

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING**

**DECEMBER 1, 2003**

**7:30 PM – MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING – HANOVER, NH**

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:30 pm by the Chairman, Brian Walsh. Present were: Brian Walsh, Chairman; Katherine Connolly, Vice-Chairman; William "Bill" Baschnagel; Judson "Jay" Pierson; Julia Griffin, Town Manager; and members of the public.

**1. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**2. DISCUSSION WITH STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION**

Representatives Bernie Benn, Ruth Bleyler, Sharon Nordgren, and Hilda Sokol were present. Representatives Nancy Scovner, Pete Solomon, and Estelle Diamond were not able to attend.

Representative Nordgren announced that the legislative session would begin on January 7, 2004. She gave a brief overview on Education Funding and distributed an issues summary sheet. She said that the House Ways And Means Committee had retained several bills and was considering the FY 2005 funding formula. It was likely that this formula would change. The Committee will vote on December 15, 2003. Mrs. Nordgren reported that a proposal would be heard in January for Hanover and two other areas to be redistricted yet again. If approved, Hanover and Lyme would again be one district with four representatives; the other five outlying communities would make up a second district that would share three representatives. Mrs. Nordgren advised of her efforts to work with the Hanover Town Clerk and others to alleviate the voter registration problems associated with same day registration activities. She said the College would hold an educational seminar on January 9, 2004 to encourage students to find ways to register to vote in their home states and vote by absentee ballot. For those students who wish to register to vote in Hanover they may do so at that seminar.

Representative Benn reported that the biggest highway project before the state was the widening of I-93 from the Massachusetts border north. He said many people were concerned that this project would consume every dollar available for the next eight years in transportation funding. He said he co-sponsored a bill that promoted the use of Garvey Bonds that in theory would allow the State to expand I-93 and keep money for other projects. The bill has been placed in interim study. Selectman Baschnagel advised of the Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission's efforts, through the Transportation

Advisory Committee, to insert some corridor studies of Routes 12A and 120 into the State's 10-year plan.

Representative Bleyler reported that Resource, Recreation & Development Committee was mainly working on surface and groundwater issues in the southern part of the state and along the coast. She said they also dealt with snowmobile/ATV issues and Class VI roads issues. Selectman Walsh said if legislation was proposed to change the status of Class VI roads the Selectboard would be very interested. He said Class VI roads took up a huge amount of civic energy in Hanover.

Selectman Walsh asked for a recap of the changes to the education funding that were outlined on the sheet provided. Representative Nordgren said the main issue was that the statewide property tax rate had changed from 5.80 to 4.92. Town Manager Griffin reported that Hanover paid \$1,258,899 to Concord in FY 2003. Under the HB608 change the Town will pay \$1,103,102 for FY 2004. She said if the current funding formula were to continue into 2005, Hanover would no longer be a donor community. Mrs. Nordgren advised that a group of receiver communities had banded together to fight the recent formula change which was to their detriment. Selectman Connolly questioned the record and reasoning of the State collecting less than usual property tax amounts when the educational costs would presumably increase every year. Mrs. Nordgren said the State was no longer paying for many things that they used to pay for, such as transportation related to special education programs. She said it was felt at the State level that the \$363 million collected should cover the annual education expenses for the coming year.

Selectman Walsh asked if anyone was going to challenge the Motor Transport Association's decision to deny \$16,000 of State funding for the study of a potential rail from Boston to Montreal. Representative Benn said the Motor Vehicle Association had brought suit against spending highway funding on a right-of-way for the trains as it was not highway related. He said that the Court had accepted the suit and would make a decision within six months. Representative Nordgren added that highway funding was separate from the rest of the State budget. Mr. Walsh asked if anyone would challenge that. He said the gas tax was one of the major sources of revenue for the State. This revenue is designated for highway funding only and in some cases, is spent frivolously, such as the recent upgrade to a nearby I-89 rest area. Mr. Benn said no, that was not being challenged.

Selectman Walsh asked what could or was being done to make the State's actions to downshift costs to counties and towns relative to human services more visible to the voters. Representative Sokol said it was made more visible a week prior when the new Commissioner of Health & Human Services spoke about having received a mandate to cut \$20 million. She said in January 2003, the Governor and Chair of the Finance Committee told the legislators that if they were going to support a new bill for funding they must provide funding for that bill by taking it from someplace else. Mr. Walsh said the issue was not finding funding; it was about getting back money that has been stolen from Health & Human Services to take care of the General Fund problems. Representative Benn said these issues must be visible at election time. Representative

Sokol said these issues were visible to many people, the question was whether they cared or not. Representative Nordgren said voter education was key.

Selectman Connolly asked if the State's action to downshift costs to the counties was part of the unfunded mandate gambit that was supposed to be avoided. Representative Nordgren said those funding issues must be challenged by the counties. Representative Sokol said it was the Health, Human Services & Elder Affairs Committee's feeling that if State funding was cut, the towns must step in to help. The result is that ultimately the taxpayers will pay for what is needed. Town Manager Griffin agreed with Representative Nordgren that until something was specifically challenged there would not be clarification on when downshifting costs could be defined as an unfunded mandate. Ms. Sokol pointed out that the downshifting of costs occurred at the national level as well. She said she did not know how it could be stopped, as a lot of people were willing to go along with these types of shenanigans. Representative Benn countered that the revenue side of things was not very predictable and many people looked to grab money from where they could.

Selectman Baschnagel expressed personal concern for Senate Bill 95, the workplace housing proposal. He said he disagreed with the appeal aspect which would allow the courts to direct towns to issue building permits irrespective of how a project matches a Master Plan, Zoning Ordinance or other local regulation. Town Manager Griffin reported that the New Hampshire Municipal Association was making progress to revise this bill. She offered to provide an updated version to the Board. Representative Sokol asked if there was anything towns could do to mandate housing development with business expansion. Ms. Griffin suggested the most that could be done would be to impose an impact fee ordinance. This would gear Site Plan Approval to the payment of fee into an affordable housing fund that would be managed by the Town. Selectman Baschnagel said incentives could be given to developers to provide a certain portion of a proposed development into affordable housing.

Selectman Walsh thanked the Representatives for meeting with the Board.

### **3. PRESENTATION BY THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS REGARDING PROPOSED TOWN MEETING TASKFORCE**

Kari Asmus and Hope Stragnell, Co-Chairs of the Voter Participation/Services unit in Hanover for the League of Women Voters of the Upper Valley, gave an overview of observations and recommendations to make the voting process more voting friendly.

#### Observation:

- The Annual Report was again clear, readable and informative.

#### Recommendation:

- Get the public more involved in the many public hearings held prior to Town Meeting.

- Distinguish between informational meeting (when background material is provided) and public hearing (when ideas are solicited from the public). Hold hearings before final decisions are made. Same amount of time should be provided for public to respond as was the deliverance of the information.
- Town Report should include financial background information, drafted by the Finance Committee, on the implications of the Warrant Articles.
- Move the general informational section of the Annual Report that defines Town Meeting, the warrant, etc. to the front of the Annual Report.
- Provide a tear off sample ballot in the Annual Report or publish one in the local newspaper.
- Change the way in which votes are deposited into collection boxes to address privacy issues.
- Reconsider the voting requirement, during the Business Meeting session, that each voter must go through the checklist, utilize the voting booths, and personally deposit ballots into collection boxes (in recognition of Hanover's elderly citizens).
- Town Moderator should discourage negative or intimidating behavior.
- Have the Town Meeting Task Force, in concert with the League of Women Voters, develop handouts on Town Meeting procedures.
- Allow everyone to speak on an issue prior to voting. (Disallowing a calling of the vote.)

Ms. Stragnell advised of a Quality of Information Statement that was adopted by the League of Women Voters of the Upper Valley. It speaks to the kind of information they would like the Hanover voters to receive. It suggests providing background information to the voters of the recommended proposals including which Selectmen favor/oppose the proposals and why. Ms. Asmus added that the League was very appreciative of the Selectmen's efforts to consider their annual recommendations in preparing for Town Meeting. She spoke favorably of the Town Moderator's efforts to conduct the day and evening sessions of Town Meeting. She said presenting the annual resolutions and the Volunteer of the Year Award during the bond voting worked well.

Selectman Baschnagel asked if the League members had any thoughts relative to increasing participation. Ms. Stragnell suggested making the process as friendly and comfortable as possible. She also suggested providing shorter, more condensed informational forms. Ms. Asmus pointed out that Hanover already had a high number of registered voters. She said she was not sure why participation numbers were so low. Mr. Baschnagel said people would show up if they thought they could make a difference. He suggested that the education process should focus on the notion of every vote making a difference. Town Manager Griffin said it had been suggested to her that hosting a community dinner at the Richard W. Black Community & Senior Center, providing child care services, and beginning Town Meeting slightly earlier might increase attendance.

sign it on behalf of the town. Ms. Griffin reported that the Town's guaranteed maximum health insurance increase will average 11.1% which was significantly lower than was expected.

## 7. **SELECTMEN'S REPORTS**

### **Katherine Connolly**

Ms. Connolly reported on the Planning Board's review of the proposed Lyme Road middle school. The Board asked for additional information that will be reviewed at a subsequent hearing. The Planning Board's next meeting will involve a discussion of a proposed 75-unit project near the Gile Tract.

### **Bill Baschnagel**

Mr. Baschnagel reported on the Parking & Transportation Board's discussion on possible parking options to replace the loss of Thompson Lot. The Upper Valley Transportation Management Association met a week prior. They are soliciting funds, building a budget, and working to create park-and-rides. DOT funding previously set aside for a park-and-ride at Exit 16 has been redirected to create a park-and-ride at Exit 13. The In-Town Traffic Committee met and worked on providing appropriate direction to RSG. Results should be available later in the month. The Upper Valley Transportation Advisory Council met and discussed the State's 10-year plan.

### **Jay Pierson**

Mr. Pierson reported on the Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting and its focus on increasing attendance. They are also continuing their efforts on the Task Force to review the town planning process. The Water Company has fallen behind schedule relative to the filtration project. They are moving ahead, gaining PUC and DES approvals. Financially the Water Company is doing well. They have received positive feedback on the information brochures that were distributed to their customers.

### **Brian Walsh**

Mr. Walsh reported that the Howe Library expansion campaign was progressing. They need \$70,000 by the end of December, 2003 to meet the \$250,000 pledge challenge from the Howe Corporation. He said pledges could be made payable over four years. The Community Substance Abuse Advisory Committee met and was given a presentation by Ryan Traviot of Dartmouth's activities relative to substance abuse prevention. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey is complete and its results will be available soon. They also reviewed the House Bill relative to consumption of alcohol.

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

Jim Rubens, Chair of the Downtown Marketing Committee, explained that the Committee was working to confront challenges the downtown has faced since the 1980's including the relocation of Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital and improvements to the West Lebanon shopping centers. They have contracted with Lewis Cardinal & Company to research four categories of potential customers in downtown Hanover at a cost of \$16,000. Town Manager Griffin added that the Committee was looking to create a marketing image for downtown Hanover that was responsive to the needs, wishes, and desires of its customers. She provided copies of the research proposal stating that the Committee was hoping the Town could provide \$5,000 for this effort. She suggested that funding could possibly be provided from the Parking Fund, which benefited most substantially from the vitality of downtown business.

Selectman Pierson asked who else the Committee would seek funding from. Mr. Rubens said they would approach all of the downtown merchants, business people, and Dartmouth College. Mr. Rubens pointed out that the business district supported 7% or 8% of the tax revenues of the town. He said to the extent that the downtown remains vibrant it reduces the load on the rural people of the town and provides a significant quality of life feature for the people that live here. Mr. Pierson suggested the Town funding should be provided only if matched by the merchants, who would have specific interest in this venture. Mr. Rubens said the merchants would have to provide at least that amount of funding. Selectman Walsh asked that the Town's contribution be counted last so that the Town only funds what is needed up to a \$5,000 pledge.

Selectman Connolly spoke in support of providing funding from the Parking Fund. Selectman Baschnagel said a vibrant downtown was a necessity to Hanover. He asked that the study give priority to Hanover residents over the other groups mentioned in the proposal. Tom Hall asked that the final report be made available to the public.

The Board reached consensus to provide the last \$5,000 of this funding if the Town Manager is able to find such funding in the Parking Fund.

Selectman Walsh thanked Mr. Rubens for taking on this project. He agreed that the role of the Hanover central business district was very important.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

**It was MOVED by Selectman Connolly and SECONDED by Selectman Baschnagel to adjourn the meeting. THE SELECTMEN VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9:35 PM.**

**SUMMARY**

- 1. It was MOVED by Selectman Pierson and SECONDED by Selectman Baschnagel to approve the minutes of November 17, 2003 as corrected. THE SELECTMEN VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 2003 AS CORRECTED.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Christie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Christie, Secretary

These minutes were transcribed by Beth Rivard.