

**MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
TOWN OF GORHAM
MONDAY, December 3, 2012, 6:00 PM
GORHAM TOWN HALL**

Gorham Selectmen present: Chairman David Graham, Paul Robitaille, Bill Jackson
Also present: Robin L. Frost, Town Manager; Rufus Ansley and Elizabeth Thompson, Gorham Public Library; Denise Vallee, Director of Finance; Michelle Lutz, Assessing; PJ Cyr, Chief of Police; Don Provencher, Jeff Schall, Ron Donato, Jay Holmes, Nicole Eastman and Deb Thornblad, Berlin Daily Sun

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 by Chairman Graham. At this time Chairman Graham took time to introduce and welcome Deb Thornblad, from the Berlin Daily Sun, who is now a full time reporter for the paper.

Prior to the regular agenda, Chairman Graham opened the floor to Selectman Jackson. Selectman Jackson presented the following: I would like to publicly apologize to Mr. Schall for the way in which I treated him prior to our last selectmen's meeting. There was absolutely no excuse for my abusive tone to you. You didn't deserve it, you shouldn't have been subjected to it. It was uncalled for and even though I have communicated with you by mail, I wanted you to know publicly that I sincerely apologize for those actions and it won't occur in the future. The second one is to the Board and it is directed to my fellow board members, members of the staff who were present and especially TM Robin Frost. My actions were so far out of line that I am not sure that an apology is sufficient. However I do offer my sincere apology for my words and my actions and in particular to TM Frost who I have not treated with respect that is due not only to her position as Town Manager but to her as a person. For this I apologize to her directly. While we will probably continue to have some very strong disagreements that affect the Town, I will promise to voice those issues in the future in a respectful manner to you. Mr. Chairman I thank you for this time and would like to continue with the meeting.

2. Appointments:

a. Gorham Public Library – Budget Presentation: Rufus Ansley presented the Board and Town Manager with copies of the adopted budget by the Library Trustees, which included Expenditures, Revenues and a Supplementary Page (which is a comparison of salaries). Mr. Ansley reviewed the budget noting that there was a \$7,183 (5.2%) increase in expenditures. Of this amount, there is a \$3,563 (3%) increase in the Town Allocation portion. Mr. Ansley pointed out that there has not been an increase in the Town Allocation line in four years, with three of the last four years having shown a reduction and feels that the increase is reasonable. During that time, the Library has absorbed the increases. Mr. Ansley went on to review the budget and indicated that the salary line includes essentially 2.75 full time employees, however, there is only one full time employee with 1.75 part time. The Trustees have included a three percent increase in Library Director Thompson's salary. Mr. Ansley went on to compare the Director's salary to other town department heads as well as other library directors. The Trustees feel that it is time to start moving Ms. Thompson's salary so it is more in line with her position as her responsibilities and duties have increased. He went on to review the Supplementary Page presented to the Board. The "benefit" line item has also increased due to the salary increase. Mr. Ansley went on discuss the balance of the expenditures, stating that while it may be

a bit premature, and estimate the Trustees feel that the amount of monies spent on oil to be less than last year because of the work completed to tighten up the building. Mr. Ansley went on to review the increase in collections which is due in part to a rate increase for downloadable books and expanding the audible book collection. Mr. Ansley went on to talk about the "Office Operation" line stating that in previous years the budget had been over spent, and the Trustees felt that it was time to catch the budget up to the actual expenses. Mr. Ansley noted a 2.7% increase in this line which is due to the increase in conferences and travel. The Trustees feel that the Director, as well as Assistant Director, need to be out there finding out what is going on with the State Library, as well as voice the feeling of the people in this area; especially with the cost increases with downloadable books. Selectman Robitaille asked what the bigger Libraries have to do with the cost of downloadable books. The Library Director and Mr. Ansley went on to explain to the Board the rates and how the fee schedule for the downloadable books currently works. Ms. Thompson indicated that the bigger Libraries have been lobbying for lower rates stating that at this time, the smaller Libraries like ours pay the same fees as the larger Libraries. These fees are paid to a consortium. Therefore right now it is a little unequal and the smaller libraries are paying a little more. Ms. Thompson has been involved with a group of smaller libraries to work on getting these rates lowered for the smaller Libraries. Ms. Thompson went on to explain that downloadable books are free to members of the Library. Mr. Ansley went on to review the anticipated revenues, noting that the Capital Outlay account has "zeroed" out and the Capital Reserve account has a small amount of money in it; stating that the Library has not asked the Town for an increase in years. He felt that was primarily due to the Murphy Bequest. He went on to indicate that the Library will be using monies in the "Equipment-generated Income" line as well as the "Gifts, Personal Property, Unanticipated Income" line to assist with expenditures and keep the Town Allocation line down.

Selectman Robitaille asked what interest was earned on monies in the bank. It was stated that year to date it is \$56.08. Selectman Robitaille then asked why there was such a large number in the "Maintenance/Repair" line. Mr. Ansley informed the Board that substantial work has been done to the building with regard to increasing its efficiency; including insulation, windows, new doors, a cap over the main stairway to second floor was built so it could be closed off. Also, repairs/maintenance to the emergency lighting was also completed. Mr. Ansley, indicated that the work was completed by local contractors and that the Library used monies from the Murphy Bequest to complete it.

Selectman Jackson indicated to Mr. Ansley, that with regard to the salary increase for Ms. Thompson, and noting that there is nothing personal against Ms. Thompson, just looking at it generally. Selectman Jackson went on to review other department position's salaries and just cautioned Mr. Ansley when the Trustees move forward to keep in mind that the Town employees have not received a raise in five years. Selectman Jackson also went on to say that he does realize that Ms. Thompson is underpaid, but again, he hopes that the Library is aware of local feeling. Mr. Ansley again stated that the Trustees feel that it is time to raise her salary.

b. Finance Department/Capital Reserve Funds – Budget Review: Chairman Graham presented the floor to Denise Vallee, Director of Finance. Director Vallee began review of the first page of the budget. She indicated that there was an increase in the conference and travel line for the Town Manager.

Because there is only one election in the upcoming year, the moderator line has decreased. She then went on to indicate that there was an increase in the Budget Clerk line to more accurately reflect the cost. Selectman Jackson asked about the Budget Clerk, noting that in the past (more than 3-4 years ago) a member of the Budget Committee used to take care of notifications and minutes and there was an extra stipend in the budget for that, why are we now paying a clerk and why is a budget committee member not doing this? TM Frost indicated that the Town is now treating that committee like any other board and is paying a stipend per meeting for a clerk to take the minutes. TM Frost went on to indicate that at this time, she feels it is easier to participate in a meeting. We have gone from paying an annual stipend to an hourly rate to a stipend per meeting. We will keep an eye on what the hours actually are so we have a better idea of how it is working. It seemed to work better for the Budget Committee last year for someone to take minutes. Selectman Jackson went on to ask and/or state that all of the Boards (Planning, Zoning, Selectmen) are now going to be using clerks. TM Frost responded that she feels that the minutes now have more meat in them and that less information will be missed when there is a designated person not involved with the meeting for the minutes.

Chairman Graham stated that most election people and Board members make very little, and wanted to make sure that the general public understand how much these people work in comparison to how little money they make. Chairman Graham wanted to make sure they were recognized for what they do for the Town.

Director Vallee went on to discuss the budget indicating that this year the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position has been split 50/50. One half of the position will be charged to the Town Clerk line and the other half will be charged to the Tax Collector line. She went on to note that this year the Deputy Clerk will be charged one third to Town Clerk, one third to Tax Collector and one third in the Finance office. She primarily works three days in the Town Clerk office and two day in the Finance Office. Finance Director Vallee went on to note that Election expenses are down this year because of the number of elections.

Selectman Jackson would be curious to see what Assessing Clerk Lutz is now doing, and would like to see an updated job description. TM Frost indicated that she would look at that with Assessing Clerk Lutz to get that description updated. Selectman Jackson went on to ask about the Assessor Contract Charges and wanted to know if we have received other quotes. TM Frost indicated that the Town is still waiting on some quotes and will present them to the Board as soon as they are received. Selectman Jackson went on to ask about Tax Mapping. TM Frost indicated that we are looking at migrating from Vision to Cartographics, stating that Cartographics is easier to use. TM Frost went on to indicate that more information will be available on line, and that Cartographics is a system that will allow us room to grow into. They will be giving us as much as we have now if not more, at the same cost. Assessing Clerk Lutz indicated to the Board that it will be easy to use as well as easily updatable. TM Frost also informed the Board that the ownership of the data will remain with the Town. Vision software will still be used in Assessing, and Cartographics will be used for online property card information.

Director Vallee went on to discuss an increase in the Equipment/Machinery line which includes one new Fire King File Cabinet, noting that since the printing of the budget, one of the Fire King Cabinets in the Finance office is broken and that this line will need to increase by about \$1,700 to cover the cost of replacement.

Budget discussion went on to review additional line items. Legal expenses were noted as being over this past year, as well as previous years' budget. The Board went on to discuss that maybe it would be wiser to increase the budget line for this expense rather than leaving it as is.

Director Vallee presented the Board with an overview of the proposed health insurance plans as received by bid last week. The costs and breakdowns included amounts that would equate to a 7.1% increase if the Town stayed with the current health insurance plan. Director Vallee prepared a spreadsheet and cost breakdown for the Board that includes additional options for insurance as well as their impact on the budget. The new plan options include deductibles versus straight co-pays for office visits. Director Vallee included options that reflect the Town and Employees splitting the cost of the deductibles, and an option that included the use of the Health Insurance Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund. Director Vallee stated to the Board that she realizes that the information presented to them is a lot to digest, but stated that if any Board member had questions, please ask. Discussion went on regarding the health insurance portion as well as the prescription portion of the benefit. The Board went on to state that the Town will need to think about taking a stand on future employees, and what the Town should contribute for new hires, noting that currently benefits represent \$4.00 on the tax rate. The Board asked Chief Cyr whether the Police contract had to be opened for the health insurance change. Chief Cyr thought that the contract did include a change in coverage.

TM Frost stated that the Board needs to look at what Denise has boiled down for you. TM Frost believes going with a deductible is the route to go. The school is paying 100% of deductible but she feels that the Town employees should be responsible for a portion of the deductible.

As discussion went on, review of Retirement Benefits began, with Finance Director Vallee reviewing unfunded State mandated increases in the Town's portion of employees' retirement accounts. She noted that the following groups/rates will take place: Town Employees – 8.8% effective thru June 30 and 10.77% thru December 31, 2013; Police Department – 19.95% thru June 30 and 25.3% thru December 31, 2013; Fire Department – 22.89% thru 6/30 and 27.74% thru December 31, 2013. Over all the increase from July 1 through December 31 is an increase of approximately \$22,000.

Budget discussion went on regarding the General Government Building portion of the Budget. Director Vallee informed the Board that the electricity line does not have the PSNH portion of the electricity billing because of the rate increase by PSNH. She will finish this portion of the budget and will get the Board the updated budget information. The discussion then went on to the Insurance Line items, with Director Vallee indicating at the present time effective July 1 insurance will increase 15.7%. The Town's multi-year contract with Primex will be done, and insurance will go out for bid.

The Board asked that, because the Capital Reserve Accounts information was just received, the CRF portion of the meeting be postponed to another evening so they may be reviewed.

The meeting continued with moving over to the Revenue portion of the Budget. Selectman Jackson suggested to move things along that instead of going over every line, to review the items that there is concern about. He then went on to ask why there was a decrease in the Highway Block Grant monies. Director Vallee informed the Board that this figure is received from DRA and is based partly on road mileage. TM Frost indicated that she did not know why it had decreased. Chairman Graham asked to go back to page one and asked about Payments in Lieu of Taxes and asked about the increase. Director Vallee indicated that she thought it was due to payments from NCES and Coos County Family Health. Assessing Clerk Lutz indicated to the Board that she would check on that.

Motor Vehicle registrations are down \$10,000, because people are not buying as many new cars. Selectman Jackson asked about the current budget and how close we are to being on track to hitting the \$400,000 mark. Director Vallee told the Board she would look at the current budget and get that number to them. Director Vallee explained to the Board that the employee revenue is the 20% portion of the health insurance that is withheld from the employees' paycheck. Discussion then went on to Welfare, with Selectman Jackson stating that it is difficult to get monies back for payments to recipients, noting that State Statute now states that we can get welfare recipients to sign a document that indicates repayment if their situation changes. TM Frost went on to say that she feels we can set something up. While it is not a lot of money, it is possible additional money for the Town. Director Vallee indicated that the revenue's bottom line figure is a \$12,858 increase.

3. New Business – Budget Discussion-dates/need for further department information: Selectman Jackson began with explaining that the Board needed more time with the budget before it goes to the Budget Committee. The items that he feels the board needs additional time on include Capital Reserve funds, health insurance and the additional request for a file cabinet. He went on to state that he feels that the Board still needs to look at Capital Projects and Salaries. Stating that the budget needs to come in as close to flat as possible, indicating the possibility of taking a small portion of each of the CRF's and/or looking at each department and trimming them to use toward a salary increase. Selectman Jackson went on to review other items that he feels are concerns and needs to be discussed and maybe added to the budget, like the handicap entrance as well as a railing along the Railroad Street side. Selectman Robitaille chimed in noting his concern with using a small portion of the CRF accounts. Stating that the work outlined for these accounts needs to be completed and not put off, and he noted infrastructure and the fact that we have neglected them for so long. Chairman Graham went on to say that there were additional meetings needed to review the budget, stating that he would like to see further discussion regarding the Police Department and the coverage it provides for the July 4th celebration. The Board agreed that they do need further dates to discuss and review the Budgets. Upon further discussion and conference with Jeff Schall, Chairman of the Budget Committee, the meeting dates that has been previously scheduled will remain in place; and it was agreed that the Board of Selectmen will add an additional meeting on December 12th at 6:00 pm. Additionally, it was agreed that the Board will discuss budgets at their December 17th meeting. Board of Selectmen meeting dates for January have been set as follows: January 7th, January 14th and January 28th at 6:00 pm.

4. Old Business: Selectman Robitaille asked what the status is of the tax payments for the Currier property. TM Frost informed the Board that she has not spoken with the Town Clerk regarding the

status of payments. TM Frost informed the Board that the Shelburne Police Contract should be ready for the December 17th meeting.

5. Public Comment: The floor was given to Jeff Schall and he presented the Board with the following response to Selectman Jackson's apology:

Gorham Board of Selectman,

I accept Mr. Jackson's apology but have concerns.

I have known Mr. Jackson for over ten years. I worked with him as a budget committee member in 2002 and on a professional level providing a service to the town and his residence. Over the years I have observed him in many public settings and have never observed him to be outwardly aggressive, disrespectful, and threatening.

Since Mr. Jackson became a selectman, he has become increasingly aggressive and vocally abusive to Ms. Frost and others which I have witnessed on more than one occasion. Last week during an episode I stood up for Ms. Frost and his aggressive behavior turned on me.

Selectmen are elected officials and need to listen to their constituents without argumental attitudes. They are suppose to ask questions and not make unreasonable demands while making decisions about how to manage the business of the town.

If further incidents occur, I suggest Mr. Jackson submit his resignation as selectman of Gorham. Citizens, taxpayers, and municipal staff need to be treated with respect and able to voice opinions in a safe, non-threatening, and non-intimidating environment.

I hope we can all put this behind us and move forward in preparing and presenting an affordable budget to the Gorham Taxpayers.

Ron Donato – Mr. Donato informed the Board that he is still having problems with the Edmondson's. Mr. Donato went on to say that he feels like nothing is being done by the Town to assist with this problem. He is growing extremely frustrated. Selectman Jackson again reiterated to Mr. Donato that he needs to call the Police Department every time there is an issue so it can be documented. The Board went on to inform Mr. Jackson that they are working on looking at the right of way issue. Chief Cyr also chimed in and told Mr. Donato that his door is always open and would be more than happy to review the file and what actions have been completed by the department.

Jay Holmes – Mr. Holmes started with informing the Board that while it was not the only reason he sold his home that was next to Mr. Donato's, the same issues that Mr. Donato is having certainly were a factor in his moving. Mr. Holmes then asked the Board if anyone was involved in the Coos County Budget, stating that he feels that the county budget is growing out of control and that someone needs to participate and look at it. Chairman Graham informed Mr. Holmes that he is involved.

Don Provencher – Mr. Provencher wanted to remind the Board about the parking ban and the issue of people still parking in the street. He is still concerned that not all citizens are being treated equally, and that the ban needs to be reinforced.

6. Other Business:

a. Town Manager’s Update – TM Frost informed the Board that the proposed agreement that EMD Miller alluded to in the last meeting was being worked on. TM Frost also spoke to the Board regarding the Easter Seal Ride In, which will take place the first weekend in February. TM Frost informed the Board that Easter Seals is looking at doing more activities on the common. TM Frost told the Board that this year will mark the 25th anniversary of Santa’s Workshop, and that they had all received an invitation to join the event. There will also be evening snacks at 8:30 pm at Mr. Pizza that the Board is invited to attend. TM Frost informed the Board that she will be attending a BTLA hearing on December 11th at 9:00 am, and that she will be attending for part of the day. TM Frost spoke about the passing zone on Route 16 and told the Board that Bill Lambert, NH Bureau of Traffic, will take the concern into consideration when the State marks the pavement again.

b. Selectmen’s Updates – Chairman Graham indicated that Selectman Robitaille attended a luncheon with newly elected state officials, and that they toured the area, which started in Franconia. He felt that it was an informative, successful event.

c. Approval of Minutes (November 19, 2012): Selectman Jackson made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Chairman Graham, approved unanimously.

d. Sign Manifest – None for signature/already signed.

e. Sign Abatements – None were presented for signature.

7. Non-Public Session: There was no need/call for non-public session.

8. Adjournment: At 8:55 pm Selectman Jackson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Chairman Graham, approved unanimously.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

David Graham

Paul Robitaille

William H. Jackson