

Town Council Minutes
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, November 6, 2002

Present: Chairman DiBietto, D. Pichette-Volk, P. Rueppel, M. Ruel, M. Jolin, R. Dion, P. Ganley, P. Loiselle, M. Farrell-Town Administrator, E. Dinwoodie-Assistant Town Administrator. R. Holley - excused.

Minutes:

August 14, 2002: R. Dion moved to approve as amended. Motion seconded by P. Loiselle. Motion carried unanimously.

September 25, 2002: M. Jolin moved to approve as amended. Motion seconded by P. Ganley. Motion carried. D. Pichette-Volk abstained.

October 9, 2002: P. Ganley moved to table. Motion seconded by P. Loiselle. Motion carried unanimously.

October 23, 2002: M. DiBietto moved to table. Motion seconded by P. Ganley. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Mountain Valley Ambulance: Sandra McKenney, Allenstown Selectman, representing the Allenstown Board of Selectmen questioned the Council Agenda New Business section regarding the letter from Mountain Valley Ambulance. Allenstown's understanding was that no changes would be made with Tri-Town Ambulance service. Allenstown wants to maintain service with Tri-Town Ambulance.

Chairman DiBietto stated Hooksett's position hasn't changed regarding Tri-Town Ambulance service and the agenda item was due to a letter received.

Photocopy Fees: Christina Katsikas from NH Fireworks reminded the Council of a motion made at the last meeting regarding the photocopy fee increases and suggested the Council take action as presented at the previous meeting.

NOMINATIONS/APPOINTMENTS:

ZBA: R. Dion moved to nominate Richard F. Johnston of 43 Elmer Avenue to Alternate Fill-in, Exp-6/04.

R. Johnston stated he has sponsored local organizations, has been in town for years and wishes to join town activities.

P. Rueppel moved to waive the rules in order to nominate and appoint in the same meeting. Motion seconded by M. Ruel. Roll call vote:

M. Jolin	no	M. DiBietto	no
D. Pichette-Volk	yes	P. Rueppel	yes
P. Ganley	yes	P. Loiselle	yes
R. Dion	yes	M. Ruel	yes

Roll call vote carried.

R. Dion moved to appoint Richard F. Johnston to Alternate Fill-in, exp-6/04. Motion seconded by M. Ruel. **Roll call vote carried unanimously.**

SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS: Campbell Hill stop signs:

Denise Levesque, 41 Lindsay Road, explained they had a neighborhood meeting and were not able to come to a conclusion. A study was done for Glencrest Estates in 2000, which indicates additional houses would not require additional stop signs. The Internet doesn't recommend stop signs as a traffic slowing device in the United States. Additional signatures have been obtained on the petition against stop signs bringing the number of signatures up to 144.

R. Dion asked if they were against all stop signs or just the new ones.

D. Levesque answered only the new stop signs.

P. Rueppel asked what her solution would be.

D. Levesque requested a committee to address it and work with the Highway Manager on other signs such as pedestrian crossings. There's a blind driveway at Virginia and Lindsay, which could use a blind drive sign. There's a willow tree blocking a stop sign on Virginia. Pedestrian crosswalks are a possibility.

Liz Feren, 28 Lindsay explained they approached the Town for a solution to the speeding problem and it's working. The stop signs are effective and inexpensive. Since then, neighbors have been more cognizant of speeding. There will always be people driving through the neighborhood who don't live there such as delivery vehicles. Stop signs serve as a reminder in the neighborhood that it's not a highway. We all watch our children but they can be impulsive and need to be protected. Crosswalks only help if someone crosses road. They won't slow down a speeder. The 2000 traffic study was done because of the need of a light at the bottom of the hill before Glencrest was built. If you drive up, you would agree that a few stop signs are worth the effort and the protection of the children.

Dale Hemeon, Highway Manager, showed the Council a map of the current 13 stop signs that were approved for the subdivision. The additional 25 were to be consistent throughout the entire development and not target any one intersection. Critical areas are Julia and Nancy.

Patricia Spencer, 41 Stirling Avenue, stated votes were taken at the neighborhood meeting and people walked out because it didn't go their way. It's safer in certain streets to ride bicycles. However, Lindsay is a busy road and not safe for bicycles. Roads are made for vehicles and stop signs are made to control interaction between cars, not children and cars.

Christine Gilroy, 28 Stirling Avenue, suggested lowering the speed limit.

Felix Weingart, 53 Lindsay Road, asked for the Police Chief's input.

Police Chief Steve Agrafiotis advised the area was looked at. It's built up and roads in the newer development are on the thin side. Solutions were discussed and that's what was brought to the Council.

F. Weingart asked if Chief Agrafiotis should've received input from the entire area instead of one section.

Chief Agrafiotis responded that his intention was to improve safety. Ideally it would great not to have a speed problem but that's not the case.

Irene Racicot, 45 Prescott Heights Road, stated that her daughter is Denise Levesque. She visits her daughter several times per week and the stop signs are ridiculous. She's lived at Prescott heights for 33 years without stop signs. Stop signs don't provide a solution but common sense and children playing signs do.

Barry Hero, 3 Thistle, advised there are multiple problems with 90 additional homes on the top of the hill with only one way in and out. There are 250 cars per day that travel the road. Some of the problems are the blind drive, the willow tree, and the speed limit. The four-way stop will help. Guidelines are needed to stop speeding.

Maria Labonte, 25 Lindsay, stated she has young teens and it's impossible to supervise young teens at all times. Stop signs are currently where the bus stops are which is a great and makes sense.

Kevin French, 36 Lindsay Road, stated that the Highway Department Manager and Police Chief have said they're not the experts in traffic control. Stop signs don't slow traffic and they are posing a hazard. Other solutions are needed to slow the traffic.

Christy Masciarelli, 13 Lindsay, stated the stop signs are working. Traffic is slowing down but there's still a speed problem going up and down the hill.

Jeff Silver, 29 Virginia Court, stated if another meeting was held with the neighbors, the Town officials should host the meeting instead of the residents. Objective people are needed to control the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Heritage Trail Easement Resolution: Town Planner Charles Watson spoke on behalf of the Heritage Trail Committee and stated they have determined that there are a number of property owners in Town along the Merrimack River that they would like to approach. They feel it's important to be able to hand them a statement from the Town to help them understand that it's not a couple of people wanting to assist in the creation of the Heritage Trail but the Town. This is not meant to exert any undue pressure but to help them understand that the Committee has been through a lot of work to accomplish this. **(Attachment #1)**

D. Pichette-Volk moved to accept resolution as presented by Town Planner Charles Watson. Motion seconded by P. Ganley. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Fire Department Inquiry:

P. Rueppel moved that if the Council decides to go forward and hire an outside firm to further help, that we request the Town Administrator get a third bid. Motion seconded by P. Ganley.

M. Farrell stated he could do that but to be fair, you have to let the others resubmit and there's no guarantee that they will.

Chairman DiBitetto asked if it was a formal sealed bid.

M. Farrell answered it was an RFP distributed nationwide with two responses. I can't be responsible for the lack of response.

P. Ganley asked what the RFP was in regards to.

M. Farrell stated it was regarding the operational aspects of the Fire Department.

P. Ganley suggested that the third party private company come from the inquiry not during it. The Council can't say that this third party can now come into the inquiry while the inquiry's ongoing with this third party has complete rein to do what they want to.

Chairman DiBitetto agreed stating it would be appropriate to conduct a third party inquiry once the Council's work is completed.

M. Jolin stated that when he originally mentioned a third party, he thought the inquiry would be either the Council doing it or a third party. The Council should've done this before or after, not in the middle.

R. Dion stated he thought a third party study would be beneficial if it was done in a hurry because we're going to be discussing the Fire Department budget in January and making important decisions about the operations reflected in the budget. If we do it after we may only get the results after the budget's all done and won't be able to act on it until the following year.

M. Ruel moved to table the third party issue. Motion seconded by D. Pichette-Volk.

Roll call:	M. Jolin	no	P. Loiseau	no
	D. Pichette-Volk	yes	M. Ruel	yes
	P. Rueppel	no	R. Dion	yes
	P. Ganley	no	M. DiBitetto	no

Roll call vote failed.

M. Jolin moved to amend the motion to obtain another bid after the inquiry is concluded. Motion seconded by P. Ganley. **Roll call vote carried unanimously.**

Roll call vote on original motion as amended:

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

Roll call vote carried.

M. Ruel moved to call ex-firefighters within the last five years, present firefighters, dispatchers, fleet maintenance, call firefighters, to ask questions specifically on safety of equipment, overtime, staff turnover if appropriate, and response procedures, to better understand the reasons for budget overexpenditures and staff turnover consistent with the original motion. Motion seconded by P. Rueppel.

After much discussion, Chairman DiBitetto explained that the Council has its job to do and the Town Administrator has his. They're not exclusive. The Council won't be doing much for the next two weeks and each Councilor should submit to the chairman in written format what your thoughts are for direction.

R. Dion suggested M. Ruel withdraw her motion with the understanding the Council would go into nonpublic.

M. Ruel withdrew her motion. P. Rueppel withdrew her second.

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

1. A job description for Bookkeeper was distributed for a proposed new position in the Finance Department. The Deputy Finance Director is retiring and because of the importance of this newly proposed position in addition to the time of year, the Finance Director has very good justification for this position. The new position would not increase expenditures from the wage line. This hourly rate position has a range of \$13.28 to \$18.00.

P. Ganley moved to create the new position of Bookkeeper at a classification level of W7. Motion seconded by D. Pichette-Volk. **Roll call vote carried unanimously.**

2. The new tax rate has been set and certified at \$25.20 which represents a decrease of seven 7 cents down from \$25.27.

P. Ganley stated he hadn't heard anything in two years regarding the school turning over the school state tax to the general fund and requested a status.

M. Farrell said he would be meeting with the SAU shortly. Currently the Town is applying one million to the fund balance to offset taxes this year while still obtaining a one million in surplus, which will help with the reval. Any major spikes could be offset by this surplus as well as next year when the Town will be faced with a two-dollar tax increase on the school side just for debt service.

3. Regarding Conservation Commission v. ZBA, it was presented but only to four justices who are deadlocked. With Justice Broderick back, it will be presented again.
4. The Town has received a favorable ruling from the Department of Labor regarding a federal wage investigation on our payroll practices. We came out with a clean bill of health.
5. Regarding NH Fireworks v. Town of Hooksett, there was a trial last Friday in Merrimack County Superior Court and the outcome was that the parties have agreed to enter into mediation with a mediators report to the judge within 90 days and hopefully that issue will be settled.

OLD BUSINESS continued:

I-93 Mitigation Plan review:

M. Farrell explained that the plans the State used were sorely out of date. If this mitigation were to go through, a large chunk of industrial land would be taken off of the tax rolls. Currently this land is being charged the full tax rate and not in current use.

M. DiBitto asked if the Town should object to them in writing because the mitigation would be taking the property out of current taxable status.

M. Ruel moved that the Chairman prepare a letter to comment on the mitigation plan. Motion seconded by P. Ganley. **Motion carried.**

Fee increases:

M. Ruel stated that at the previous meeting she made a motion that died due to lack of time and would like to reconsider the photocopy charge for standard documents and propose 25 cents per page. If there are more than 25 copies, add a charge for a quarter of an hour of labor.

M. Ruel moved to change photocopy costs to 25 cents per page and if it's excessive there's an hourly rate applied. Motion seconded by P. Loiselle.

D. Pichette-Volk moved at 9:30pm to extend for 30 minutes. Motion seconded by P. Ganley.

Roll call vote:	R. Dion	no	P. Ganley	no
	M. Jolin	no	P. Loiselle	yes
	M. Ruel	yes	D. Pichette-Volk	yes
	P. Rueppel	yes	M. DiBitetto	no

Roll call vote tied.

The meeting ended at 9:31pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Dinwoodie

Mary A. Ruel
Town Council Secretary