



SELECTMAN'S OFFICE
174 Main Street
Deep River, Connecticut 06417

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

DEEP RIVER TOWN HALL

Regular Meeting — March 24, 2015

Attendance: Selectmen Richard Smith, Angus McDonald & David Oliveria. Also: Margo Hilfinger and John Greene (*videography*); Anna Marie & Zach Gilbert.

This regular meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm by Smith.

Minutes: Regular Meeting of March 10, 2015

Motion by Oliveria, McDonald 2nd, to approve the minutes of the regular Meeting of March 10, 2015.

APPROVED 3 – 0

NOTE: *Consideration of agenda items A & B was delayed until the 7:30 joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance.*

Smith gave an update on the 2015-16 budget. On the revenue side, the Grand List increased by \$9,145,318 (approximately two percent), which will add \$236,000 in new tax revenue. Expenditures for the Regional School District #4 budget increased by \$251,000.

The General Government portion of the budget includes a two percent wage increase for Town employees, \$7,800 for computer support and software for the Tax Office, and an increase of \$10,000 for Blue Cross / Blue Shield insurance. Workers Compensation and liability insurance costs will actually decrease by \$20,000.

Funding for General Government—Capital Expenses includes \$50,000 for Plattwood Park, \$32,000 for property revaluation, and \$50,000 for roof repairs, in the Deep River Elementary School—Maintenance line.

Under the heading of Debt Redemption, a new budget line entitled “Kirtland Street / River Street Sewer Expansion” will be funded at \$135,000. The final payment of \$113,098.69 for the Town Hall HVAC was included in the current (FY 2014-15) budget.

Fees generated by the new sewer line will be allocated to a new revenue line entitled “Kirtland Street / River Street Sewer Expansion,” with anticipated annual revenue of \$22,000.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that an increase should not exceed four-tenths of a mill. To meet that goal, the current budget draft would need to be reduced by \$40,000. Four joint meetings remain for the Boards to produce a finished budget for presentation at the Annual Town Meeting.

Audience of Citizens - Any Other Matters to Come Before the Board:

Margo Hilfinger stated that taxes continue to rise every year, and that there have been no decreases. She asked that ways be found to reduce the mill rate and cut taxes. Smith responded that during his 26 years as First Selectman, nine years had seen no increase (one included a half-mill decrease), and that, with the exception of four years, increases were generally held to a half-mill or less.

Hilfinger, referring to the number of projects currently underway, asked how we could fund future capital projects. Smith replied that within the Debt Redemption category there is a line entitled “Fire Department / Highway” with an appropriation of approximately \$144,000. This line allows the Town to expend approximately \$650,000 for equipment or other capital projects every five years without increasing taxes.

Hilfinger stated that she appreciated knowing that line is in the budget.

Smith mentioned that the General Government portion of the budget, which represents the entire cost of the Town's operations, is considerably less than in many towns. He went on to explain that the staff is lean: many departments are staffed only part-time, personnel are cross-trained, where possible, and that he, himself, augments the three-person Highway Department, but at no compensation in addition to his salary. Finally, he noted that most capital projects have been made possible by grants.

During discussion of the three new buildings at the Plattwood Industrial Park, Smith noted that they would first appear on the next Grand List, which will be compiled as of October 1, 2015.

NOTE: The Board of Selectmen remained in session during the meeting of the Board of Finance to discuss jointly agenda items A & B.

A. Agreement between the Town of Deep River & ULC Holding for installation of a natural gas pipeline on Route 154.

B. Thomas A. Gribben, Architect, to discuss the preliminary design of a new firehouse at 57 Union Street.

Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen & Board of Finance:

Thomas Gribben, President of Noyes Vogt Architects of Chester, discussed possible replacement of the present Fire Headquarters, at the intersection of Union and Elm Streets. Fire Chief Tim Lee was also present. Discussion centered on the size and appearance of a new building. Gribben will prepare illustrations of the present structure for comparison with the concept of a possible replacement. Presentation will be scheduled for a future meeting with the two Boards and representatives of the Fire Department. Of primary concern is the impact on the residential neighborhood, as well as its impression as a major gateway to Deep River.

Members of both boards discussed at length the proposal by ULC Holding Company to install a natural gas pipeline along Route 154 (Main Street) from the Essex Town Line as far as Winter Avenue. Much of the discussion concerned two of ULC's conditions:

1. The Town would contribute \$250,000, payable over five years, toward the cost of the project. Payments would be funded largely by the estimated \$48,000 in annual property tax revenue from the

pipeline, with the Town responsible for the difference, estimated at approximately \$11,000 over the entire five year period.

2. Both Boards agreed that the number of major projects currently underway precludes the additional expense of converting heating systems in all affected Town buildings during the summer of 2015, as requested by ULC. Conversion of the Public Library system would be accomplished this summer (2015), with the Elementary School scheduled for the summer of 2016.

Following discussion, McDonald moved, Oliveria 2nd, to approve an agreement with ULC, subject to the following stipulations:

1. The \$50,000 payment due to ULC each year for five years will be offset by the estimated \$48,000 in tax revenue generated by the new pipeline, with the balance made up by the Town.
2. The Town would agree to convert the Public Library during the summer of 2015, but conversion of the Elementary School would be completed during the summer of 2016.

All present agreed that the savings in heating costs offered by natural gas would benefit not only the town itself, but all properties along the pipeline, especially industrial and commercial users and Kirtland Commons.

APPROVED 3 – 0

Adjournment:

Motion by Oliveria, McDonald 2nd, to adjourn at 8:52 pm.

APPROVED 3 – 0

Respectfully submitted,

Richard H. Smith,
First Selectman