

**HOOKSETT TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2002**

**PRESENT:** Chairman M. DiBietto, P. Rueppel, R. Dion, P. Ganley, M. Jolin, R. Holley, D. Pichette-Volk, Town Administrator – M. Farrell. M. Ruel present at 6:39pm. P. Loiselle – absent.

**MINUTES:** August 28, 2002: R. Holley moved to table the August 28, 2002 minutes. Motion seconded by P. Rueppel. **Roll call vote carried unanimously.**

**NOMINATIONS/APPOINTMENTS:** ZBA: P. Rueppel nominated Lonnie Wright as an alternate fill-in position, exp/6/2005 and Joan Holleran as an alternate fill-in, exp/6/2003.

Chairman DiBietto closed the ZBA nominations.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**Default budget discussion:** Chairman DiBietto stated he and the Town Administrator met regarding the current default budget staffing, modifications, etc. Glaring issues need to be addressed. Most of the requested transfers are related to the reorganization over the last year. As an example, the Parks & Recreation Department is now under Highway Department; both department head positions have been merged into one; assessing contracted services v. a hired salaried assessor. The transfers are warranted in order that the money remains with the personnel and tasks.

M. Farrell passed out a summary detail of the budget. In order to meet obligations, transfers are needed. There is an excess in capital purchases, which can be used for some of the transfers. In order to avoid asking for transfers at every meeting and to give department heads an opportunity to plan and operate their budgets rather than using an ad hoc method, the handout has proposed budget transfers with certain provisos. These transfers need to be approved now so that the departments can get on with performing their duties and do what they need to do.

R. Dion asked why the capital purchases were so high.

M. Farrell advised it was additional equipment plus a lease that expired.

P. Rueppel asked what the average monthly Assessing Department MRI bill was.

M. Farrell responded that it fluctuates anywhere from \$12,000 to \$1,000 depending on the amount of work that can be done due to the seasons.

M. Ruel stated that this budget handout appears to be beyond changes in reorganization and would like an explanation on last year's budget expenditures.

M. Jolin stated he doesn't agree with transferring money into the Assessing Department from contracted services because it's an estimate and estimated needs are not what the Council voted on before.

D. Pichette-Volk stated the Council has adopted the default budget. The Council needs to be able to look over this proposal. If transfers were done now or later, would the end result be

the starting point for next years budget? The Council receives monthly budget status reports of expenditures and we have never asked any questions, so the burden and opportunity was on us all the time and we did not pursue it.

M. Farrell stated the default budget for next year will be 9.5million plus or minus contractual obligations and debt service. It will affect the departments. The entire budget is an estimate and waiting six months or until there's an obvious problem may be too late. \$300,000 was returned this year and it's due to good management not because someone gave us too much money. We can't predict how many snowstorms there will be how much salt & sand will be used. It's similar to welfare in that we have to plow whether there's money in the line or not.

R. Dion stated that a default budget doesn't mean we'll be 'spending' the same amount of money as the previous year.

Chairman DiBitetto stated he has a different perspective having sat with the Town Administrator. The Assessing Department is spending \$12,000 per month and the budgeted amount requested was \$140,000 but the default amount is \$117,000. That department will run out of money in ten months and they won't be able to operate. Do we want the Town Administrator to ask us in ten months to shut that department down or transfer money into it? More importantly, does the Town Administrator cut out the least critical position or not do the actual field assessments. They know they're in trouble. We need to set priorities and if we're not going to do it now, we need to at least give him a guideline to avoid shortfalls. He can't assume we're going to act when it's needed. Do we hang a department head with monthly overexpenditures knowing he may be saved later? We live by rules but there are exceptions to every rule and we need to address the exceptions.

R. Dion stated that the Council had extensive discussions about assessing during budget discussions such as a full-time assessor vs. contracted services. We came up with a figure for the budget committee and townspeople to vote on. Responsible planning is the best guess, based on experience.

M. Ruel asked where the line item for was the Assessing Department contracted services because if it's not in a line how can it be spent.

M. Farrell stated that the MS2 and MS7 forms have the line for the contracted services. RSA 32:3 refers to this as the official budget voted on by town meeting. The line item budget is for management and informational purposes. These laws are made so that our hands aren't tied and to be flexible enough to deliver services in the most efficient and best way possible.

Chairman DiBitetto stated that this budget discussion would be heard at the next meeting.

**SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS:**

Public hearing on gift from Kiwanis Club of Hooksett: Chairman DiBitetto opened the public hearing at 7:30pm.

Fred Bishop of the Kiwanis Club of Hooksett addressed the Council and said they have been very successful in raising a considerable amount of money to benefit children. Kiwanis would like to donate \$5,000 towards a preschooler's playground at Fraser Field, which is geared towards very young children; and \$5,000 for the purchase of ramps for the skateboard park. Dale Hemeon, Kiwanis member and Highway Department Manager, asked if there was a way the Council could word the acceptance so that if Kiwanis wanted to give more money in the

future a public hearing wouldn't have to be held every time. There are other ramps that will be needed in the future. All ramps are certified and approved by industry standards.

Chairman DiBitetto stated that a hearing would have to be held on any gift over \$500.

Chairman DiBitetto closed the public hearing at 7:33pm.

P. Ganley moved to accept the gift of \$10,000 from the Kiwanis Club of Hooksett. Motion seconded by R. Holley. **Roll call vote carried unanimously.**

Chairman DiBitetto thanked the Kiwanis Club for their generous donation.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Budget goals & objectives FY 03/04:** M. Farrell suggested the Council try performance management. Instead of department heads setting goals and the Council deciding what's good and bad, the Council establishes goals and tell the department heads what they'd like to see instead of denying items after the department heads have gone through of many months of work. This all ties in to the discussion at a previous meeting about performance government. In order to do this correctly you set goals and have the department heads achieve them. Goals such as what you would like to see the Hooksett government do. The Council is the leader of the government. After the Council sets the goals the performance can be measured by the achievement of the goals instead of haggling over dollars & cents. This can sometimes save 20 – 30 % savings. You need resources to save that amount. Would you like to do this? If not, we'll go back to the old way.

P. Ganley asked how many years of info would be needed to start rationalizing this performance management.

M. Farrell answered it could start after you set your targets the first year and each year they are readjusted. Certain departments have this statistical information for the last year. For two years the Town has been doing a good job of collecting data and submitting monthly reports.

P. Ganley questioned if they could receive the statistical measurements and could they start with police and fire instead of every department.

R. Dion stated the Council should take one department at a time and get some objectives to go in the right direction. It used to be done at the school board level. The Council could define priorities.

M. Farrell stated he sees it as a benefit to the Town in doing it this way but it starts at the top.

M. Ruel requested the monthly department head reports show what they're doing on a monthly basis.

M. Jolin requested clarification on the goal setting. Are the goals prepared by the Council or by the department heads for the Council to use?

M. Farrell stated the goals come from Council. Objectives are how they're achieved through a two-way discussion. The Council needs to get involved in the goal setting procedures. If you measure the goals, the budget and day-to-day operations take care of themselves.

D. Pichette-Volk agreed but would like two goals – one for department heads and one for the Council. The department heads have consistently submitted service statistics on a monthly basis. Before we agree on specifics, we would need to be more educated on this and hear a wider range of suggestions from the departments.

M. DiBitetto stated the Council needs to know what the department goals have been in prior years and then decide if we need to modify them.

P. Rueppel stated the Council should have the department heads do a report on what they want for their own goals and then we could make comparisons.

D. Pichette-Volk stated it's too easy to turn it back to the department heads and ask what their goals are. They know what to do and what services to provide. This is our job. They help us edit not the other way around.

M. Dibitto requested the mission statements and goals from the departments that currently have them.

M. Jolin requested national averages. I.e.: snowstorms, roads plowed with time frames, amount of roads, etc.

Trick Or Treat hours: E. Dinwoodie gave a history of the hours for the last eleven years and explained Fire Lieutenant Wally Spear's offer for a Halloween party in lieu of trick of treating for safety reasons.

M. Farrell explained that Wally Spears currently does Santa Claus in a fire truck around town during the Christmas season. The truck is his own and he does this as a volunteer. Wally offered an alternative to trick or treating for safety reasons. This would be held at the Safety Center in the truck bay area. The cost would be handled through donations, which would sponsor traditional games, apples, costume contest, etc. Knowing how seriously Hooksett residents take trick or treating, to outlaw trick or treat hours would create quite a stir but Wally has offered to do this as an alternative. The Administration Department fully supports Wally's offer.

R. Dion asked if there were any problems last year with evening hours compared to the previous ten years of daytime hours.

M. Farrell responded none that were reported to him but it did require more police officers.

D. Pichette-Volk moved to celebrate Halloween with 2-phased event consisting of giving permission for the Fire Department under the leadership of Wally Spears to have an onsite Halloween party at the Safety Center for hours of his choosing and also to celebrate traditional trick or treat hours on October 31<sup>st</sup> from 6pm-8pm. Motion seconded by R. Holley.

**Roll call vote:**

P. Ganley	no	R. Holley	yes
M. Jolin	yes	D. Pichette-Volk	yes
M. Ruel	yes	P. Rueppel	yes
R. Dion	yes	M. DiBitetto	yes

**Roll call vote carried.**

Speeding complaints: P. Rueppel reported receiving complaints of speeders in various neighborhoods.

R. Dion stated he has found that most of the speed complaints are in neighborhoods where it's those neighborhood residents themselves that are speeding because the neighborhood does not have connector roads.

Tour of streets and growth: P. Rueppel suggest the Council rent a van on a Saturday morning and have Dale Hemeon, Highway Department Manager, drive around and show the Council what's happening as far as new streets and growth.

The consensus was for the Highway Department Manager to set the date and route.

Assessing Revaluation: P. Rueppel asked if Visions Company was the bid winner in the revaluation RFP and if they were the old MMC Company.

M. Farrell responded that they were.

Minutes on web site: P. Rueppel stated she has received complaints of lack of up-to-date minutes on the web site.

Council consensus was to place unofficial minutes on the web site.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:** M. Farrell reported on the following:

1. Today was a condition orange day as far as the EOC was concerned. Orange is one step below red, which is the highest level of alert for terrorism. All public buildings were secure as possibly could be.
2. An RFP for the fire inquiry was sent out to the State Fire Academy, all colleagues in municipal management requesting names of organizations that would do a study, MRI, Emergency Services in Oregon. Timing is against us to meet the schedule and cost. The faster you want it the more it's going to cost. The counter proposal by MRI deserves merit. It's the least expensive method. A full-blown study would cost \$20,000 – \$50,000 which would include an eminently qualified individual and experienced backup staff. They would provide the Town with expert guidance and allow them to stick to the more technical aspects of this investigation in reviewing sop's etc in which you have no real knowledge of and it would speed up the process. Otherwise you'd get bogged down in those type of issues. The Town has worked with MRI in the past on a 'not to exceed' basis. We could go along with this approach or wait for other proposals to come in.

M. Jolin suggested the Council wait to see other responses.

P. Rueppel agreed with M. Jolin.

M. DiBitetto stated the Council should narrow the study or at least define it in areas of response procedures, equipment evaluation and replacement schedule, CIP, etc.

M. Farrell advised there is information for the Councilors to take home this evening on requested inquiry information such as budgetary information and names.

M. DiBitetto requested the contact home addresses and phone numbers of all current and ex-employees mentioned in the inquiry.

D. Pichette-Volk stated she was uncomfortable with that and none of the Councilors need to know the addresses.

M. DiBitetto disagreed stating if the Council considers calling witnesses it would be via a letter sent to their homes.

D. Pichette-Volk stated it would be through the Administration.

M. DiBitetto stated he needed to have the addresses available and whether he had them physically or they were elsewhere didn't make a difference.

R. Dion stated he would feel more comfortable without the addresses at this point. At some future date the Council is supposed to write down a list of things to ask as well as testimony witnesses. The Council hasn't decided yet who will be called to testify.

M. DiBitetto stated he had no objection to that and requested it be available for when the Council needs it keeping in mind the next inquiry meeting is October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

(This discussion is continued later in the minutes.)

3. There is a Fire Department cost analysis of a recent blasting accident as stated several weeks ago and you'll be receiving these cost analysis's on a regular basis.

M. Ruel requested the applicable RSA's for billing purposes be referred to on the incident reports for cost recovery.

4. There was a two-day period Hooksett Fire sent personnel to New Durham to assist with a large multi-day forest fire. Hooksett gets fully reimbursed. Mutual aid isn't reimbursable but forest fires are.
5. There is an ongoing move to explore a regional water district as an option to the sale of Pennichuck Water to Philadelphia Suburban Company. The Town has received a letter regarding a future meeting and inviting participation. Hooksett has two areas serviced by Pennichuck. The Town Planner is being kept up to date on this issue.
6. Robie's Store is hosting their annual Old Time event and is requesting permission to close Riverside Street. After Police, Fire and Highway have submitted their recommendations, it will be addressed at the next meeting.
7. A small 9/11 commemoration ceremony was held today at Fire Station #1.
8. The tax rate should be set soon. Not all figures have been received yet in order to have it set but a best estimate is \$25.41, which equals a 14-cent increase over last year.
9. Even though Hooksett Dispatch is no longer dispatching for Allenstown the issue of payment hasn't been finalized. Allenstown was billed and has paid on an annual basis after the year. When they left they owed Hooksett two years worth of dispatching services.

We haven't received payment as of yet. The Police Chief is handling it. It may be coming before you in the future. Total amount due is approximately \$65,000.

10. There is a special meeting on September 18<sup>th</sup> with the Budget Committee, Planning Board, CIP, Council to review the process of budgetary and CIP items. The Finance Director and Town Planner will provide info for all attendees.

11. The primary election results are in the reading file.

12. The Town was served this week by Nancy Winneg on behalf of petitioner Rene Smagula regarding the Council's decision on the protest petition.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Chairman DiBitetto clarified that all e-mailed subcommittee reports would have to be presented and read at the council meeting in order to be attached to the minutes. Otherwise, they could be referenced as being in the reading file and later filed.

Perambulation: D. Pichette-Volk reported they are working on a new strategy to involve the Merrimack and Hillsborough county attorney's to resolve the Manchester/Hooksett line issue.

Planning: P. Ganley reported that Southern NH University-North Campus brought in their master plan at a workshop. The entire golf course is now changed to a huge residential and commercial project. There will be more discussion in the future.

Police: M. DiBitetto submitted a report previously via e-mail.

Sewer: P. Rueppel submitted a report previously via e-mail.

Southern NH Planning Commission: M. Jolin reported a presentation from DOT on the I-93 work. The minutes of the meeting will be e-mail later. DOT feels they've done enough mitigation because they've provided more land than was required in lieu of the amount of wetlands that's being disturbed. They're proposing additional mitigation in the form of technical aid money, which will be included in a grant.

ZBA: R. Dion reported the ZBA has concerns of property owners appealing when the problem should've been taken care of on a lower level. A large commercial development on Bypass-28 is going in which abuts Autumn Run and Summerfare. The residential abutters don't want it to go in because of lighting, noise, etc. Previous town meeting vote changed this area to commercial. When the residential homeowners purchased their properties they were not informed of the abutting commercial property.

Central Water Precinct: M. Ruel reported the middle school water issue was resolved but has resurfaced. The remaining issue is over how much effort should be put into the water for the possibility of a future high school. A joint meeting should be held with all parties to talk about it.

Tri-Town Ambulance: D. Pichette-Volk reported the Presidency has changed from Rob Cole to Nina Catano.

### **Fire Department Inquiry continued:**

M. DiBietto stated that he would be asking the Fire Chief, Finance Director, and Town Administrator to attend the October 2<sup>nd</sup> inquiry meeting to answer questions on budgetary items and procedures.

D. Pichette-Volk questioned what type of meeting October 2<sup>nd</sup> would be.

M. DiBietto answered it would be a Fire Department Inquiry Special Meeting and if there was no quorum, it would continue on as a workshop with no decisions.

D. Pichette-Volk asked if the official inquiry is convened, will the Council have some preparatory guidelines beforehand than there currently are. Also, if will the inquiry will include the swearing-in of individuals and would a stenographer or transcriptionist be hired to take the burden off staff.

M. DiBietto stated there would be a meeting prior to October 2<sup>nd</sup> to finalize the procedures; the respondents would be sworn in; it would be a good idea for a stenographer or transcriptionist.

D. Pichette-Volk stated for the record and questioned if it would be premature to proceed with the October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting since we haven't finalized an outside agency per the RFP. The Council shouldn't be bound by the October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting just because it was set previously. There are steps that need to be taken before the October 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Chairman DiBietto stated the two are not exclusive and synonymous but complimentary and parallel. There will be a special meeting to discuss these issues prior to October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

R. Dion stated the Council needs to prepare questions and the Fire Chief should know the questions ahead of time so he can be prepared.

Chairman DiBietto stated the Council would talk about this at the meeting to be scheduled prior to October 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Chairman DiBietto adjourned at 9:33pm.

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Elizabeth D. Dinwoodie  
Assistant Town Administrator

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Mary A. Ruel  
Town Council Secretary