

Board of Selectmen's Meeting

December 16, 2015

A regular meeting of the Deerfield Board of Selectmen was held on December 16, 2015.

*Present: David Wolfram (Chair)
Carolyn Shores Ness
Mark Gilmore*

Also Present: Kayce Warren (Town Administrator)

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 PM, and a quorum was declared.

Hearings/Appearances before the Board

FY2017 Budget Preparation Discussion with Board of Assessors and Finance Committee, Capital Improvement Planning Committee

The board welcomed members from the Board of Assessors, the Finance Committee, and the Capital Improvement Planning Committee, for the purposes of discussing budget priorities.

PRESENT:

- **CIPC (Quorum)**
 - Jack Davey - CIPC
 - John Paresky – CIPC (chair)
 - Bill Cummings – CIPC
- **FINANCE COMMITTEE (Quorum)**
 - Dylan Korpita – Finance Committee (Chair)
 - John Paciorek – Finance Committee
 - Skip Olmstead – Finance Committee
 - Mary Stokarski – Finance Committee
- **BOARD OF ASSESSORS (Quorum)**
 - Skip Sobieski – CIPC / Board of Assessors
 - Chuck Shattuck – Board of Assessors
 - John Coderre – Board of Assessors (Chair)

Also Present and participating:

- Jeff Upton – Resident

The Finance Committee, Board of Assessors and CIPC were independently called to order, to meet jointly with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Korpita thanked those present for their participation, and suggested that the goal of the meeting would be to look at 'big picture' goals and ideas.

Mr. Korpita spoke about revenue and expense numbers from the previous year, but encouraged the committees and boards not to get 'bogged down' in numbers.

Mr. Olmstead handed out his projected numbers related to revenue sources, including debt exclusions, levy limits, and other related information.

The potential of a debt-exclusion for the Oxford Property debt was discussed, along with a debt-exclusion vote for the School Committee.

Mr. Coderre questioned the validity of some of the figures presented by Mr. Olmstead. There was some discussion as to the source of the numbers.

Mr. Korpita reiterated his concern about getting lost 'in the weeds' by addressing specific figures.

Mr. Wolfram suggested that the source of revenue figures should be the Board of Assessors, and not the Finance Committee.

Mr. Korpita asked what factors could change the budget landscape for FY17.

Mr. Gilmore suggested that all parties consider ways to improve the budgeting process.

Mr. Korpita asked about a policy related to free cash, and how much should be retained in any given year. Mr. Gilmore stated that, historically, an amount equal to 5% of the overall annual budget was a target goal.

Ms. Ness stated that previous figures for revenues have been conservative.

Mr. Korpita suggested that a focus on a 'free cash policy' would be prudent. The benefit of a capital stabilization fund was also considered.

Mr. Korpita expressed his concern related to appropriating money toward OPEB, describing it as a 'bucket with a hole in it'. Mr. Korpita recommended the developing a long-term plan related to OPEB. There was further discussion related to OPEB funding, the establishment of the account, and progress towards meeting the requirements for OPEB.

There was further discussion related to County / Regional efforts related to OPEB.

Mr. Olmstead also presented draft numbers for state revenues as well. Ms. Ness suggested that the town generally uses level numbers from one year to the next.

Mr. Korpita asked about school assessments, and whether assessments would increase or decrease.

Ms. Ness spoke about school choice, and the timeline for numbers.

Mr. Coderre asked about Mr. Olmstead's levy limit calculations.

Mr. Paciorek reiterated the Finance Committee's wish to retain free cash equal to 5% of the annual budget. Mr. Paciorek also suggested that OPEB be funded at, at least, a minimal level.

(0:41:10)

Mr. Paresky stated that the CIPC approved \$1.4 for the headworks project. There was some discussion as to the source of those funds (grant, loan, etc.).

There was some discussion as to the design part of the Headworks project (about \$124,000), and the source of funds for that portion of the project.

Mr. Paciorek stated that the town agreed at some point in the past that the town would be responsible for capital improvements to the sewer system, and the sewer users would be responsible for operational costs.

Strategies for pursuit of funding for the headworks project were discussed, including defining the reasons for the upgrade, the potential for regionalization, and other issues. (0:51:46)

The importance of the sewer rate study to the overall project was discussed. (0:53:56)

Mr. Upton spoke about the benefit that residents enjoy as a result of the availability of sewer service in town. Mr. Gilmore reiterated the intent of the sewer rate study, and suggested that further comment be reserved until after its completion. Ms. Ness stated that, regardless of the rate study, the current sewer rate does not cover capital expenses, and will likely go up as a result. (0:59:45)

There was other discussion about the 'process' of developing a town budget, and how it could be improved.

Mr. Coderre suggested that the process was dependent on the timeliness of assessment data.

Mr. Olmstead suggested developing priorities as to where the money is spent. (1:07:10)

Mr. Davey spoke about the CIPC efforts to prioritize capital expenditures, and sources of money for such expenditures.

The role of the CIPC in the budget process was discussed. The process by which capital requests are considered and/or recommended was discussed.

Mr. Paresky asked for clarification as to how the CIPC should operate. (1:11:40)

Mr. Gilmore suggested that the CIPC work to develop a long-term capital plan that includes requests from all departments, and prioritizes capital expenses in a manner that balances need with available funds.

Mr. Olmstead suggested that boards and committees agree on a number that funds capital requests.

Mr. Gilmore stated that he would rather reduce the amount of free cash retained in favor of granting capital requests if warranted.

Mr. Olmstead stated that the Town Administrator has been speaking about developing a capital stabilization policy and reserve, and that he was in favor of pursuing that.

Mr. Coderre suggested that caution be observed when attempting to develop any hard-and-fast rules. (1:20:25) Mr. Coderre stated that historically, the town has failed to invest in capital equipment and facilities.

Further conversation related to the use of free cash, free cash levels from year to year, and the ability to reserve some of those funds for capital expenses. (1:27:40)

Capital appropriation was discussed, and the 'setting aside' of money for capital expenses.

Mr. Coderre expressed concern over the use of 'special funds' was expressed, and disagreed with the need for Capital Stabilization funds.

Mr. Gilmore endorsed providing financial resources necessary for department heads to complete needed capital improvements.

Ms. Warren stated that capital stabilization funds require 2/3 approval by Town Meeting for use. Capital Stabilization money can be grown through investment.

Mr. Coderre: Where does the money come from?

Ms. Warren described the benefits of a capital stabilization fund for various purposes.

Ms. Stokarski stated that, over history, capital assets have been ignored.

Ms. Ness suggested that the matter be referred to the CIPC for further review, and then brought back to the various committees as a whole.

Mr. Paresky suggested that the committee needs to address capital requests for the year first, and then consider a capital policy later in the year.

There was some discussion related to the state budget schedule, and the school budget schedule.

The Town Manager requested a spreadsheet from the CIPC related to requests, and potential expenses.

Mr. Paresky stated that the Committee was not interested in addressing requests that are for less than \$25,000. The Town Administrator was asked to inform Town Department heads of the parameters for capital requests.

There was further discussion as to how requests for capital expenses are dealt with, particularly lower-cost capital expenses related to facility repairs and improvements.

The Board of Assessors were asked for an estimated timeline for potential revenue figures.
Answer: March.

The Board of Assessors was asked about Overlay Surplus, and whether the Board would consider releasing overlay surplus by mid-February. Answer: Yes, we will reconsider.

The CIPC adjourned at about 7:54 PM. The Finance Committee repaired to the Town Hall Kitchen to continue their meeting. The Board of Assessors adjourned.

Minutes of previous meetings for review and approval

The Minutes of November 18, 2015, and December 2, 2015 were reviewed. MS Ness requested two minor corrections to the minutes from December 2, which were accepted by the Board.

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Wolfram

To approve the minutes of November 18, 2015 as submitted and to approve the minutes of December 2, 2015 as amended.

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

Public Comments

There was no public comment.

Selectmen's Comments / Announcements

Ms. Ness offered positive comment on the lights on the South Deerfield Common.

Board of Health Comments / Announcements / Appearances

Ms. Ness reminded viewers that the flu season was in full swing – 'wash your hands, and get a flu shot!'

Mr. Gilmore mentioned a recent rash of thefts of packages being delivered to residence door fronts, and from cars.

Discussion/Decision Items

Discuss/Approve/Vote – Special Town Meeting; Open Warrant

It was MOVED by Wolfram, SECONDED by Warren

To declare the warrant for a special town meeting on January 25, 2016, at 7 PM, at the Deerfield Town Hall to be open.

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

Ms. Warren stated that there are four tentative articles to be placed on the warrant.

One article, related to the DES Roof project, has language to be determined by MSBA, and must be vetted by Town's Counsel.

A second article is for the proposed sewer rate study.

The third article is a request for legislative action, which would exempt two Deerfield Police Officers from the mandatory retirement at Age 65, and extend their employment status for an additional five years.

Mr. Wolfram expressed a concern about physical requirements for the job; Ms. Warren will pass on that concern to the Chief of Police.

Mr. Gilmore stated that state mandatory retirement is there for a reason; if the reasons are applicable in this situation, the Chief should provide that information to the Board.

The fourth article is related to the petition submitted in relation to the SCEMS ambulance service. Town Moderator has requested that the petition be submitted as a non-binding petition, in the form of instructions to officers.

Ms. Ness asked about voting to include a number of capital expenses into a future town meeting warrant. There was concern about how to inform the voters about the impact of a debt exclusion.

In the end, the board generally agreed that the four articles constitute the entirety of the special town meeting.

Discuss/Approve/Vote – Debt Exclusion Vote for DES Roof Project

The board discussed the possibility of excluding the DES roof expenses from the limitations of Proposition 2 ½. The topic will be taken up.

Discuss/Approve/Vote – Sugarloaf Cemetery Fence Bid Award

The board considered the response to the Sugarloaf Cemetery Fence Request for Bids. The

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore

To accept the bid from Fitzgerald Fence for \$15,250 for the construction of a portion of fence in front of the Sugarloaf Cemetery.

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

The board requested that the fence be in place before Memorial Day.

Discuss/Approve/Vote – Lake Street Developers Net Metering Agreement, Solar Project at 901 River Road

Mr. Wolfram stated that he had a conference call related to a proposed Net Metering Agreement with Lake Street Developers. Mr. Wolfram suggested tabling the topic, as further information was needed.

Mr. Gilmore reminded the board that various provisions related to solar credits ‘sunset’ after 2016, and that the town should try to act as quickly as possible.

Discuss/Approve/Vote – New England Patient Network Host Agreement

Mr. Nick Spagnola would be attending the December 30 meeting to speak to the NEPN host agreement.

Wolfram: Were the numbers in the host agreement proposed by NEPN or by the Town?

Answer: The town.

There was some discussion related to ‘fee for service’ impacts, such as health inspections, etc. Mr. Gilmore strongly recommended that money in the host agreement be used for outreach and educational efforts.

There was further discussion on the general parameters of the agreement, and the intentions for the monies to be collected.

There was further discussion related to the operation as proposed and potential concerns of the Board of Health Agent. The board generally agreed to a timeline for review of the host agreement within three years.

The terms of the agreement were generally reviewed by the board. Ms. Warren reminded the board that the host agreement as it stands is the Town’s proposal to NEPN, and that NEPN would likely review, and return with a counterproposal.

Mr. Gilmore expressed his concerns related to the proposal, and whether or not the numbers represent a realistic proposal, and a good use of the money that could be gained through this agreement.

There was ongoing discussion related to the host agreement, the timeline for review and revision, the amounts of money set aside for specific purposes, and the limitations that the host agreement might place up on the town.

The potential of funding positions in town through the host agreement revenues was discussed.

There was discussion related to providing funding to 'public non profits'

The board expressed interest in supporting 'public health efforts in the local or regional community'.

Information related to other communities' host agreements was requested. Ms. Ness suggested that she and the Board of Health Agent would seek that information and forward it to the other Board members.

Mr. Gilmore also expressed concern about the focus on police services in the agreement, and suggested that other uses are just as valid, and potentially just as important to the town.

The Town Administrator would send her notes and the tentative changes to Town's Counsel.

Discuss/Approve/Vote – FCAT – Request for release of PEG Funds

A letter from FCAT requesting a release of capital funds to put towards housing efforts for the public-access television station.

It was suggested that \$80,000 be released, to be held aside for the specific purpose, in a separate account. Mr. Gilmore had no specific recommendation, but generally agreed with the request.

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED by Ness

To release \$80,000 from the Public Access Television Revenue Funds to FCAT for the purpose of securing a physical PEG Access facility.

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

Town Administrator's Report

Update on Civil War Statue Preservation Project

On Friday, December 11, the figure from the Civil War Memorial was removed from the pedestal at the Old Deerfield Town Common, and placed in temporary storage at PVMA. The figure is calculated to be about 1,500 pounds. The removal went smoothly, and with the efforts at stabilization of the figure.

The removal was videotaped by a reporter from the local paper, and was made available through the Town's website.

Ms. Warren thanked John Nove, and the Historical Commission, the CPA Commission, John Stobierski and family, PVMA, Deerfield Academy, Historic Deerfield, Francis Miller, and other partners in the effort.

Mr. Miller will attend the Board Meeting on January 13, 2016, to present a review of the effort, and provide an update on the status of the restoration.

FRCOG regional Meeting

Ms. Warren attended the FRCOG Regional Pipeline meeting with Ms. Ness. Meeting presenters suggested that the town could file an environmental impact statement, as part of the process. Other potential areas that might be addressed include noise, water quality, and the impacts from blasting.

Gilmore: why is the pipeline not going through Vermont?

There was some discussion related to the potential for gas-fired generation of electricity in Vernon.

Appointment to DHC

It was MOVED by Ness, SECONDED by Gilmore

To appoint Bonita Conlin to the Deerfield Historical Commission

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

SCEMS Update

There was some information provided to the Board from the Town of Whately, related to the indirect costs calculations for administrative services provided to the South County EMS by the Town of Deerfield. The final approved amount was 10% of the allocated costs for administrative services.

There was further discussion related to the housing of the service in Whately. The 'reasonableness' of the proposal (about \$322k for renovations) will be considered by the SCEMS Board of Oversight at their upcoming meeting.

Library Update

A meeting was scheduled for December 8, but was cancelled. The meeting should be rescheduled in January.

Kinder Morgan NED Update

When available, an updated map of the proposed route can be acquired through the FRCOG. It is expected that the "true route" of the pipeline will not be available until the environmental impact statement is published.

Some of the proposed changes to the route were discussed, including the potential of the pipeline's route going through Greenfield.

FY17 Budgets

Budget documents are being assembled, with about 80% of budgets included in the books.

Other Items

Mr. Gilmore spoke about some furniture and fixtures that were being acquired from Vermont Yankee, and would be delivered to the town. Additional furniture, including tables, may be available. Mr. Wolfram would speak with Mr. Gilmore about tables, office chairs, and etc., and how they can meet the needs of the town.

Resignation

Ms. Warren submitted her resignation from the position of Town Administrator, effective January 8, 2016. Her decision was based on a personal need to spend time with her family, and to be closer to home. Ms. Warren extended her sincerest thanks to the Board of Selectmen for their trust and confidence, allowing her to learn, and grow. Ms. Warren also thanked everyone that she has worked with, from her time as an administrative assistant, to her service as Town Administrator. Ms. Warren acknowledged the support of department heads, committee chairs, and the many others she has worked with over her seventeen years of service.

Mr. Gilmore expressed his appreciation to the Town Administrator for her extra work to support the town, over the time in her current and former offices. Ms. Ness thanked Ms. Warren for her extra time – nights and weekends – in service to the town.

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED by Ness

To accept the resignation of the Town Administrator with great (“wicked”) regret, said resignation effective January 8, 2016.

VOTED: 2, 0, 1.

Upcoming Meetings

- December 30, 2015, 6:30 PM (Town Offices)
- January 13, 2016, 6:30 PM (Town Offices)

Adjourn

It was MOVED by Gilmore, SECONDED by Ness

To authorize signing of payroll and vendor warrants, upon completion, and at the convenience of the Board, and thereafter to adjourn.

VOTED: 3, 0, 0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas C. Finn