

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Minutes of May 28, 2013**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Phil LoChiatto called the meeting to order at 5:10 PM. Selectmen Ross McLeod, Roger Hohenberger, Kathleen DiFruscia, and Al Letizio were present; as was Town Administrator David Sullivan. Mr. LoChiatto opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**WORKSHOP SESSION:** Mr. LoChiatto opened the discussion by explaining that the Board had met a few weeks earlier with the Town Department heads to garner their input, and that the purpose of this workshop was as a Board follow-up to discuss goal setting. Mr. LoChiatto noted, for example, that he has heard concerns regarding morale issues and expressed hope that the Board can find a way to aid in correcting that. Mr. McLeod questioned what the Board could do regarding morale, as Mr. Sullivan deals with the day to day activity, and a discussion ensued regarding beliefs that the Board is disengaged.

Mr. Hohenberger indicated that he believed the tone of the current morale was set with the former Planning Director; as there was a perception then that the Board was “out to get” staff. He indicated that, as an employee, he would have felt that same fear; adding that he believed it then spread to other issues and that many feel the Board members are antagonistic and possessed their own agendas. Mr. Hohenberger noted that he feels it has improved, however, the issue is not day to day operations but interactions between the staff and the Board. Discussion ensued regarding any disconnect between the Board members and Department Heads, in the area of strategic planning for example which represents more of a “to do” list for staff than a vision for the Board.

Mrs. DiFruscia opined that if the members were talking about developing a vision for the community, such a thing would apply more to the Master Plan, Planning Board, and/or Economic Development Committee. She indicated that it is hard to develop anything without knowing the ultimate build-out of the Town, as there are things to consider such as budgetary needs, whether the Board of Selectmen form of government is antiquated or sufficient for a built-out town, and things such as water/sewer infrastructure. Mrs. DiFruscia felt all were important and that professional input should be provided to the Board. Mr. LoChiatto noted all were good points by Mrs. DiFruscia, but he believed the members needed to separate what is the physical path of the Town to be addressed by the Planning Board; adding that he was thinking of things along the administrative/governmental side such as whether maintaining 0% budgets was prudent and looking at the future of the Town’s physical assets. Discussion ensued in that one cannot be considered without the other, and the intertwining of visions.

Mr. McLeod noted that the Capital Improvements Program is the key strategic planning tool at the Board’s disposal; adding that he had never subscribed to the need for a 0% budget but rather that a fiscally responsible budget be developed each year.

Mr. Letizio noted that since being elected he been endeavoring to listen and learn without making assumptions about what is done or how. He noted that he had researched the RSA’s as it pertained to Selectmen duties and found it essentially amounted to one sentence; while the Board’s own by-laws are more tactical in nature. Mr. Letizio indicated he believed the Board would best function with a visionary principal that can be strategized and then tactically implemented; adding he believed the Board’s job was to interpret the wants of the general public and translate same into a visionary statement.

Lengthy discussion ensued as to the means to develop such a vision, the Board’s responsibility to control spending, various possible visions statements (eg unions/compensation), and comparisons between Windham and surrounding communities.

Mr. Sullivan clarified that, demographically and geographically, the Town of Windham compares to eighteen (18) communities, and is in the low to mid-range in percentages as it pertains to wages. Further discussion ensued regarding public safety needs and staff levels, the development of common visions, and how to successfully/creatively move into the future within financial constraints.

Mr. Sullivan noted that staff is working to develop an action plan relative to non-Capital Improvement items, such as tasers and infrastructure, which will be presented to the Board prior to budget season. He went on to note the differences between Boards, and the move years ago from a bonding philosophy to cash philosophy; adding that some form of guideline from the Board would be appreciated to work towards.

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the CIP program, previous projects such as the Salt Shed, maintaining a stable tax rate as a vision statement and defining same, and Capital expenditures versus operating costs. Mr. Hohenberger indicated he would like to see an analysis of other communities as it pertained to overtime to salary ratios. Mr. Sullivan indicated that Windham expends far less in overtime than other communities, as we have less employees; adding that it is far less expensive to utilize overtime to cover absences than to bring in new people as related benefit costs for the latter quickly eat up any savings.

Mr. Sullivan then briefly described the budgeting process as it pertained to earned time and overtime; adding that he would advocate keeping overtime stable within the budget. Mr. Sullivan noted that the Board of Selectmen will always have a “reasonable” budget to consider as staff endeavors to adhere to the established value statement of the Town as follows:

- Translate the myriad of community and municipal needs into a fiscally stable government;
- Embrace and implement advances in technology and business practices and strive, always, to expand our municipal knowledge base;
- Acknowledge and respect the varied opinions and suggestions of citizens, employees, business community, and visitors, and exhibit fairness and equity in all our dealings;
- Maintain a desirable quality of life through all appropriate and available means, and by fostering the natural, cultural, historical, and recreational aspects of our community;
- Work to recruit, train, develop, and retain staff capable of adapting to an ever-changing society while providing courteous and professional service;
- Openly encourage volunteerism in our community, not only by our actions, but also by our support of and gratitude for volunteer endeavors;
- Recognize that the trust and support of our endeavors by our community must be continuously earned, through leadership, integrity, innovation, and communication;
- Keep paramount, above all else, the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens and employees.

Mr. Sullivan then noted that what the Department Heads are seeking from the Board is support of their efforts; adding that recognition/acknowledgement is important. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding specific matters facing the Town, such as pension and other benefit changes, as well as a possible joint meeting with the EDC, previous discussions/votes regarding bringing water and/or sewer to portions of Town, and possibly revisiting the value statement which continues to be valid. It was ultimately the consensus of the Board that the following three goals be established:

- Review of the Town’s compensation package, including contracts, earned time, and health insurance. Mr. Letizio and Mr. Hohenberger will work with Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Call to gather data for the remaining members to review.
- Review of/planning for the Town’s facilities, including support of the Staff committee’s development of the non-CIP equipment and infrastructure management plan, analysis of the Town’s funds (ie property maintenance), and the means to maintain our overall infrastructure in the long-term.
- Safety review to ascertain if the Town is in line where it should be right now; including future impacts of changes to major roadways.

Discussion then ensued as to the departmental strategic plans, which the Department’s will continue to utilize internally, possibly returning to the global budgeting process, and establishment of a long-term agenda.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Mr. Sullivan advised that a resident complaint had been received relative to interpretation of the Town’s policy regarding winter maintenance on unaccepted roads; specifically as it pertained to the fact that the Town does not sweep these roads to remove the sand. He indicated that those unaccepted roads designated as “emergency lanes” were declared as such to allow for winter maintenance only; and inquired whether the Board wished to consider removing the sand.

Discussion ensued regarding the policy, potential safety/drainage issues related to not removing the sand, that public funds cannot be expended on private roads, and whether the removal of the sand was adjunct to winter maintenance. Mr. Hohenberger questioned why these roads continue to be unaccepted, and Mr. Letizio replied that as it pertained to this complaint there was a punch list of items outstanding for the developer to complete.

Discussion ensued, and it was the consensus of the Board that this be placed on the next agenda and that, in the interim, the Highway Agent will review the sites and comprise an estimated cost to sweep those roads in need of sand removal. Also, Town Counsel's opinion will be sought on this matter.

Mrs. DiFruscia moved and Mr. McLeod seconded to adjourn. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendi Devlin, Administrative Assistant

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