

APPROVED

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

DECEMBER 15, 1997

7:30 P.M. - MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING - HANOVER, NH

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the Chairman, Marilyn W. Black. Present were: Marilyn W. Black, Chairman; Brian Walsh, Vice Chairman; Jack Nelson; Katherine S. Connolly; John Manchester; Julia Griffin, Town Manager; and members of the public.

Ms. Black announced that this meeting was being taped by CATV 6 and that assistive listening devices were available for anyone who wished to use them.

1. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

2. PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING THE TOWN OF HANOVER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM.

Ms. Griffin introduced Vickie Smith to answer any questions the Board might have concerning the Connecticut River Scenic Byway Program. A map of the proposed routes to be included in the scenic byway program was displayed, as well as the color scheme and format for the proposed scenic and cultural byway signs.

Mr. Walsh asked if the drawing was to scale and indicated the size of the actual sign. Ms. Smith answered that she understood that it may be a little larger than the drawing.

Ms. Griffin stated that it is up to Hanover whether or not the Town wishes signs to be placed in the community. She added that the Town can have an impact on the frequency of placement of the signs. Ms. Griffin read portions of a letter which she received from Carol Barlione as follows: "1) In cooperation with NH DOT it is planned that logo signs will be placed on existing route signs, where appropriate. DOT will use a pull-through method so that travellers will be able to determine that they are still on the scenic byway once they have passed a decision point. We are working to establish a procedure that will accomplish our objectives with minimal impact on the intrinsic qualities we are striving to protect; 2) For practical consideration, only one size sign is currently being planned, although the suggestion of using smaller size signs within village areas is an idea that deserves further consideration; 3) The color scheme and design that was voted on by the scenic and cultural byways council on November 20th is the official logo for the program and will appear on the road signs at any marketing or promotional material. I am forwarding a copy for your consideration. We feel that it is more consistent with our traditional New England heritage than the proposed original design."

Ms. Smith indicated that positive responses have been received from Piermont, Orford, Lyme, Cornish, Charlestown and Langdon. She added that Lebanon seems positive, although they have not yet sent a response. A response has not been received from the Plainfield selectboard, but the conservation commission was positive, and the planning board said no. Ms. Smith noted that Claremont's city council seems positive, as does their planning board and conservation commission. Hartland is leaning toward positive as well as Hartford. She stated that it does not seem to be a big issue in Norwich as the conservation commission and planning board have sent positive responses to their selectboard. Negative letters have been received from the Thetford Historical Society and the Plainfield Planning Board.

Mr. Manchester MADE THE MOTION that the Board approve the Town of Hanover's participation in the Connecticut River Scenic Byway Program. Ms. Connolly SECONDED THE MOTION and the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE TOWN OF HANOVER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM.

3. DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED DISPATCH CENTER FEE SCHEDULE.

Ms. Griffin reported that there has been a large effort on the part of the finance director, the fire chief and the police chief to determine a way to equitably set the fees that outlying communities are charged for dispatch services. She noted that there is an upcoming meeting to which representatives from the various groups have been invited to discuss this matter.

Ms. Griffin stated that the dispatch center deals with many more police calls than fire calls, with many of the police calls consisting of motor vehicle checks. She indicated that in the past a large portion of the dispatch fees were based on fire activity distributed over population as opposed to police call activity distributed over population. Ms. Griffin explained that when the dispatch fees were first developed, it was done in a straightforward and easy format. The downside of changing that approach to distribution is that there are a few communities for whom Hanover dispatches only police and not fire, and those communities will see a fairly substantial increase over what they are currently paying.

Ms. Griffin stated that the proposed recommendation is to distribute fees based on population. Hanover's calls will be taken out of the number of total calls handled, and those calls which belong to agencies that are served by dispatch will be distributed based on population, to arrive at an allocation of calls and costs. She noted that the population of the 13 communities served will be totalled, and each individual community will be shown as a percentage of that population with the charges allocated based on that percentage. Ms. Griffin indicated that this strategy is planned to increase fees over time, and starts with Hanover accounting for 80 percent of the calls when, in fact, Hanover only accounts for approximately 72 percent of the total call load.

Ms. Griffin indicated that another way to ease into the increases is to freeze the fees at the current rate of communities whose fees would go down rather than reduce them, and use the frozen fees to create a reserve cushion that would help alleviate the impact on some of the communities that have significant increases.

Mr. Manchester asked what would happen if the fees were established using a per call basis. Ms. Griffin answered that in this case, the communities that have an increase would see a much more substantial increase. Those communities that see a decrease under the proposed plan would not see as significant a decrease if a per call basis were used.

Mr. Walsh asked if ambulance, fire and police were dealt with as an actuarial question rather than a selling or service question, would their number of police calls over time be even against population. Ms. Griffin explained that some communities generate far more police calls per capita than other communities due partly to socio-economics and partly to how much of the police force is part-time versus full-time.

Mr. Walsh asked what would happen if the fees were set using a straight fee-for-service basis and accounted for at the end of the year rather than the beginning. Ms. Griffin stated that this was her original notion, but that it actually had a much more significant impact on the cost for communities that use police services, rather than the proposed formula which has the least significant upward impact.

Mr. Nelson noted that Plainfield has a substantial 164% increase, or \$5,000, which is going to impact their budget significantly. He suggested giving the information to them in budget numbers which may result in the town's cutting back on some of their police calls to dispatch.

Ms. Griffin noted that the dispatch center is at a point currently where one dispatcher is not enough during peak periods. She added that one reason for looking at raising fees is to be able to fund the addition of another dispatcher for peak periods. Ms. Griffin indicated that the dispatch center receives a fair amount of non-emergency calls, and the fee increases might result in a decrease in the number of those calls.

Ms. Black asked how the fees charged by Lebanon and Hartford compare with the fees charged by Hanover. Ms. Griffin answered that Hanover's fees are a bargain even with the proposed increases.

Ms. Black asked how the surrounding communities set their billing rate. Ms. Griffin answered that Grafton, for instance, is a combination of a formula with a portion based on call load distribution, a portion based on population, and a portion based on a per call charge for certain kinds of calls, with the formula recalculated every year.

Mr. Nelson asked whether the dispatch budget breaks out ongoing expenses such as heat, lights, rent, etc. Ms. Griffin answered that the dispatch budget does not reflect a portion of the utility costs, but consists of labor, benefits, overtime, part-time, telephone charges, material supplies, and tapes. The budget number does not include rent paid to the police or fire department for rent for the dispatch center, nor does it include its share of utilities which service the building. She added that the budget also does not include reserve funds for dispatch equipment, but budgets for those items when required.

Mr. Nelson asked what the logic was in giving all other communities a 10 percent discount on their dispatch fees. Ms. Griffin responded that the cost increase based on 72 percent seemed very significant, and she preferred to increase the fees over time to the 72 percent rather than increase them all at once.

Ms. Griffin stated that the proposal would freeze the rates of communities that would ultimately go down to create a reserve to offset the increase in the first year of communities whose fees would increase.

Mr. Nelson stated that he is in favor of Hanover providing service to smaller communities, but not as a profit center nor at a cost to taxpayers.

Mr. Walsh suggested phasing the increases in to 72 percent over four years to bring it to a place of even-handedness. Mr. Nelson agreed that it should be at a place of even-handedness for other communities, but also for Hanover.

Ms. Griffin stated that all fees that are charged by the Town need to be raised each year by the cost of living adjustment or some other method to tie the increased cost of providing that particular service directly to the service.

Mr. Walsh suggested having a table available at the upcoming meeting with the communities showing comparisons with other fees in the area, and a statement of when the fees were last changed.

Ms. Griffin noted that the proposed dispatch budget number of \$282,755 includes adding a full-time dispatcher to cover the second shift. She added that she had received a letter from dispatch staff approximately eight months ago stating they were concerned about breaking because of call load. Ms. Griffin stated that a significant amount of money is spent on part-time dispatchers, and there is difficulty in attracting and retaining good, high quality part-time dispatchers.

Ms. Black asked if there was a way to reach the police department without going through dispatch. Ms. Griffin answered that part of the reason for the voice mail system is that when the regular police department number is called, dispatch does not necessarily answer the number. She noted that they are looking at a new phone system to allow people to call directly and not have to go through dispatch. Ms. Griffin indicated to the Board that they will see some telephone consulting assistance in the proposed budget for next year.

Ms. Griffin noted that interest has been expressed on the part of some communities in Vermont in using Hanover's dispatch services, as the closing of the Bethel State Police barracks is in the planning stages. She added that adding a few more communities might be one way to offset the increases in dispatch fees.

4. APPOINTMENTS: PLANNING BOARD; ADVANCE TRANSIT

Ms. Connolly MADE THE MOTION to appoint John Hughes as an alternate member of the Planning Board. Mr. Walsh SECONDED THE MOTION and the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPOINT JOHN HUGHES AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE PLANNING BOARD.

Ms. Black asked if requests for individuals to fill positions on the Advance Transit Board were advertised. Ms. Griffin answered that they have not been advertised, and that the Board is looking at the reappointment of a current appointee, but is also looking for a female member of the Board. She is to place a transaction ad in the Valley News indicating that the Town of Hanover is looking for individuals interested in serving on the Advance Transit Board.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Ms. Griffin reported that her office has received correspondence from Nihonmatsu, Japan relative to sister city relations.

Mr. Walsh noted that Nihonmatsu would like to be twinned as a sister city with Hanover as well as New Haven, Connecticut, and wanted to be sure that this did not cause a problem. Ms. Black indicated that there is no problem with Hanover and New Haven being considered as sister cities with Nihonmatsu.

Ms. Griffin stated that she would be happy to draft responses to the questions raised in their letter.

Mr. Walsh expressed concern with the expenses involved in becoming a sister city. He noted that he has nothing against becoming a sister city to Nihonmatsu, but noted that Hanover is trying to keep the budget at or under inflation and believes there may be a mismatch of expectations between Nihonmatsu and what Hanover is able to offer.

Ms. Griffin stated that Hanover as a small community does not have an international relations section or a large budget for sister cityhood. She added that Nihonmatsu will spend significant money for its residents to come to Hanover each year for a cultural exchange, and Hanover cannot respond in a similar manner. Ms. Griffin suggested stating to them very clearly what Hanover cannot do, and communicate to them that although we are very interested in a cultural exchange, there is no budget available.

Ms. Black indicated that she had been contacted by Skip Sturman at Dartmouth College who expressed his interest in helping with this matter.

Ms. Griffin indicated that unless a link can be found with the College, all that can be done is to exchange and receive communications with Nihonmatsu.

Ms. Black stated that a committee of townspeople would have to be created as there is inadequate staff time and expertise to accomplish this.

Ms. Connolly requested a map of Japan showing the location of Nihonmatsu.

Ms. Griffin also reported that Hypertherm has been named the #1 New Hampshire company to work for. Ms. Black sent a Tip of the Hat to Hypertherm, and stated that the company deserves much credit for achieving this honor.

6. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS.

Mr. Walsh

Mr. Walsh reported that the Parking Facilities Task Force continues its work, and hopes to have something to bring to the Board in January or February with the prospect of this May's Town Meeting.

Mr. Walsh also reported that he, Ms. Griffin and Ms. Black met with representatives of the College's search committee for a new president. He noted that the College was interested in what the Town thought was valuable, and identified places where a common interest exists such as the water company and police and campus security. Ms. Griffin added that the College wishes to maintain a strong working relationship with the Town.

Regarding parking issues, Ms. Black stated that her survey of the downtown parking lots over the last two Saturdays indicated that the lot behind Lou's and the lot west of the Hopkins Center were full at 8:50 a.m., before the shops even opened. She added that the municipal lot was 2/3 full at that time, with no cars parked either on the platform or in the Marshall lot. Ms. Black also noted that the lots behind Roberts Flowers and Coldwell Banker were full both Saturdays before shops opened.

Ms. Griffin stated that the Chamber of Commerce has worked hard to get the word out to downtown employees and employers, and has funded on their own the cost of adding an extra shuttle to encourage employees who work downtown to take the shuttle and arrive back at Thompson Arena later in the evening. Ms. Black added that the Chamber has also been good about bagging the meters and removing the bags.

Mr. Walsh wondered if it would help the Chamber if the Board were to officially communicate to them that the level of parking on the remaining days before Christmas will decide whether free holiday parking occurs next year. Ms. Black will pass that information along to Clint Bean.

Mr. Manchester

Mr. Manchester reported that the Planning Board met two weeks ago regarding a presentation by Dartmouth College on their new tennis facility, and that a site visit on Saturday went well. He added that there was a presentation by Molly's Balloon regarding a waiver for building renovations.

Mr. Manchester also reported that there is a Rec Committee meeting on Wednesday, December 17th.

Mr. Nelson

Mr. Nelson reported that he will be attending a Planning Board meeting to discuss the continuation of the Paull subdivision case.

Mr. Nelson also reported that he had distributed to the Board a report from Dufresne Henry regarding the Water Company's distribution system. With the Board's approval, Mr. Nelson intends to have copies available for public use at the Howe Library and the Municipal Building.

Mr. Walsh suggested that the Board have a presentation regarding this issue.

Mr. Nelson stated that in the existing budget year for the Town, approximately 48% of \$150,000 represents the Town's share to complete a series of studies, the first one being on the distribution system, much of which is over 100 years old. He added that there are no reserves to maintain or replace the distribution system. Mr. Nelson stated that the end result of the report is a capital improvement budget with a recommendation for the distribution system.

Mr. Nelson indicated that another issue being worked on is the water source, noting that there have been complaints received about the quality of the water from the reservoir. Also being investigated are alternatives such as filtering of the water, and the balance of the funds will be used to retain appropriate accounting firms and legal firms familiar with small utilities to determine how management, ownership and financing should most appropriately be structured for the long-term benefit of the customers of the Water Company.

Mr. Nelson stated that they are testing the ground water, and if good quality ground water can be located, it has a trait of being consistent versus surface water which is affected by every change of season. He indicated that there is a Board of Directors meeting of the Water Company on January 29th, and he would be glad to give a report on the matter to the Board of Selectmen after that time.

Ms. Griffin stated that a great deal of time will be required to evaluate the program, and that the Town needs to look carefully at what is done in connection with water distribution system upgrades as it involves Town streets.

Mr. Nelson noted that the insurance companies rate communities for fire rates, and that Hanover has not been receiving good ratings for fire protection. This means that homeowners pay more for their fire insurance. Mr. Nelson stated that the improvements suggested would make the rates very good, so that for many customers there might be an offset increase for water rates, and a decrease in their homeowner's insurance rates, with the same situation occurring for industry.

Ms. Connolly

Ms. Connolly reported five out of 12 or 13 chapters of the master plan were finished at the last Planning Board meeting; the chapters were transportation, recreation, open spaces, historical resources and natural resources.

Mr. Manchester noted that although the Planning Board meetings are interesting, they are quite long. He stated that he had attended Planning Board meetings in Lebanon which start at 7:00 p.m., have a break at 9:00 p.m., and are finished by 10:00 p.m. Ms. Black stated that the Planning Board could meet as a board and set its own rules regarding adjournment time, etc.

Ms. Black

Ms. Black reported that the first draft of the Community Facilities Task Force survey will be presented to the Rec Board on Wednesday, December 17th. The Task Force will work with it on Thursday, and hopefully it will be distributed in January. Ms. Griffin added that the second draft of the survey is expected on December 30th, and she is to send a copy of the final draft to the Board.

Ms. Black reminded the Board about the upcoming first annual holiday luncheon which will be held at the Fire Department this year.

Mr. Walsh stated that the plaque which is at the Public Works Department entrance naming the facility the Richard Hauger Facility looks spectacular.

Ms. Black reported that the reception for Mr. Hauger's retirement went very well, with over 300 people attending.

7. OTHER BUSINESS.

There was no other business to come before the meeting.

8. ADJOURNMENT.

Ms. Connolly MADE THE MOTION to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Manchester SECONDED THE MOTION and the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN.

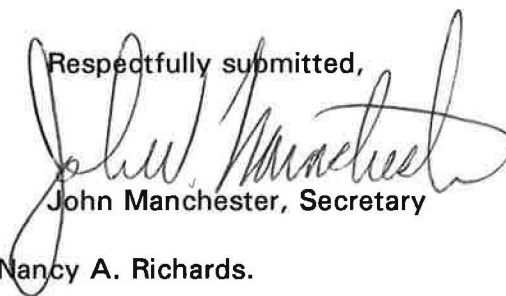
The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

SUMMARY

- 1. Mr. Manchester MADE THE MOTION that the Board approve the Town of Hanover's participation in the Connecticut River Scenic Byway Program. Ms. Connolly SECONDED THE MOTION and the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE TOWN OF HANOVER'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CONNECTICUT RIVER SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM.**
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Respectfully submitted,



John Manchester, Secretary

These minutes were taken and transcribed by Nancy A. Richards.