



TOWN OF GRANBY

COA Building

10 West State Street

Granby, MA 01033

Telephone: (413) 467-7177 Fax: (413) 467-2080

Website: www.granby-ma.gov

Town Administrator: Christopher Martin

Granby Select Board: Louis Barry, Chair

Mark L. Bail, Clerk

Mary A. McDowell, Member

Board Meeting: December 10th @ 6:30 P.M.

AGENDA:

CALL TO ORDER:

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

APPOINTMENTS:

6:00 PLANNING BOARD & FINANCE COMMITTEE

7:00 JOINT MEETING FINANCE AND SCHOOL COMMITTEE

ADJOURNMENT:



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Meeting December 10, 2012

Members Present: Louis Barry, Mark Bail, and Mary McDowell

Others Present: Christopher Martin

Mr. Barry called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Mr. Barry led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

The Reasoning behind the meeting: Mr. Barry went on to elaborate on what this meeting will be about. The town by-laws call for a joint meeting between the Finance Committee, the School Committee, and the Select Board. This meeting was supposed to be in November, but was held off until now. It is the kick off for any budget talk for the next fiscal year. The original intent for this meeting was this joint meeting, but the Planning Board came to the board looking for support. They want the support for a consultant for future planning of Granby. The board wanted to talk to the Finance Committee about it, so they grouped the two meetings into one night.

Planning Board's Request: Pam Desjardins of the Planning Board; explained that the Planning Board is just a volunteer group, but they need a professional on hand for some of their projects. The Planning Board is looking for support from the Select Board in putting aside some money for hiring a professional on as-needed basis. This person would help take the action steps of fulfilling a plan. The Planning Board is currently considering zoning issues, business issues, and developing new revenue systems for the Town of Granby. The Planning Board believes that they need a professional to fulfill all of these jobs. So, the Planning Board is just looking for that support in having that money set aside. This person would need to be able to go out and market the project to the town and consult on the projects, and have professional ways of moving forward with projects.

Repeatedly at meetings, the Planning Board has discussed re-zoning parts of the town. They want to do less planning and more group consensus. If the by-laws need to be changed pertaining to zoning, then they will get someone to do so. Now, they currently use George Boyle, who seems to be the regular consultant. However, Pam and the Planning Board are looking for a person with the professional knowledge and expertise to look at what would enhance an area, allow more businesses to come in, create more

revenue sources, look over by-laws/ structure of the committee, and have enough knowledge to take that and still be able to move forward.

George Boyle may not continue to work for the Planning Committee, but there is no final decision. The board might be able to find services similar to Mr. Boyle's, but offers more. This might cost less than Mr. Boyle because the use of this person would be less often and the left over money would be used for planning things. The Planning Board used to have a revolving fund of \$25,000 and \$30,000. Apparently, now the fund is \$7,500. This means that George Boyle is not getting compensated for his time and effort. The Planning Board is looking for someone who can take what the Planning Board is right now and move forward with it. George Boyle has apparently stated that he does not want that role.

By "new revenue sources" Pam meant that the town could develop the unused farmland across town and possibly gain some new tax revenues. The new consultant may have the job of finding land to develop.

Ms. Desjardins believes that the developing land, re-developing land, and zoning all fall under the Planning Board's list of duties. Of course, while considering public opinion. With that description of the Planning Board, the board itself has been talking for a while about developing the land for businesses. It may not be possible right now due to water or sewer issues. Therefore, they are looking for someone who has enough expertise to help the board work around those issues to get those acres developed.

The Finance Committee asked the question of where the Planning Board stands on having preliminary things done, for example, the Master Plan. The Select Board has seemed to have taken over the Master Plan. According to Mr. Bail, the Select Board should have the Master Plan done by the end of December. Ms. Desjardins has seen the Master Plan and finds that it is to not be specific. She believes that they should use the Master Plan as a guide and build off of it, not from it.

According to Ms. Desjardins, the Master Plan is at least specific enough to address the issues of sewers and water. It was addressed in several chapters, including in the economic development section. All around town, the land that could be developed either has water problems or/and sewer problems. So the questions are, is it feasible, how do we develop that land, how do we move it forward, and where do we get the money? It would take a lot of time for a volunteer group to come up with these answers. So, it would only make sense for an expert to come and do the work fast and well.

The Finance Committee asked if the town must approve the Master Plan before anything further could be done or is this new consultant to be the one to figure out how to get town approval? According to Mr. Bail, the final public hearing of the Comprehensive Water Plan will be part of the first meeting of January 2013. That will then go to Town Meeting to be approved. This plan just outlines where any septic issues are around town. A geological survey of what the Town of Granby has for dirt was included. Town Meeting must approve all fees as well.

The Finance Committee also asked if this would mean that the consultant would be a town employee. Ms. Desjardins said that the consultant would not be a town employee and Mr. Bail just reminded her that if they are to represent the Town of Granby in any which way, they need to be appointed by the Select Board. Ms. Desjardins also stated that she would like to see the Planning Board oversee any project that this consultant was to do. Mrs. McDowell just explained that the appointment is just the Select Board making it official. The Planning Board would do all of the leg work on finding this consultant, but the Select Board would just agree to it.

The Finance Committee asked more questions. For instance, why the Planning Board would use tax payer's money to pay for a consultant to do town projects? The Finance Committee made Ms. Desjardins aware that the School Committee will hear about all of the cuts to school funding. There is not an unlimited source of money. Mr. Hartley asked, "What are the town's priorities?" It appears that the Finance Committee believes that the town has more important things to pay for than a Town of Granby project consultant. For example: a new sewer system for the town. The Finance Committee just wants to know why all of a sudden, this consultant moved to the top of the list.

Ms. Desjardins believes that the Finance Committee is not seeing the whole picture for the Town of Granby, in the way that they are only going to be working on one town project at a time. The Finance Committee stated that they do not have money for every project. So, if this consultant idea were to happen, then the Planning Board is going to have to rule out a different project. Ms. Desjardins appeared to be very troubled by this statement. She still feels that Granby should be in a moving forward mode and that the Finance Committee does not understand that. Whereas the Finance Committee thinks that the Planning Board does not understand that things need to be done in sequence in order to decide if hiring a consultant would be a good idea. Their example was finding out how much money hiring a consultant would cost. Or, how much the Planning Board can spend. The Finance Committee brought up the gambling in building new businesses. Some might cost \$5,000,000 when it only brings in \$60,000 in revenue.

The Select Board interjected to bring up that the Town of Granby does not want to be so closed minded, but they do already have plans in the works on re-zoning. Not to mention, the town is going to have to drop some groups due to lack of funding. The schools could potentially lose some teachers if the schools are cut too much money. The Finance Committee brought up how the money that would be used for a consultant could pay for a teacher. The Select Board asked the Financial Committee if it would be possible to just bring up projects as ideas. John Libera thought that was fine. He alluded back to what Ms. Desjardins had said earlier about how most of the Planning Board's projects don't go far enough to have a true sense about all of the logistics. That is what the Mr. Libera wants to do with this particular idea. He, personally, wants this idea to keep forming and be well thought out in order to be really considered. The same debate has been discussed before and it continued on.

The two groups went back and forth, debating the same topics. Including if this “advisor” is a priority or not. The Planning Board has put together a master plan that should be done by mid-end of December. This master plan includes a survey that was sent out to the public. It had the input of the community and the Planning Board has talked often of the direction of the community. This plan should be the plan of economic development for the town. All the Planning Board needs is a person with the expertise to put the idea into action. The Finance Committee is asking for the Planning Board to put their proposal into words on paper, so the Select Board and Finance Committee could read it. Ms. Desjardins made it clear that she wants this money to pay an expert to help the Planning Board get more development done throughout the Town of Granby. She does not intend to get money just to have more ideas, but put those ideas into actions.

The conclusion of this discussion is that the Finance Committee did not make a final decision, but asked for the Planning Board to clearly write out what their proposal is. Ms. Desjardins agreed to that.

Joint meeting between School Committee, Finance Committee, and Select Board: Mr. Barry reiterated that the purpose of this meeting was to fulfill policy and have a joint meeting with the School Committee and Finance Committee to kick-off next year’s budget.

The governor is not expected to send out an estimate for the states’ next year budget until the end of January. Therefore it is a little hard to try to estimate our own town’s revenue side, but there are some things we can do to get started. Something that can get started is the expenditure side of the town. Speaking of what will be available to spend and what will have to be cut. There is money in the stabilization fund. This is if there are dips in revenue that need to be filled. Hopefully it is temporary, but the stabilization fund is the back-up plan.

Mr. Martin’s concern is the federal level of our budget, with the fiscal cliff approaching. The school district getting a possible decrease of 5 to 8% in grants is one of his concerns as well. The schools are also looking at a decrease in school of choice for fiscal 2014 as well. As for municipal funding accounts, Mr. Martin predicts a decrease in government aid of 1 to 2%. Mr. Libera is worried that if there is that decrease in the schools revenue that the year’s expenditures will not balance the budget. The schools budget is the biggest portion of the overall budget for the town and they could tip the town one way or another.

Mr. Martin continues to express concern for the Police Department considering they get quite a few grants. Since there will be a potential decrease in government aid, they might not be able to get those grants again. A lot of the town’s departments work off of governmental grants, but if those are not available anymore, Mr. Martin is concerned that the departments might not have enough money to keep running. For that reason alone, Mr. Libera would like to know what the different departments and schools have in mind for the fiscal year. That way when the time comes to hear the numbers for the budget, they have some idea how far off they are.

Mr. Libera said that he thinks that the Town of Granby might just be at the point where we need a different approach towards the budget. Starting with how we estimate for the budget. We might need to give an estimated budget for each of the departments let them set up all of their expenditures, and see how far off the numbers are. From there, the departments will see what needs to be cut. Mr. Libera does not want the town to be at that point, but it appears to be that the Town of Granby will be dealing with this problem at the next Annual Town Meeting.

The Finance Committee no longer gives direction as to what needs to be cut. That falls under the Town Administrator. There is no way to knock 10% out of our town budget, because it all goes through personnel. Most of the money is spent through the personnel department. The Finance Committee has had basic discussion about the compensation in the budget. This year's budget includes a salary survey which will help make sure employees will get the compensation for the labor they provided. This budget is not doubt going to affect all of the Town of Granby.

As a result of this year's budget that is coming in, there may be some layoffs. They will determine this on what services the town still wants and what services the town wants to stop. The town can have an override election for if they want higher taxes or to cut some services. Mr. Libera went on to explain that there are obvious capital needs like schools, road maintenance, and so on. For these capital needs to keep going, they are going to need money. For that purpose alone, Mr. Libera thinks that an override might be necessary. It is for the Select Board to pick how much the override will be voted on. The Select Board has agreed to get back to the Finance Committee about what departments should be looked at for cuts. The Board will not make any speculations as to what the town's priorities (in terms of what cuts will be made first) until the Town Administrator puts together his preliminary budget, so he has a clue as to the extent of the money shortage.

The School Committee is looking to decline in enrollment for the 2013-2014 year. Cuts to the high school this year will decrease the School of Choice program. This is a statewide issue. On the bright side, since the student enrollment has been shrinking, the classes have been consolidated and money was saved that way. However, since the classes are getting smaller and there are fewer teachers, the School Choice program has decreased even further. The worst of it was at the high school. Especially since one and a half teachers were cut over the past year.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mark Bail and seconded by Mary McDowell it was unanimously voted to adjourn the regular session meeting @ 7:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Olivia DePino, Student Intern