

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of December 12, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Ross McLeod called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Selectmen Kathleen DiFruscia and Roger Hohenberger were present, as was Town Administrator David Sullivan and several department heads. Selectman Phil LoChiatto was delayed and arrived at 7:15 PM. Selectman Bruce Breton was also delayed and arrived at 9:30 PM. Mr. McLeod opened with the Pledge of Allegiance then read the agenda into the record.

Mr. McLeod advised that the Board had received a citizen petition relative to the Canobie Lake Watershed Protection District. Mr. Sullivan added that two additional citizen petitions had been received as well, and all required verification of their signatures before acceptance and handing over to the Planning Board.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: Mr. McLeod read the following notices into the record:

In accordance with RSA 31:95-b, the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing at 7:00 pm on December 12, 2011 at the Community Development Department for the purpose of considering the acceptance of \$26,684.00 from the NH Office of Energy and Planning, representing funds awarded to the Town of Windham through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Funding, to be used towards building energy audits and lighting upgrades.

In accordance with RSA 31:95-b, the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing at 7:00 pm on December 12, 2011 at the Community Development Department for the purpose of considering the acceptance of funds from the Urban Search & Rescue Task Force (MA-TF1) in the amount of \$7,914.63. These funds will be utilized to reimburse the Town of Windham for salary and benefit costs relating to the federal deployment of a Town employee, as a member of the task force, to assist with disasters in New England during 2011.

Mrs. Call explained that the Energy grant was in reference to EECBG funding received by the Town late in 2011. Mr. Hohenberger moved and Mrs. DiFruscia seconded to accept the grant in the amount of \$26,684 for the energy audit. Passed 3-0.

Mrs. Call then explained that the latter grant pertains to reimbursement for coverage to allow a Windham member of the task force to be deployed to respond to disasters in other areas. These funds have been received by the Town in response to two separate events, and the Board must formally accept them to offset the Town's expenses. Mrs. DiFruscia moved and Mr. Hohenberger seconded to accept the funds in the amount of \$7,914.63 for reimbursement of Town expenses. Passed 3-0.

HEALTH INSURANCE: Mr. Sullivan explained that, as the Board was aware, he had been working with non-union employees to offer alternative insurance plans; and that to date 26 eligible employees had taken advantage of those alternatives. He indicated that seventeen of those had switched from the Town's self-insured plan to Anthem's Matthew Thornton Blue (MTB) and, as part of their HMO plan, were now responsible for out-of-pocket expenses such as co-pays and deductibles. Mr. Sullivan noted that, under the current plan, employees may put aside pre-tax monies for out-of-pocket expenses up to a cap of \$1000 and he was proposing allowing those employees who had chosen the MTB plans to increase this flex spending account to \$2,500. He explained that this would allow these employees to put additional pre-tax dollars aside to cover their costs, and posed only a small risk to the Town in that these funds are available from day one. Mr. Sullivan noted, however, that should an employee not use the full \$2,500 they lose it at year end.

After a brief discussion, Mrs. DiFruscia moved and Mr. Hohenberger seconded to increase the flexible health spending cap for those employees choosing MTB plans to \$2,500 as discussed. Passed 3-0.

RAIL TRAIL DONATION: Mr. Sullivan advised that this represented an annual donation in the amount of \$1,500 from the Amherst Railway Society to the Windham Rail Trail Alliance for the purpose of continued restoration to the Town's Depot Buildings. He further explained that the intent is to place these funds into an escrow account in hopes of receiving an additional donation next year and using the combined funds to complete the ADA ramp to the freight building deck.

Mrs. DiFruscia inquired whether there were any conditions attached to these funds, and Mr. Sullivan replied the only requirement was they be used for the Depot buildings.

Discussion ensued as to whether these funds could be utilized to offset other costs, such as ARRA funding or expenses already incurred for the buildings. Mr. Sullivan clarified these monies could only be used toward further improvements.

Mrs. DiFruscia then moved and Mr. Hohenberger seconded to accept the donation from the WRTA in the amount of \$1,500. Passed 3-0.

BUDGET WORKSHOPS: Mr. Sullivan presented the Board with a time line of dates relative to posting requirements, etc., and advised that the intention was to schedule the Public Hearing for the budget on January 9th, with a follow-up on the 16th, if necessary.

Library: The Board discussed with Library Carl Heidenblad the proposed entry into the G-Note group, a consortium of ten other public libraries that would expand offerings to Windham residents through a common borrower card. Mr. Heidenblad indicated that membership entails a recurring fee based on population and number of books lent, and the first year cost would be \$24K. Further discussion ensued regarding the reallocation of other budget items to cover this funding request, including salary changes and reduction in staff hours. Mr. LoChiatto inquired whether the funding need would increase, and Mr. Heidenblad indicated it would not for at least a couple of years. No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Cable: The Board discussed at length with Cable Advisory Board Chairman Margaret Case the \$12K requested for equipment; and the overall increase of 7% over last year's budget, \$6,200 of which is related to overtime, retirement and health insurance. Mrs. Case noted that the Town receives over \$200K per year from Comcast, and that Windham is the only Town in which cable does not receive all of those funds. She noted that the \$12K is primarily to cover tangible items and repairs.

WCAB member Leo Hart approached noting that Comcast does have a competitor in town via satellite offerings, with the main difference between two being the availability of WCTV to subscribers. He noted it is a selling point for Comcast to have our local channel which is why they come through with support for the station, and added that if the Town is to continue providing that asset the signal has to remain of high quality and the equipment be improved every year. Lengthy discussion ensued, and no changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Elections: Mr. Sullivan discussed an amended request received from Mr. Skinner for an additional \$780 for election salaries/supervisor of the checklist hours. Discussion ensued regarding the number of elections last year versus the ensuing year, hours worked, and the amount unexpended. No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Tax Collector: No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Treasurer: The Board discussed the proposed reduction in the Treasurer's stipend from \$2,500 to \$1,500 as suggested by Mr. Breton. Mr. Skinner advised that he puts in over 40 hours per month on the Treasurer duties, handling over \$50M, and must do so from home as he is unable to utilize the Town's software.

Discussion ensued, with input from Deputy Treasurer Bob Coole, regarding how long the stipend had been at \$2,500 and the lack of a supply budget. Mr. Sullivan clarified that Mr. Skinner could put in requests for items and utilize the Town's supplies, however, he voluntarily chooses not to.

Mr. Coole noted that, in the future, an elected Treasurer may want equipment and office space, and Mr. Sullivan indicated a desk, computer, and software were available. Discussion ensued, and no changes were made to the stipend, or the overall budget as submitted.

Town Clerk: The Board discussed with Town Clerk Nicole Merrill e-registration costs, which Mrs. Call clarified were recouped via the customers, and office supply cost increases. Miss Merrill indicated she was encouraging people to provide email addresses to the Office in order that email notices could be sent rather than mailings. Brief discussion then ensued regarding dog registration fees, and no changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Assessing: The Board discussed the \$4K funding request related to the utility appraisals and defense thereof with Assessor Rex Norman, as it pertained to past expenditures for this and concerns with appeals moving away from the Board of Tax and Land Appeals to Superior Court.

Mr. Hohenberger moved to reduce the Assessing budget by \$4K in contracted services. Mr. LoChiatto seconded for discussion, after which the motion failed 1-3, with Mr. LoChiatto opposed.

No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

General Assistance: Mr. Sullivan clarified for the record that this is the only budget that can be over-expended as, statutorily, the Town must provide assistance to those who qualify. He noted that staff was not advocating for additional funding for next year, however, there were concerns that the budget will run close to or exceed its bottom line. No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Health and Human Services: All items have been level funded, however a lengthy discussion ensued with Director Eileen Maloney regarding CART funding and whether it was proportional to the service Windham was receiving. Also discussed were CART's proposals for a shuttle service for Windham and Salem.

Mrs. Call then noted Red Cross had again requested \$1K in funding, which had been cut last year and not included this year; and also that The Upper Room in Derry had requested \$5K which had not been included. Brief discussion ensued regarding mosquito control, which had also not been included, and Mr. Sullivan clarified that the Town's permit will be in place in case an emergency situation arises.

Discussion moved to funding for the Rockingham VNA, which had not requested funding for the last two years, and Senior Citizen President Barbara Coish approached to indicate that the organization is nearly defunct.

Discussion then moved to CLM funding, which had been steadily decreasing over the years to zero funding this year. Mr. Sullivan noted that the Town's Welfare Administrator, Kathy Davis, works closely with CLM and had advised the Board that the need for services/treatment could be handled on a case by case basis. Mr. Sullivan indicated that CLM does not turn anyone away and, if necessary, the Town pays for those services through the general assistance budget. Discussion ensued. No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Discussion moved briefly to the overall increase of \$293,015, or \$0.14/dollar, if the budget passes as presented, with \$167K of that being CIP requests.

Fire Department: The Board had a lengthy discussion with Chief McPherson and Assistant Chief Morgan regarding the self contained breathing apparatus requests as it pertained to grant funding, NFPA standards, and the failure of the current equipment to meet CBRNE standards. No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Highway Department: The Board discussed at length with Highway Agent Jack McCartney his request for \$330K in funding; with Mr. McCartney explaining it is based primarily on ever increasing asphalt prices. Mr. Hohenberger felt that, realistically, only so much work can be overseen and completed each year by Mr. McCartney, thus the rationale for reducing the funding to \$300K.

Mr. McCartney noted that asphalt costs increase each year, and he had been able to stay within \$300K by doing less work. He added that the Town is falling behind and does not meet national standards for repair. Discussion ensued, and Mr. Sullivan noted that in actuality Mr. McCartney should be asking for half a million to make reasonable gains in improvements to the roads, adding that ten years from now the Town will have significant issues as the new roads start needing repairs. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Hohenberger then moved to reduce the request for \$330K to \$300K. There was no second.

Further discussion ensued regarding need for more funding, future bonds, and means to stretch the dollars available. Mr. McCartney also advised that he had lowered the funding request for the loader to \$90K due to a favorable trade-in value. Brief discussion ensued regarding keeping or trading the existing loader.

No changes were made to the overall budget as submitted.

Mr. Sullivan then discussed with the Board the funding request of \$105,870 for HVAC repairs, which he recommended keeping in an expendable account. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the feasibility of repairing the Town Hall HVAC, and reducing the budget by said amount as a cost neutral project. It was the consensus of the Board to make no changes to the funding request.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

LIAISON REPORTS: None.

MINUTES: None.

CORRESPONDENCE: The Board addressed the citizens' petitions noted earlier in the meeting by Mr. McLeod; all of which had been verified in the interim for appropriate signatures by the Town Clerk. The petitions include proposed amendments regarding the Canobie Lake Watershed, the WWPD and Watershed Protection. Mr. Breton motioned and Mrs. DiFruscia seconded to accept the petitions and submit them to the Planning Board. Passed 5-0.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: Mr. Sullivan reminded the Board that the last budget workshop, prior to posting for the public hearing, is scheduled for this Thursday, December 15, 2011 and that the Board will also be discussing union contract negotiations that night.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION: Mr. Hohenberger motioned and Mr. Breton seconded to enter into nonpublic session in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II d. Roll call vote all "yes". The topic of discussion was land acquisition. The Board and Mr. Sullivan were in attendance.

Mrs. DiFruscia motioned and Mr. Lochiatto seconded to deny a request to abate property taxes on a potential gift of land. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Hohenberger moved and Mrs. DiFruscia seconded to adjourn. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 10:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Call, Asst Town Administrator-Finance
Wendi Devlin, Administrative Assistant

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