken at meeting indicate Valerie Friedman seconded the Motion in this area.) Any more questions on the General Fund Budget?

Jackson: We should probably take a vote.

Solley: Okay, then this is to approve an amount not to exceed \$3,437,636 for expenditures from the '05-'06 General Fund Budget. All in favor of the resolution, please say "aye."

Audience: Aye.



Solley: Any opposed? Thank you. Okay, so carried.

Solley: Michael, I'll ask you to read the resolution on the second item on the agenda.

Crosstalk.

Jackson: . . . I'll just keep it attached to my ear so I can hear myself.

The second resolution has to do with the Non-recurring Capital Account.

Solley: They can't hear you in the back.

Pause for commercial break-lots of "Can you hear me now?"

Jackson: This is for the Non-recurring Capital Account and the dollar amount there. . . resolutions says:

To approve an amount not to exceed \$980,004 for net expenditures from the 2005-2006 Capital Fund Budget.

If there's anyone has any questions about what's in there, about what we've done, I'll be glad to answer them (inaudible. . .)

Is there a second to this Motion?

Solley: Valerie.

Jackson: Valerie seconded. Questions? Would you come to the microphone, please.

Ronald Gerst: Ronald Gerst, New Preston. I was under the impression that the tax abatement question was taken off the agenda. Is that correct?

Jackson: That's correct.

Gerst: Then I do have something to say in regards to the Capital (inaudible. . .).

Jackson: Okay.

Gerst: I thought initially with regard to abatement (inaudible. . .). So I have to take this opportunity to try and make my feelings known and I (inaudible. . .) housing (inaudible. . .). I think it's an insult that the taxpayers in town to consider an abatement (inaudible. . .) property. No matter how you cut it, what it amounts to is a rent subsidy. The people living in (inaudible. . .). I have rental units and I've had to ask my

tenants for a rent increase this year for the first time in five years. (Inaudible. . .) tax (inaudible. . .).

(Inaudible. . .) like buying (inaudible. . .) portable housing to prevent developers from coming into town. It seems to me that by getting the houses up (inaudible. . .), we could only attract outside developers.

We've been told that (inaudible. . .) affordable living space, Washington's residents are getting squeezed out of town by the escalating costs of living, or (inaudible. . .) people really from Washington prefer to live and work here? (Inaudible for an extended period of time. . .). I saw figures in the paper of 99.2 percent of taxes being from here in town. I believe in two of those cases, figures are closer to 75 percent and (inaudible for an extended period of time.)

One finance board member was quoted in the paper saying "I don't understand the big deal about me coming in from out of town, we're all from out of town." In the forty-plus years that I have lived here, I've met a lot of people who were born here and died here. I've also met a lot of people like myself that moved here because I was attracted to the area. But what we all had in common is and we all paid our own way. We were not attracted by artificially low rentals units.

Mr. Sears recently said with regard to the tax abatement, "Let's do it and be done with it." He also said, "This is (inaudible. . .) the Housing Trust." Let's suppose (inaudible. . .) New Preston (inaudible for an extended period. . .) how much trust we have in the Housing Trust.

The Housing Trust (inaudible. . .) (Inaudible. . .) to help (inaudible. . .) for maintenance on a structure basically only ten years old. I think grants to this town should aid all people, not just for the housing.

So, the \$50,000 requested for Affordable Housing (inaudible. . .) requests additional funding (inaudible. . .)

I'd like to add (inaudible. . .) as Selectmen. (Inaudible. . .). Second was taxes; to minimize increases to Washington property and personal taxes. (Inaudible. . .).

Audience: Applause.

Solley: I don't know what the budget (inaudible. . .) applicable, but I appreciate your opinion.

Anybody else? Okay. Why don't we vote?

This Motion is to approve an amount not to exceed \$980,004 for the expenditures for the Non-recurring Capital Fund.

All in favor of granting the Motion, please signify by saying "aye."

Audience: Aye.

Solley: All those in opposition?

Gerst: Nay.

Solley: Thank you.

Our third item on our Agenda tonight. . . , Dick, you want to read the Motion?

Sears: Sure.

I simply move that the Town of Washington establish a Housing Commission.

Solley: Do I have a second to this Motion?

Mullin: Second.

Sears: Alright. You have before you in the documents for tonight. It's out on the web site and been published for a couple of weeks-a draft of the idea of a structure to help the Town move ahead on its goal for continuing diversity of housing and for affordable housing. Our Town Attorney had a chan. . . did not have a chance before it was published to look at it, so I'd like to amend the Motion so what you have before you is you have the original (inaudible. . .) of this Motion (inaudible. . .) which is essentially (inaudible. . .) and that's the Motion that's on the floor, that's the main Motion. I'm going to add my amendment to include. . .to amend that Motion according to those attorney-recommended amendments on the backside of that paper which is Attachment 3B. So, to second the amendment I will include the details of the amendment and then we'll discuss the contents and body of the main Motion.

Solley: At this time, we need a Second to the Amendment.

Sherr: Second.

Solley: Thank you. Dan Sherr.

Sears: On Attachment 3D it describes in detail so many of you (inaudible. . .) first time you've seen the details of this.

Following boldface text copied from Gollow's notes taken at Meeting:

## **ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH A HOUSING COMMISSION**

### **Section I. Commission established; purpose.**

**A Housing Commission is hereby established to promote and encourage the development and continued availability of affordable housing for the people of Washington by bringing together public and private resources, developing recommendations for comprehensive housing policies and goals, and facilitating the accomplishment of those goals.**

Sears: Let me go through the changes with you. They're minor changes, they're not of substance but the attorney's asked us to make these. . .and then we can debate the merits of the actual concept itself. In the right-hand column you'll see these vertical lines and if you look across you'll see the things that are crossed out or things that are underlined in the text. The things that are underlined in the text are additional to what was there and the things that are crossed out have been taken out of the original text which is on the other side of the page.

They're pretty simple-take out the word "continuously" in "A". (Inaudible. . .) recommendations of the attorney. You don't want this group to be acting for the Town; it's basically an advisory group, you don't want it acting alone for the Selectmen; it's basically to work through the Board of Selectmen. (Inaudible. . .) Board of Selectmen. (Inaudible. . .) which is one of the duties.

The italicized text was not spoken in the Meeting but is in Gollow's notes taken at Meeting:

### *Section II. Duties.*

*The duties of the Commission shall be:*

*A. To study and analyze the housing needs of the Town.*

*B. To recommend to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commissions housing policies and practices calculated to encourage the development and continued availability of affordable housing for the people of Washington.*

*C. To establish housing priorities and recommend immediate and long-range housing goals to the Board of Selectmen.*

*D. To act as a clearinghouse for information concerning federal, state, municipal and private sources of funding and programs for housing and make such information available to the Board of Selectmen, and to potential developers (profit making and nonprofit) of new, converted or rehabilitated housing.*

Sears: (Inaudible. . .) basically to gather information and share that information.

*E. To make recommendations to the Board of Selectmen expenditures from the Affordable Housing Fund.*

*F. To provide a forum for housing issues.*

*Section III. Membership; terms; vacancies.*

*The Commission shall consist of five (5) members who shall be electors of the Town of Washington, and shall serve without pay, to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen.*

Sears: And then the word "elector" has been changed to "the members of the committee."

*The initial appointees of the Commission shall be one (1) member who shall serve for a term of one (1) year; two (2) members who shall serve for a term of two (2) years; two (2) members who shall serve for a term of three (3) years; all such members to hold office to the first day of July in the year of the expiration of their term and thereafter, all appointments shall be for a term of three (3) years expiring on the 30th day of June.*

Sears: And then under item III, the last part:

*Any vacancies shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen for the unexpired term.*

*Section IV. Organization*

*The Commission shall elect a Chairperson from its members and may organize itself in such manner as its members may determine is best suited to carry out the Commission's duties.*

Sears: And finally, the ordinance ends when it mentions that this ordinance will become effective should you vote to do this. . . .

*This ordinance shall become effective July 1, 2005.*

Sears: I simply want to say that after many years of study in this Town the Plan of Conservation and Development, the Housing Study Committee, and this past year the Board of Selectmen appointed a Housing Diversity Committee to look at the issue of affordability for people. The Housing Diversity Committee has proposed this structure on the public side to be accountable to you through the Selectmen, particularly the expenditure of funds. In this budget is a continuing line item, or line item for this year for Affordable Housing in that Capital Budget.

You and I want people who are elected or appointed to determine with us the best use for that. It may be (inaudible. . .) work done by the Housing Trust which is a private, non-profit, but it's not a public organization. So the Housing Diversity Committee chaired by Bill Fairbairn recognizes the need for public accountability. That's one of the essential pieces of having a town structure accountable to the Board of Selectmen. That's all I would like to say for now.

Solley: So, what I'm going to ask you for now is just simply approval of the amendment of the ordinance to establish the Housing Commission. We're not voting on whether or not we're going to have a Housing Commission; we're just simply voting on the amendment as prescribed by Town counsel.

John Allen?

Allen: I move to accept the amendment.

Solley: Okay. The motion was made by Mr. Sears earlier and seconded (by Betty Mullin per Gollow's notes taken at meeting). I will ask for a vote now to amend the ordinance to establish a Housing Commission as we have discuss. . .just discussed.

All in favor of the amendments please say "Aye."

Audience: Aye.

Solley: Any opposed? Thank you.

Now we will carry on with the business of the establishment of a Housing Commission.

Jackson (?): Bill Fairbairn may want to. . . .

Solley: Bill Fairbairn, I think that you might want to have a couple of words. . . .

Fairbairn: (Inaudible) come up and answer questions?

Solley: Right.

Fairbairn: My wife says I speak loudly. Can everyone hear me, or. . . .

Solley: (Inaudible) \_\_\_\_\_.

Fairbairn: Okay. I will speak loudly.

Those of you that are familiar the housing issues here in town, in 2002 the Housing Study Committee which had been appointed by the Board of Selectmen issued a report which is available on the web site and also published. I don't know. . . hopefully, all of you had a chance to read it.

The Town Plan of Conservation and Development in 2003 recommended that the Selectmen appoint a committee to evaluate the recommendations contained in this report and come back to the Town Meeting with specific recommendations for implementation. In April of 2004, the Board of

Selectmen appointed a committee of which I was a member. I'm looking around and I see Jeff Anderson and Simone Rourk, Matt Murgio, Don Brigham. . . Mark Lyon's back there, I see him. . . Jack Boyer was on the Committee. . . my memory's getting faulty. . . but we had a good cross section of the community and we came back with four major recommendations which are contained in this report which was submitted to the Board of Selection in March of this year. What we're asking you to do tonight is to implement the first recommendation which is to appoint a Housing Commission.

Dick, I think, has briefly addressed it. I'd be happy to answer questions as to why we're making this recommendation (inaudible. . .). So, if there are any questions, I'd be happy to answer them.

Solley: Yes, sir. Speak into the microphone.

Unknown Male: . . . Washington Depot. Is there any sort of evidence that you don't have diverse housing stock? What are you basing all of these figures on?

Solley: Repeat the question Bill.

Fairbairn: Okay. The question was "what are you basing this on?" And, again, it's based on this report which is (inaudible. . .) housing in town. The number of units, affordable units, you know (inaudible. . .). It's a very detailed report. The recommendations are based on the work that was done here. In addition, our

Committee undertook a number of other studies to follow up on what was done here. So, that's the basis for this recommendation.

Unknown Female: (Inaudible. . . ).

You have that now. You have the Conservation Commission, you have Steep Rock. You've got a Parks and Rec Commission, you've got (inaudible. . . ) providing recreation. The recommendation that we made, and I will read it very quickly, is *"that the Committee believes the evaluation of housing needs in Washington and a long term plan for addressing them will not occur until there is a creation of a Town Housing Commission."* The Town has never addressed this issue; it's been done privately. *"Establishment of a Town Housing Commission will provide public acfor creation of an action plan and for overseeing future housing opportunities. Acfor public funds,"* you just voted \$50,000 to put into a fund tonight, so I hope you want some accountability. . . . *"allocated for housing programs. Coordination with other town agencies to see that regulations are enacted to facilitate the particutype of housneeded, and coordination with local non-profit housing providers like the WashingCommunity HousTrust, and to manage the Town Housing Fund* (inaudible. . . )."

The Town has. . . .whether you want to believe it or not. . . .has a housing crisis. I've lived here

. . . .my family moved here forty-three years ago. Most of it. . .if you look at the median income in town. . . .but this. . . .a substantial portion of people that live here could not live here now if they hadn't moved here twenty, thirty, forty years ago. So, the town has to look at how they're going to address this issue and, hopefully, . . .the way it's been done, it's been private. The Washington Community Housing Trust and the leadership of Dick Sears, and now Matt Murgio, have done a great deal to bring more housing to town so that there can be younger people. If you look at the

. . . .there's a difference in the census from 1990 to 2000, the drop in young adults, 28 to 34, is like forty percent. I mean, that's not good for this town. This town does not have young people and Chet Lyon articulated it so well in our committee meetings- these are the people that are going to show up at your house when it's on fire. You know. . .when you're having a heart attack and you want the ambulance to show up. . . . If we don't make some way for our young teachers, our employees here in town, to have some way to live here, what kind of town do we have? Do you want to even live in a town like that? I mean, that's the question you're going to ask yourself. (Inaudible. . . ), but I love it. Yes, sir?



Unknown Male: The median selling price of houses in Washington was roughly \$300,000. Slightly more than Warren, and that's \$150,000 less than Roxbury and Bridgewater. So, I just don't understand. . .where is the crisis?

Fairbairn: Well, right now and maybe Liddy Adams can answer, too. Looking at the Multiple Listing Service, I think there may be one or two houses that are under 300,000 and something thousand dollars.

Unknown Male: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Well, I would tell you, sir, that no one working for the Town of Washington can afford to buy a house at that price at the salaries we pay. That's the reality. They're here because they looked at the. . . .

Unknown Male: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Well, I'll tell you what. . .if you want to come down, I'll go through the reams of stuff. . . .have you read any of there reports, sir?

Unknown Male: No.

Fairbairn: Then I would just recommend that if you could first read those, I'd be more than happy to discuss them, and I think you will have a better understanding.

Unknown Board Member: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: (Inaudible. . .), you're the boss.

Solley: Andy Shapiro.

Shapiro: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Speak up (inaudible. . .).

Gollow: He can just pick the mike up. . . .

Shapiro: I just wanted to. . . .he mentioned the 800 pound gorilla in the room which is the Affordable Housing Appeals Act which is published on the web site. It's the same issue that was raised at the last zoning commission meeting. As most people know, it's a State Statute which put a great deal of pressure on towns like Washington to either provide affordable housing or to wind up in court when they turn down a developer's application and they then find themselves with a very difficult burden of proof. And the developers win in sixty-eight percent of those cases.

I would just very quickly point out that the thirty-two percent that towns or zoning commissions win are on very limited grounds. A zoning commission can deny an affordable housing application because there's inadequate sewage disposal or there's inadequate potable water supply. And, failing that kind of a public health or safety reason, Zoning Commissions basically lose because they manage winning in only thirty-two percent of the cases. That does not mean. . .not in the habit of sort of a one in three shot at winning. (Inaudible. . .). A zoning commission can't say well, we're going to turn down this affordable housing application because it violates our zoning rules. That is (inaudible. . .) multi-family housing. If we rely on (inaudible. . .) like that, we'd end up losing one hundred percent of the time. (Inaudible. . .) local zoning rules count for nothing under this State's affordable housing mandate.

So, that's one the reasons that Dick Sears, I think quite honestly at this point, is involved in the Town's web site and the Town should take some kind of proactive approach to providing affordable housing.

Just to very quickly underline the reality of this threat, I would simply ask each of you to read tomorrow morning's Litchfield County Times front page story-"Bridgewater Developer Wins Round in Bridgewater Battle". It states that a Supreme Court decision backs Carr on Affordable Housing plans. It's an ongoing battle that dictates basically the grounds for (inaudible. . .).

Solley: Any other questions?

Betsy Mullen: On the same subject, I was just going to ask you. . . is the urgency for Affordable Housing is driven by mandate of the State?

Fairbairn: Andy has touched on the 800 pound gorilla in the room which is that under the old formula if you have ten percent of your housing that qualified as affordable, the definition for affordable is essentially eighty percent of the median income and as long as you're not spending more than thirty percent of that for your housing, then that's deemed affordable.

They've come up with a new formula now that has to do with points which has to do with the moratorium part. It used to be if you had two percent of your housing stock as affordable, then you got a four year moratorium which allowed you to develop more affordable housing and extend the moratorium (inaudible. . .).

It's down to a point system now which is seventy-five unit points. Right now, Washington I'm going to guess is. . . I can't remember, thirty-something units here. There are other units here that could qualify, but the owners of the properties will have to deed-restrict under the Connecticut DECD rule.

So, right now Washington is vulnerable to this and what Andy said is. . . I mean, how many of you have driven out 109 and seen the property right on the border there that's one hundred acres and is going to have eighty houses on it?

Unknown Female: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Yeah, but that's, but that's right. Washington's Zoning Regulations don't control that. Someone could come in here and do the same thing on a piece of property here and the people think that somehow our Zoning Regulations are protecting us against intensive development, and they don't as long as there's not affordable housing as Andy said. That's the 800 pound gorilla in the room.

Unknown Male: (Inaudible. . .).

Solley: Come to the mike, sir.

Unknown Male: My question is, if the land in Washington is so expensive, how does a developer come into an area like this and build affordable housing and make a profit? Now, you're talking about housing that is not affordable housing. That doesn't count, throw that out. (Inaudible. . .).

How does a developer come in to the Town of Washington, buy the land, build affordable housing, and make a buck?

Fairbairn: Because. . . the way he does it, sir, is just the way that John Carr has proposed to Bridgewater. As long as thirty percent of the units are under that affordable level. . . you know, the eighty percent which is roughly 225,0, somewhere around there, 230,. As long as those houses are priced at that, he can. . . if he's got a hundred units he's going to put on there, as long as thirty of them sell at that price, he can sell seventy at any price he wants. And that's how they make their money. That's how it's done.

And the Zoning Regulations that I saw. . . maybe Hank Martin can address it. . . but the multi-family that I saw would only require a developer to have ten percent, I think, or fifteen. Is that right? Yeah, and it's (inaudible. . .), so that would make it even less restrictive. If developers come in and do, say, ten houses (inaudible. . .), that's how they make their money.

Solley: Any other. . . I want questions regarding the establishment of a Housing Commission. I don't necessarily want this to go into a debate on affordable housing or (inaudible. . .).

Unknown Male: My name is Paul (inaudible. . .). I live in New Preston for some twenty years now. I don't understand how this (inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: That's not what it said, sir. What was recommended in the 2002 Housing Study Report was that the Town come up with a comprehensive plan for addressing a number of issues which I just read to you, but this is, as Andy said, is one of the issues-there is a way for the Town to be involved with private, non-profits like the Housing Trust, with responsible developers to try and get to that quota without having to do it all with Town funds. I mean, clearly I think this gentleman doesn't want the Town to spend a penny on affordable housing and I respect his opinion. But, it's just that. . .you know the way all this housing has been done has either been through the Washington Housing Trust, private donations, the churches have donated money. . . .I mean, that's the way it's got to be done-at least that's. . . .we need to have a plan. If we don't have a plan for getting to this, as Andy said, we are now subject to our Zoning Regulations being overridden, umm, you know, (inaudible. . .).

Crosstalk by audience.

Unknown Female: (Inaudible. . .)?

Fairbairn: Until we reach that unit equivalent, point equivalent, absolutely. And yet this is saying, you know, this is a group that will be accountable to the town's people, all of you gathered here, you voted to allocate money for this. . .so, as we did our study over here, that that was one of the major issues. . .that people wanted public accountability for any funds that were going to be expended by the town. So, that's the recommendation from the Committee.

Solley: Any other questions regarding the. . . .yes.

Simone Rourk: (Inaudible. . .). I just want to ask a question about how the Housing Commission can possibly help (inaudible for an extended period of time. . .).

Fairbairn: And I might add. Simone was a wonderful member of the Committee who took. . . .who was critical of the process and did something about it by joining a committee and making a very beneficial change, so. . . .thank you, Simone.

Solley: Jere Allan.

Could you come to the mike, please.

Jere Allan: I think that the way this has been handled has been pretty shoddily, at least in a few respects:

1. I think probably we should have been (inaudible. . .) 4.1 these people got snowballed into approving a budget (inaudible. . .). Now they're stuck.

2. Where do we say that if we don't put affordable housing in. . .there are houses that are here in town that are going to burn down (inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Jere, your house isn't going to burn down. I trust. It might, but they won't.

Audience: Loud crosstalk.

Jere Allan: 3. I'd love to have a Park Avenue penthouse. I just can't afford it. I don't (inaudible. . .). Not everyone who I've spoke to is going to get a (inaudible. . .).

Audience: Applauds.

Jere Allan: I think (inaudible. . .) outrageous. This doesn't have as much to do about the housing (inaudible)

. . .community thing. It has to do with the way that this was handled.

Now, if Bridgewater is fighting this to the Supreme Court, I say table it and see how Bridgewater does. You know and I know that Carr has (inaudible. . .) thirty-five years. We can wait another year. We can take that money that you're going to spend on this Committee and pay the School Budget because you know darn well that it's higher than a kite and there's nothing we can do about it.

And, also, maybe (inaudible. . .) lawyer's bill (inaudible. . .).

Audience: Applauds.

Fairbairn: I'm going to put you in the "maybe" column, Jere. Alright.

Solley: Any other questions?

Unknown Male: Is there any reason why the members of this Committee couldn't be elected, rather than appointed by the Selectmen?

Fairbairn: You could redo it at some point to have it that way. It's just that the Inland/Wetlands are appointed, Conservation is appointed, Planning Commission's appointed. I think if you wanted to amend it at some point, it's just. . .it makes it easier to do, but. . .I mean, at some point you could do that. You could change all the commissions to elected. Including, I might add, the Board of Finance .

Jackson: They are.

Fairbairn: Yeah, I know. . .there's no competition. Everybody's nominated now.

Solley: Any other questions regarding the creation of a Housing Commission? Peter?

Peter: (Inaudible. . .).

Fairbairn: Peter asked if the Hous. . .whether Washington Community Housing Trust continues to stay in existence. Yes, it does. This is no different than when the town put up the Conservation Commission. Steep Rock, in the past, had basically handled all the land use. . .donations, all that. I think what's happening here Pete, is that the town was basically in the past, more or less, been

run by volunteer groups that took up issues. The Fire Department, the Library, you know, the town took possession of the library. . .but the town now is realizing that it needs to have a say in this. Simone, I think, articulated it. Is it right for a private group that is not accountable to the public to be making decisions that not only impact what happens to people in town, but is also using town funds? And I think a lot people would say that I don't have a problem with that. There's a lot of people who feel that people making these kinds of decisions and doing this kind of planning should be accountable to all of you folks.

So, you know, you could look at it both ways.

Jackson: I'll speak up and I'll try to talk into the microphone.

This is sort of a matter of oversight. . .what the Finance Board does with things like the library, and the fire company and the Housing Trust. Our function's always been the same with each of these entities. If the town gave them money for any purpose, we exercise oversight. That means we look at it, we pay attention to it, they submit financial statements. . .so, I don't think you have to worry about the oversight aspect of something that is independent like the Housing Trust, because it has nothing to do with the Town, or the Library, which has nothing to do with the Town. We give the library \$100,000 plus a year, but we exercise oversight over it and we watch it continually. So, that function's going to continue for anything that we do.

Solley: Are there any more questions regarding this Resolution?

If not, we will go to a vote on the third item as amended:

Resolved: To approve an ordinance to establish a Housing Commission. All in favor of the resolution, please signify by saying "Aye."

Audience: Aye.

Solley: All those opposed.

Audience: No.

Solley: It appears that the "ayes" have it.

Unknown Male: I call for a hand count.

Solley: A raise of hands count?

Sears: We'll do a hand count.

Solley: All those in the negative, please raise your hand.

Sears: Negative? Are you sure about that?

Solley: All those opposed to the resolution, raise your hand.

Sears: Start the way you did before then. Start again.

Solley: Okay. All those in favor of this resolution, please raise your hand.

All those opposed to this resolution, please raise your hand.

Those who are for it, have it.

Sears: Motion carried.

Solley: Motion carried. Thank you.

Gollow's notes taken at meeting indicates "Vote taken by hand count resulted in approximately 10:1 in favor. Motion passed."

Solley: We're going to go Item four.

Dick, you want to address this?

Sears: Very simply, the Washington Community Housing Trust has withdrawn its request for a permanent tax abatement for the 16 Church Street Apartments. The Board of Selectmen has agreed to this request.

All in favor of granting the request to withdraw this item from the agenda, please signify by saying "aye."

Audience: Aye.

Sears: . . . .opposed by "nay."

Motion carried.

Solley: Now to the business of electing four representatives as members of the Shepaug Valley Region 12. What I'd like to do is first, before I get into the nominations, I'd like to recognize Irene Allan, Chair of the Board of Education.

Audience: Applause.

Irene Allan: Thank you.

I'm the more visible member of our family.

Laughter.

Irene Allan: I'd like to take just a moment for something that I trust will not be contentious. This evening we have four seats that have expired on the Board of Education and we're going to vote on filling those seats. One member of the Board who is leaving after sixteen years is Jay Hubelbank. . .and that's a lot of Monday nights, that's a lot of Tuesday nights, Wednesday, Thursday nights. He chaired the Board for two years. This past year he's been chairman of the Building Committee that has set about to explore the architectural possibilities in the renovations of our three elementary schools in Region 12-that's being applied to Roxbury, Bridgewater, and Washington. And he graciously agreed to stay on the Committee in the future despite not being a Member of the Board. That Committee is composed of a Board Member and townspeople.

He's done many, many other things. He's been involved in negotiations. . .contract negotiations. He's just an absolute stalwart member. He brings to the Board special expertise which has been invaluable. He been the manager of business and finance for Bethel Schools at one time in Region 9 and, basically, that's the nuts and bolts department of any school district or region. He's been our contribution of nuts and



bolts on the Board and has just been invaluable. He's always put doing what's right for Region 12's children as his primary priority. He's never been afraid to speak out.

Thanks also go to Laurie and their two daughters for letting us have him on Monday nights and whatever night. . . . So, I'd just like you to join me in thanking Jay. . .

Audience: Applause for an extended period of time.

Solley: What I'd like to do is set up a few ground rules with regard to the elections for our four vacancies on the Board of Education.

I would ask each of the nominees to come forth to the microphone and make their nomination. I

will then take a second. After all those are nominated, then we will give the nominees an opportunity, three or four minutes, to just make a small speech if they have something to say to us.

At this time, I will entertain a nomination for the Board of Ed.

Come to the mike, please.

Paul Frankel: Will the audience have an opportunity to speak about (inaudible. . .)?

Solley: I don't know why not.

Unknown Male: I think that's very important. From what I see, there's been a great deal of service and I (inaudible. . .).

Solley: Is there a nomination for the Board of Education position? Susie Payne.

Payne: Should I go to the microphone in the middle?

Solley: Please.

Payne: My name is Susan Payne. I've lived in Washington since 1966 and I'd like to nominate Irene Allan to a third term on the Board of Education. (Inaudible. . .) two terms, eight years. I've known Irene since she and her family moved to Washington in 1980. We were living on Nettleton Hollow.

Just a little background. I think you all know. Irene has been Chair of the Board the past year. (Inaudible. . .).

Solley: Thank you. Is there a second to Irene Allan's nomination? Jay Hubelbank.

Hubelbank: I second. . . .

Solley: Thank you. Is there anybody else?

Tape is very garbled at this point-cannot translate garble and cross talk.

Gollow's notes taken at meeting indicate Chuck Issellee of Mygatt Road nominated Jim Hirshfield to a third term on the Board.

Solley: Is there a second for Jim Hirshfield's nomination?

Gollow's notes taken at meeting indicate Wendy Breeckner seconded the nomination.

(Inaudible) crosstalk from Board and audience.

Miller: I'm Liz Miller. I taught in the school system for twenty-nine years and have lived here for many, many, many, many years. I'd like to nominate Matt Franjola on Region 12's Board of Education. Matt has followed Region 12's education and philosophies faithfully through many years as his daughters have gone through the school system. He has some reservations about the philosophy of education practiced in Connecticut at the present time. I share his concerns. I would say probably that when it comes to a view of what is and what is not "good" education, he and I see eye-to-eye.

Matt also has very steadfast views about the spending of the public's money, which is very important in these difficult economic times. Matt has run a small business in the area for some years. He has participated in Washington's wonderful volunteer system, serving on the Environmental Council for six years. He has a view of the world well beyond this area, having served as the nation's correspondence in southeast Asia. In fact, this leads to (inaudible. . .) to show his experiences with them, and he gave them a window on places and events that have shaped our world that they could never get from textbooks..

These are very difficult times for Region 12 in case you haven't heard about the renovation project. And still, I'd like to say a little more about the Board of Education as a whole. It's a very tough job. It's always been a time-consuming job. It's always been a job where you have to really (inaudible. . .) and talk to lots and lots of people. (Inaudible. . .) no matter how good your (inaudible. . .) is, no matter how hard you try, when you make a decision, many, many people are going to be very, very angry with you to the point of (inaudible. . .).

I'm a veteran of the town meetings when we brought Glenholme to the town. And I would commend Matt for taking on this job at this difficult time. Thank you very much.

Audience: Applause.

Solley: Do I have a second? Valerie Friedman.

The floor is still open for further nominations. . . . Jim.

Mitchell: My name is Jim Mitchell. (Per Gollow's notes taken at meeting, "Old Litchfield Road, nominated Valerie Andersen to a third term on the Board.. Betty Mullin seconded the nomination."

Mitchell: (Inaudible. . .).

Solley: Are there any other nominations for the School Board? Now or never. . . .

If there are no further nominations-there are four positions and four persons nominated. I will accept a motion to close the nominations.

Gollow's notes taken at meeting indicate Valerie Friedman moved to close the nominations. Betty Mullen

seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Solley: Because there are four members for four slots, I propose a single vote for all four. Otherwise, we'll have a written ballot in four corners. If this was a contested, if there was a fifth person involved, we'd have to have a written ballot.

Susie Payne.

Per Gollow's notes taken at meeting, Susan Payne moved that the Secretary coast one vote for the four nominees to serve as the four representatives to the Shepaug Valley Region #12 Board of Education. Ted Adams second the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

Solley: So, it's been. . .the motion has been made and seconded that we will have a single vote for the four nominees. . .so, we have Irene Allan, Jim Hirshfield, Matthew Franjola, and Valerie Andersen. . .all those in favor of electing these four to the Board of Ed for a single term, signify by saying "aye."

Audience: Aye.

Solley: All those opposed.

Thank you.

Audience: Applause.

Per Gollow's notes taken at meeting, Mark Lyon moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 PM. Dan Sherr seconded the motion. Motion unanimously passed.

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