

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, April 12, 2010

/Present: Walter F. Alterisio, Clerk and Procurement Officer and Member Kevin Welch; Chairman Wesley D. Goss arriving later

Meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM with quorum present. The board briefly discussed the changes in the GDRSD budget override amount, voted to place the question on the ballot for the Annual Town Election and signed the memo submitting the question to Town Clerk for inclusion.

Meeting adjourned at 1:12PM after proper motion and vote.

Chairman Goss arrived after the other members had left, also indicated support for placing the item on the ballot and signed memo accordingly.

Chairman Goss called regular meeting to order at 7:00PM with all members present. Board will prepare a letter of appreciation for Vic Stewart re: his retirement.

Ted Gaudette stopped in to visit and Chairman Goss advised that he'd have hay wagon, etc. available for Memorial Day parade; Ted reported the garden club planned to begin working on the planting area out front.

Mail review: Selectman Welch read the invitation from the Karen Riggert and the Town of Groton to their reception honoring 9.11 First Responders as part of their Pages for Peace celebration this weekend.

Selectman Welch noted the breakdown of water usage for town hall detailing costs as compared to the cost of an irrigation well advising \$9800 has been spent over the last 5 years roughly \$2000.00 per year. The estimate for a irrigation well was \$8500.00. If we had installed the well 5 years ago when requested from town meeting we would have paid off the cost and the rest going forward would be savings.

Chairman Goss noted that he's spoken with Charlie and it turns out suburban has to go out for bid but Selectman Welch noted that Charlie was just in here to advise it's his, if he wants it.

Minutes of 3/29 were accepted with the following amendments: page 4 towards end of 1st paragraph, noting it appears difference between illegal and unlawful, replace illegal with unlawful. ; Selectman Welch had 2 red lines word and 3rd paragraph down 1st page; 2nd page as

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marked by Selectman Welch. Chairman Goss to accept as amended; 2nd and voted with all in favor.

Minutes of 4/5, Selectman Alterisio didn't have any problem with them, discussion continued on whether it would be appropriate to release these particular minutes without town counsel's rubber stamp. Selectman Welch noted we're acting as personnel board and not the board of selectmen, reluctant to sign the response; Selectman Alterisio noted there was a request for executive session and he himself felt uncomfortable with some of the requirements requested for that. Selectman Alterisio suggested David go to his superiors, the Road Commissioners and then to the Selectmen if unresolved. Selectman Welch noted that since we don't have a personnel board, the BOS were acting as the personnel board. So, the employee came to us as a personnel board, not as selectmen. Chairman Goss asked about the differential between an employee and an elected official. Selectman Alterisio noted that elected official is hands off, board can voice their concerns, recommendation but no authority. Selectman Welch suggested in this particular case, his recommendation was that letter of apology be put in David's personnel file and that's the end of it. Selectman Alterisio noted that response prepared was in answer to Mr. Dean's letter but Selectman Welch felt the Board of Selectmen doesn't need to respond to that letter and shouldn't do so. Selectman Alterisio indicated he didn't get into the issues brought up in the letter; basically acknowledging receipt, and giving position of the board on the item received. He indicated that counsel was comfortable with the response prepared. Selectman Welch questioned what happens if we didn't send anything out – Selectman Alterisio felt it put the town in a position that we at least responded to Mr. Dean's letter with town's stance. Selectman Welch suggested erring on side of caution, if no-one comes in looking for it let's not fuel the flame and let this thing be.

Selectman Welch indicated, speaking of roads, on the arrival of Road Commissioner, or what's left of them - Main Street. Selectman Welch reported on the report of visit from DPH who Chief Downes had called in to look at the water situation. He also referenced grant monies that had apparently been made available.

Road Commission Mike Martin advised at the Road Commissioner's meeting on the Route 113 wall – Historical and Conservation advised they want no part of any changes to that wall; they don't understand why we should be making changes, would like it to stay the way it is. He reported that Historic and Conservation has been invited to all meetings regarding this project; town already appropriated funds for

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the design but their input wasn't voiced at that time. Selectman Alterisio indicated his understanding was that Historical and Conservation were egged on to put in their position for the record. Mike advised he was under the understanding that you had to be 12' wide each lane – we're 6' short and 4' shoulder on each side. Historical and Conservation felt that if opened up and had 4' shoulder and then 2 more feet to the guardrail, would give vision of it being open resulting in more speed on that roadway. Board reviewed some of the changes made to roadways over the year and the increased speed that has in fact resulted from straightening road. Discussion continued on the concerns and impact; historic wants the wall as you see it right now. Selectman Alterisio noted the problem with that approach is that when the roadway collapses the state will come in and do it to their specs. Mike indicated that when you go the speed limit, trucks are getting longer, snow relief. Selectman Welch indicated that Historic is could be trying to pile up these letters so they can go to the state and possibly use them for more funds to restore the road to the original aesthetics. Mike advised that state would assist as long as they agree with our layout – he believes for \$6K Historic can pay the bill to redo the plans. Discussion continued – do engineering work, get input from town items to consider, and state will look at. Mike advised he's letting the 2nd plan go first, if they accept it, we're all set. Chairman Goss asked how much time do we have to take care of this – Mike advised it has dropped some but not much, with the beavers doing what they're doing and all the water going up to the road as a result, it's weakening it more. Going forward with Historical Commission and Conservation suggestions, CPA should pay the \$6K to amend plan to their liking. Mike and David have told Jeff Rider to go ahead and make the modifications as recommended by Historical & Conservation. Selectman Welch indicated his understanding that Conservation was concerned relative to impact on wetlands. Selectman Alterisio suggested that Mike approach CPA Chairman Psaledakis relative to CPA support at Town meeting. Discussion continued on how best to include it in our ATM or STM warrant.

The Treasurer's warrants were reviewed and signed. Selectmen Welch left the meeting briefly to see when Fincom would be ready to meet with them and Chairman Goss advised that Town Clerk has asked whether she must continue to get approval from the board before accessing town counsel. Selectman Alterisio didn't have a problem with her seeking counsel when it's technically necessary. Selectman Alterisio suggested that some of the questions could simply be answered by referring to the official or department who's already

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asked the question, to eliminate duplication. Current method is working well now and should continue unless there is a significant change.

Chairman Goss & Selectman Alterisio noted their discussions with Police Chief who indicated his requests shouldn't be approved at the cost of personnel raises.

Upon Selectman Welch's return, Chairman Goss left for the evening and Selectman Welch and Alterisio visited Fincom's meeting already in session, with all their members present, as Fincom preferred meeting in their chambers where the overhead was already set up and running. Selectman Welch distributed the STM warrant as it stands now; he advised on the latest request from Roads for \$6k noting CPA would be contacted.

Fincom advised on the new format and process for the budget – easy 1st; tough at end; everyone submitted electronically – plan was to tie to Vadar system; loaded all numbers in – for most part line times are funded;

1st item: Selectmen – salaries & operations separated – looking at summary of departments and then vote on sheet with number of account; if need be go down to next level. Fincom advised budget detail will be on website but not in town report. Selectman Welch noted it all must be readily available. Recommending \$0 on personnel policy consultant which is basically carry over; Fincom up about \$20K; dropping reserve account down from \$25K – have bumped up town hall energy up to the amount normally funded via transfers. Town accountant – looking at pay raises across the board at 1½%; no audit this year; 2010 we allocated \$20K for audit – \$10K balance remaining; Assessors – salaries (or stipends) staying @\$900, associate and clerical increased by 1.5%; treasurer salary up by 1.5%; Fincom recommending all salaries increase by 1.5 % - Selectman Alterisio noted by contract we have to go with 3% for Police. Fincom responded that they've spoken with Police and will address within their budget.

Town counsel-level; town clerk up 1.5%; noting more insight this year than in previous years; elections required more money for wages to cover costs for federal elections, primaries, etc. Registrar \$225; conservation 1.5% increase; planning board 1.5%; Zoning board flat lined @\$2K; town hall clerical 1.5%; part-time wages, caretaker,

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increased by \$1500 for clerical part time – no definitive numbers; town rentals; town engineer \$15K;

Police department Chief presently @\$94K, requested \$97K – \$95K is 1.5% increase for chief; wages reflect \$1.5% increase – all others are flat lined; they are recommending administrative assistant at \$38K – with Fincom expecting savings to come from reduced overtime to pay for it. Selectman Welch noted that, in addition we are looking at like \$15k for miscellaneous benefits. Selectman Welch asked whether the ranking file realize that they're losing some of their overtime in order to fund this position. If these guys are at \$58-64K base salary, Selectman Welch noted that with the overtime budget cut in half, will mean limitation on present personnel's overall salary.

Selectman Welch noted he assumed that the police used \$164K overtime between 6 men. It was further indicated that we're $\frac{3}{4}$ of way thru year and has only used \$47K overtime. Selectman Welch noted we could be dealing with major road job on Route 113 but Fincom advised that contractor pays detail costs so it would have no impact on wages account.

Budget working with for police now is \$797K but request comes in at well over \$1M. Discussion continued regarding the \$53K increase in last June; balanced budget in September. Ron felt we did do an override but not last year – it was 3 years ago \$213K lost by about 5 votes, went back in and voted in override of \$86K to refund police officers. The \$52K was GDRSD last year; did not have an override for the schools. Point Selectman Welch was making was relative to funding overtime of \$164K and only using $\frac{1}{2}$ of it; could have eliminated the extra work that Fincom and others put in trying to balance the budget and run the \$52K override. Other thing – to Dan's point of view; budget request for \$937K and take whole public safety, including highway who, if we didn't have would have additional costs for fire & police, roughly over \$1M for a little over 1000 households (taxpayers). Kevin stated we are the only town he has heard of the that is actually trying to grow the town; most towns are wrestling with layoffs. We'll never stay under budget by growing personnel. Dana Metzler argued yet you're willing to give 3% raise, which results in 5 years increasing by 15%. Dana further indicated adding the police administrative assistant should save us money and should have officers out on the street more. Selectman Welch noted on paper can't argue it (police should be on the street) but didn't see how the administrator could save money. Selectman Alterisio presented argument that paperwork has to be done by the officers; there is no

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way an administrator could possibly know what went on during and incident or investigation. In addition, Fincom Chairman Ron Mikol advised on some events he's witnessed from the station, noting the Chief had to bring the Sergeant in during off time to process something that might have been handled by admin personnel - that place is an administrative bungalow – boxes that have to be filed, etc. He explained that issues with shortages in grant funding could help somewhat to cover. Selectman Alterisio advised that point is going to strike a cord when personnel realize that they they're losing all that overtime. Discussion continued on the budget presented by Police Department with Dana noting that board had plenty of time to address this with the Chief; Selectman Welch indicated these admin issues have existed for a long time but could be addressed with a consultant to help with initial setup of filing etc.,

Fire dept. will be paying men a stipend for calls and training - \$8500 basically for training – going from \$8500 to \$18500 for training and response. Previously small portion was divvied out amongst the ranks – inducement for \$20 for 2 hours training; handful of people who come down and do a little extra – work on trucks, errands, etc. who would get a little more. Selectman Welch indicated so we're going from strictly volunteer to a call fire department – has anyone asked town counsel if there's any change in liability because of it. It was noted that went from 1099's or nothing to W2's. Selectman Welch advised that could pay money and get a few more show up – maybe 10% increase in response; definitely not worth it if the intent is to get more guys to show up for calls. Ron indicated that problem has been with limitation on response – Selectman Welch noted that Charlie came in and indicated he was thinking about this or regionalizing but no more was said; the fact that you don't pay for service may have a huge impact on liability. Selectman Welch not opposed to paying everyone for service, but does have a problem with everyone running around with the volunteer flag and then cashes the check. Dana advised that Chief had presented a plan for how the money would be expended. Ron indicated we're still a call department; Selectman Welch doesn't prefer but need to look at realities of people not showing up indicating regionalization can present other options. He suggested getting a group together who knows the business and put together a recommendation on best approach. Selectman Welch & Selectman Alterisio noted that they didn't get the information – difficult for BOS to understand why they didn't get explanation. They (BOS) can go back to the Chief to determine how he came up.

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Fire Department: going from \$67K to \$85K for FY11 budget. Joe presented breakdown and Selectman Alterisio indicated with increase of budget by basically 12% how would you gain that value? He cautioned on singling out any one group, good conscience – police no better or worse than other employees in the town. If we're going to give them a 3% and if they can't afford the increase as required by contract, something has to go.

Discussion continued on the impact of reductions whether you're talking police, fire, town hall, etc. Must reduce where it's necessary – Fincom felt first thing to go is head count. Selectman Welch indicated that he agreed in industry but noted we're limited on where we can make the cut, unlike big business, we don't have extra personnel. Selectman Alterisio indicated that problem is who makes the decision about head count; it's the individuals who hire personnel. The Board of Selectmen doesn't have the authority to make the decision on who goes across the board. The BoS is only in charge of fire and police; not roads, water, schools, etc. The BOS would like to see a town administrator break down these problems. Kevin noted we have all the responsibilities of all the larger towns but no one to oversee the day to operations; noting towns in MA, as small as 700 people have a fulltime administrator. Dana noted that's not a bad idea but it's not in this year's subject. Selectman Alterisio further indicated what's good for one is good for everybody – budget is just a wish list based on assumptions so can be prepared for it. If he takes number at end of third quarter – \$220K left – we've already demonstrated as we do every year when we turn money back. Fincom member Dana Metzler suggested sending the budget file to BOS for them to work through, indicating for them to just give raises without addressing the rest of the budget didn't make sense either.

Fincom Chairman Ron Mikol advised they sniffed around, in partners with Groton, where their practice is they're going to give everyone 1.5% - partnered through school, etc. would like to be as close as possible to Groton for pay raises so that teachers can't use our town's raises in opposition. Everything points to us. If gave everyone 3% as required with police union contract, going up by \$30K? Discussion continued on impact of limiting employees with Selectman Alterisio noting we don't have a union in all our other departments, by treating everyone the same, we're keeping ourselves in line and avoiding the unions from marching forward, but that could change rapidly if we're not proactive.

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Discussion continued on the cost of under-funding the fire department for as long as we have, with members noting George had been doing tons of things on his own and Selectmen let him do it. This is the right direction for the fire department, but other towns have been cutting back from a point where they could steal it back. Selectman Alterisio – we don't have really any room to scale back – being asked to scale back in terms of budget needs. Fincom could balance at 3% - probably pretty close but in much better position with 1.5%. could find a little more if needed; have got what they consider a balanced budget, gives police administrative assistant, doesn't give highway the additional person. Selectman Alterisio would like to send the signal to everyone that 1.5 vs. some other amount – that we value all our employees same – no higher no lower for any of them – whether it's the Library or the Town Clerk – we need them all – can't afford to eliminate any personnel.

BOS are here for 3% for employees – brings deficit to \$18K; Selectman Welch advised that BOS not faulting anyone, departments should have been working with BOS and BOS should have been fighting for them. Selectman Welch noted that he'd met with Chief for over 3 hours – each Selectman takes on a project and follows through. Town administrators check with all departments – Fincom just trying to do the best they can with what they're provided. Selectman Alterisio noted that he thinks we could go and negotiate if going with 3%. – Fincom indicated that they could probably work through the 3%. – Fincom advised that Emergency Management was getting a little more to cover the new blackboard service. All override money for snow removal is still within the snow – have authorized special spending. \$172K was used to balance 2009 which we have available to spend in 2011.

Not adding a person at this time – Fincom's theory is to bring DOR in and possibly looking at organizing highway, parks, cemetery etc. All agreed it made sense for the state to do the analysis for us. Right now Fincom doesn't have enough confidence that adding a person is the right thing to do.

BORC indicated that they weren't buying a truck out of Chapter 90 money – are buying a sander. Selectman Alterisio indicated these guys are doing a great job with their use of chapter 90 money and some reference was made to Pine Street as a possibility for next year prompting a brief discussion on that proposal since the road doesn't service any Dunstable residences.

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Transfer station is only asking for \$35K from the town, the remainder is sticker revenue. Discussion continued on whether we'd ever get to a point where it can support itself – will continue to work with them. Harold advised that BOH is looking at options which might be available for reducing costs via equipment modifications. Fincom discussed some of the modifications made to transfer station budget.

Dana suggested consideration for pulling all the enterprise numbers out of the general budget and showing separately.

Cemetery wages flat-lined – but part time individuals. Board of Health Nashoba Board of Health assessment has gone down. Fincom will check with BOH.

Fincom continued with breakdown – veteran's budget has gone up some – like 300% but still under-funded. Harold mentioned 75% reimbursement on benefits paid; and board advised on computer requirements, etc. and free assistance offered to assist Peter through transition. Library is basically flat – only item up is salaries; presently @1.5%. Energy costs expected to be reduced due to audit and equipment modifications.

The group noted the money requested for upgrading town hall computers, web site, mail carrier, etc.; debt & interest from Bonnie; nothing on cherry sheet yet. Joe Dean continued to go thru the budget requests. Health insurance up, Current deficit of \$13K with 1.5% raise – 3% would make it \$16K. Discussion continued onto articles, and discussion addressing Minuteman bill – custody decree determines the legal residence. Ron indicated that's incorrect he has a letter from DOE which disagrees from what town counsel has advised. Fincom indicated this would make the budget \$36K in the hole.

Discussion continued on the remainder of the budget, including some of the warrant articles like the well and how it will affect the budget. Dana explained the expenditures and how they work through – noting account billing is always a month behind. The BOS will talk with the chief re: some of his requests. Selectman Alterisio advised he felt the group had done a great job with pulling this together and now it was up to the BOS to go back to the Chief relative to his request.

Discussion continued relative to the GDRSD budget – \$1.2M override for schools \$932K for Groton, Dunstable \$309K. Dunstable now is at about 30%. \$309K is 24% of the \$1.2M. Ron stated he has the debt exclusions listed under revenue and that would have a large negative

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impact on the current bottom line. Fincom continued to work through their agenda but the Selectmen left meeting, adjourning the Selectmen's meeting at 10: 34PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Danice N. Palumbo,
Board Secretary

