

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of November 16, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Galen Stearns called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. Selectmen Ross McLeod and Charles McMahan were present. Selectmen Bruce Breton and Town Administrator David Sullivan were delayed. Roger Hohenberger was excused. Mr. Stearns read the agenda into the record, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING: Mr. Stearns opened the public hearing and read the notice into the record as follows:

The Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing at 7:00 pm on November 16, 2009 at the Community Development Department to consider the acceptance of Canterbury Road Extension from Station 0+00 to 8+00 as a public road.

Mr. McMahan motioned to approve the final bond release in the amount of \$7,465.20 and Mr. McLeod seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Mr. McMahan motioned to accept the road as posted and Mr. McLeod seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chief Lewis noted that he received an offer from the Greater Salem Exchange Club wishing to donate two American flags to the Police Department. Mr. McLeod motioned to accept the donation and Mr. McMahan seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Chief Lewis also announced that the Police Department will be holding an auction this Saturday at 11:00 am to auction off bicycles and other items that they would like to get rid of. Items will be available at 10:00 am for viewing prior to the auction.

Mr. McLeod announced that the girls' U14 soccer team was in the State Championship game yesterday and won against Bedford. They were congratulated on a great season.

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP: Mr. Sullivan presented the draft strategic plan as prepared by the various Town department heads. Mr. Sullivan noted that the department heads were in attendance at the meeting to answer any specific questions by the Board and that the department heads were looking for input from the Board as to the items listed as priorities for the next 3-5 years. Mr. Sullivan noted that if the Board did not have significant comments or changes, he asked that they consider adopting the draft strategic plan in its current form and allow the departments to move forward with implementing the action items as laid out in the plan. Mr. Sullivan noted that some items would have budgetary implications, and if slated for 2010, they have been included in the proposed 2010 budget being presented to the Board later this evening. However, he noted that the majority of the action items are procedural in nature in order to gain efficiencies and/or improve services within the various departments and do not represent significant budgetary items. Mr. Sullivan also noted that the action items are measurable goals and each department will undergo peer reviews by other departments throughout the upcoming years, with results reported to Mr. Sullivan. Mr. Stearns asked about the review process and Mr. Sullivan noted that a standardized format will be used.

Discussion ensued regarding revenues and funding for action items. Mr. McMahan noted that the overall "global" plan indicated departments should be budgeting within increased assessments and revenues, but that he would

like to see this concept addressed in all individual department plans and would like it to be more specific with timeframes and benchmarks, coordinating with the Assessing department. Mr. McMahon asked about one of Administration's action items regarding revenue budgeting and Mrs. Call explained that this was simply a goal to get individual departments involved in the various revenue budgeting that has typically been done by Administration. Mr. McMahon also asked about the costs associated with the various items in the plan. Mr. Sullivan indicated that the document is just a plan and that any cost related items would still need to go through the normal budgetary process with the Board, in the year that they are earmarked. Mr. Poulson added that department heads would like to spend their time on action items that are consistent with the Board of Selectmen's goals. Further discussion ensued regarding labor and management relations as a priority, as well as the concept of interest-based bargaining. Ms. Scott echoed that as a new department head and a newly reorganized department, Board of Selectmen input is vital to providing direction to her department. She also noted that funding isn't always necessarily taxpayer funding and that having specific action items in the strategic plan may help in securing other outside funding sources. Mr. McLeod indicated that he felt Ms. Scott's plan was missing a component regarding citizen input and the Master Planning process, and Ms. Scott stated she would go back through the plan and ensure that component was included.

Mr. Stearns noted that it appeared that a lot of work had been put into the draft plan and it includes several good goals. He indicated that he does have concerns regarding certain specific items and that he believes the Board would need more time and dialogue with departments, before being able to adopt the entire plan as drafted. Several members of the Board agreed that scheduling individual workshops with the department heads to go through the specifics of their plans would be a good idea and an appropriate next step, as well as to get further into the potential sources of funding for particular items. Mr. Sullivan agreed and asked the Board to continue their support of the strategic planning process and make these department head workshops a priority for 2010. Mr. Breton noted that the Board may have to look out several years for funding mechanisms and find ways to avoid balancing all costs on the backs of residential taxpayers.

Further discussion ensued regarding whether the inability to fund items will stall the concept incorporated into the Plan and a discussion ensued regarding the Fire department and full ALS service as an example. Chief McPherson indicated that his plan was put together as a "plan" to incorporate what he believes the department should be focusing on in the upcoming years, however, the timing of implementing these items is still dependent on the global budgeting process. It was noted that the Board would still need to evaluate the merit of each item, as either an improvement in services, a way to reduce costs or increase revenues. Further discussion ensued with Board members seeking clarification on specific items in various department plans. Mr. Sullivan reminded the Board that putting these action items in the plan is no different than what department heads have always done in assessing the needs for the departments on a year-to-year basis, it just provides documented, advanced notice to the Board of such items.

Discussion turned to the strategic plan document itself and the ability to get public input. Mr. Stearns indicated that he would like to see a concise, summarized document available for the public and Mr. Sullivan agreed that we can solicit feedback via the website, noting that it is still in draft form.

The Board then took a brief recess until 9:25 pm.

2010 BUDGET WORKSHOP: Mr. Sullivan presented to the Board the overview of the 2010 proposed Town budget. Mr. Sullivan went through several details in the budget via a powerpoint presentation. The overall Town budget is proposed at \$8,454 (-.068%) less than the 2009 approved budget. Mr. Sullivan then discussed the department heads' "global list" which includes only two remaining significant items that are included in the proposed budget. All other items, including across the board wage adjustments, have been deferred to future years. The Board discussed the plan for upcoming budget workshops and what process they would like to use this year. Consensus of the Board was to go through the budget books provided in detail over the next two weeks and to plan for the agenda of Nov 30th to go through the budget details, at least initially, and present questions to the department heads at that time.

ABATEMENTS: Mr. Norman discussed several abatements with the Board. The first set of abatements was regarding several condominium units at Golden Brook Crossing on Lowell Rd (Monomoy Development LLC). The values for Unit #'s 1,2,3 & 4 (of 7 units owned) were appealed by the taxpayer as they were not completed at the time of assessment. After further review, Mr. Norman recommended the Board accept the settlement agreed to by both parties to abate a total of \$193,800 and refund \$3,488.40 for the 2008 tax year, and in turn, the owners will accept and agree to not appeal the 2009 assessments on all 7 units. Mr. McLeod motioned to approve as presented by Mr. Norman and Mr. McMahan seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The second item was an administrative abatement for a billing error regarding a blind exemption for Lot 14-B-800 (Gosbee) in the amount of \$283.80. Consensus of the Board was in agreement. The third item was regarding a veteran's exemption that was incorrectly taken in duplicate states over the past 14 years. The residents, Carl & Michaelina Meinelt of 19 Horne Rd voluntarily provided the Town with a check for \$5,900 representing a refund for the duplicate credits and asked that the Board accept the refund. Mr. McMahan motioned to accept based on the taxpayer's request and Mr. McLeod seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

AUDIT: Mr. Breton noted that based on the late hour, he would defer his requested agenda item to the Nov 30th meeting.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Sullivan presented the Board with an update regarding the Depot project and the upcoming bid for the project. The Depot Advisory Committee recently met regarding the options for inclusion as part of the "base bid" versus "alternate bids" for the components of the project. The discussion centered around improvements to the freight building and, if included in the base bid, this work will have to be completed regardless of how the costs come in. In addition, this means that the Highway department may not be able to operate out of the area once construction begins, which may be an issue if the Town doesn't approve a new salt shed/highway garage in the upcoming Town Meeting. Although there is some risk to including the freight shed (not including the "platform") in the base bid, as Mr. Sullivan described, the DAC believes it is in the best interest to include it in the base bid as this will mean that it will be 80% funded by the State, and if not included, the Town will be foregoing approximately \$31,000. Lastly, Mr. Sullivan indicated that the State's Project Manager also believes it is in the best interest of the Town to take advantage of the available funding and get the freight shed improved as part of the base bid. Mr. McMahan motioned to move forward to include the freight shed in the base bid as presented by Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Breton seconded. Motion passed 3-1 with Mr. McLeod opposed.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION: Mr. Breton moved and Mr. McLeod seconded to enter into a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3-II b,c and d. Roll call vote – all members “yes”. The topics of discussion were personnel, reputations and land acquisition. Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Call were present for all sessions.

Mr. Sullivan updated the Board on the condition of Captain Patrick Yatsevich.

Mr. Sullivan also discussed a matter involving negotiations with the Firefighter’s IAFF Local 2915. Mr. Sullivan explained that the Fire Union is entitled to a minimum 2% cost of living adjustment beginning 4/1/10, for the third year of their existing contract however he recently met with the Union to discuss the possibility of reopening the wage adjustment for 2010. As a result of that meeting the Union presented a proposal that represents significant savings to the Town in wages for the 2010 budget. Through negotiations with Mr. Sullivan, the Union proposed to defer their COLA adjustment and not receive the increased wages until 3/31/11, the last day of the existing contract, thereby only increasing the wage scale on a go-forward basis from that date, in return for a one-year freeze on their health insurance cost share, consistent with other employees of the Town. Mr. Sullivan also noted that in negotiations for this change, the Fire Union required that any member that retires during the upcoming contract year, receives their full 2% COLA. Finally the agreement includes a provision that declares this agreement null and void should other employees in the Town receive a COLA. In that case the Union would simply revert to the provisions of year three of the current contract. Mr. Sullivan noted that if the Board was in agreement, it would be finalized through a sidebar agreement with the Union. Mr. McLeod motioned to accept the terms of the sidebar as negotiated between the Town and the Fire Union and Mr. Breton seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The Board discussed a request from Ms. Nicole Merrill to be appointed as an alternate to the Cable Advisory Board. Mr. McLeod motioned to appoint as stated and Mr. Breton seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Breton suggested that members of the Board, Mr. Sullivan and Mr. McCartney do a site visit to a potential rental property for temporary relocation of the Highway department. No decisions were made.

Mr. McLeod motioned and Mr. McMahon seconded to adjourn. Passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Call, *Assistant Town Administrator*

Note: These minutes are in draft form and have not been submitted to the Board for approval.