

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 21, 2004**

Chairman M. DiBitetto called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

**PRESENT:** Chairman M. DiBitetto, D. St. Pierre, G. Longfellow, M. Ruel, D. Belanger, M. Jolin, P. Fitanides. P. Loiselle, A. Packard-Town Administrator. P. Rueppel – excused.

**MINUTES:**

December 17, 2003: G. Longfellow moved to approve as amended. Motion seconded by P. Loiselle. Motion carried.

January 5, 2004: P. Loiselle moved to approve as amended. Motion seconded by G. Longfellow. Motion carried.

January 7, 2004: M. Jolin moved to approve as amended. Motion seconded by D. St. Pierre. Motion carried.

January 12, 2004: M. Jolin moved to table. Motion seconded by G. Longfellow. Motion carried.

**NOMINATIONS/APPOINTMENTS:**

Supervisors of the Checklist: S. Piper and M. Gannon resigned. Chairman Bryan Williams. The Supervisors appoint their own members as a fill-in until the next election. Pat O’Leary was appointed and subsequently had to resign for personal reasons. Two vacancies remain on the three-member board. Chairman Williams will be filling the vacancies.

**SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS:**

6:45pm - Manchester Water Works Franchise Extension: Guy Chabot of Manchester Water Works (MWW) explained the request which involves Map 28, Lots 19-1, 19-2 and Lots 20–28 which are on the southern end of Hackett Hill Road. This came about out of a request by Terrence Pfaff on Hackett Hill Road. The requested extension area is not in the MWW franchise. This will involve a 12-inch line, 300 feet along Hackett Hill Road from the franchise border north to the Pfaff residence. There will be no cost to the new hookups.

G. Longfellow moved to table until the other water precincts had been notified and feedback had been obtained. Motion seconded by P. Loiselle. Motion carried.

7:00pm – Public Hearing – FEMA Emergency Preparedness & Response Grant: Chairman DiBitetto opened the public hearing at 7:00pm. Deputy Fire Chief Frank Fraitzl explained that Hooksett had been awarded a grant through the FEMA 2003/2004 Fire Act Grant Program for \$100,800. The request was for \$112,000 with a 10% match required to complete three projects in the two fire stations. 1. Install a sprinkler in Station #1 on Riverside Street at \$44,500. 2. Install an exhaust removal system in Station #1 on Riverside Street at \$45,000. 3. Provide upgrades and modifications for the current exhaust system at Central Station at \$22,500. The grant was awarded to Hooksett with the Town’s required 10% share at \$11,200, most of which has already been obtained through encumbered funds and warrant articles. The balance remains for the sprinkler system, which will be put into the upcoming budget of \$4,500. If the Town receives a default budget the money is added to the operating budget, as it would be contractual.

Donald Duford, 191 West River Road, stated this has been requested in the past and denied. There are no supporting bids for an exhaust system. Last year the Council put it on the warrant and cut it to \$5,000. \$45,000 is too high and something of a lower value would work just as well. Deputy Chief Fraitzl responded that estimates have been obtained to upgrade current system and for a source-capture system. Whichever system is chosen must be compliant.

D. St. Pierre stated that it's quite apparent that we have two substandard forms of construction for two firehouses. These systems were needed when the buildings were built, but several years later with problems. The town must become more prudent and watchful and hopefully hire a town engineer so that we don't build another white elephant that will need grants and upgrades after it's been built and paid for.

M. Jolin stated the fire dept didn't know the system wouldn't work. When the safety center was built there was a lot of discussion on how the Safety Center would be built. Most wanted it planned and designed by an individual who would know about fire stations, but other political influences wanted to go as a construction management system such as design-build which is how it was done and why we now have problems.

Deputy Chief Fraitzl requested D. Duford provide the names of companies who his sources of information is so that a bid package can be sent.

M. Jolin asked how the grant money is handled.

Diane Savoie, Finance Director, stated once the specs are sent to FEMA and approved, FEMA sends the Town 90% of the money via wire transfer, which the Town disperses to the vendor. The town provides the remaining 10% as required by the grant.

P. Fitanides questioned the paperwork process and any salary expenses associated with it.

D. Savoie stated she's salary and that's her job so there are no additional expenses.

Chairman DiBitetto closed the public hearing at 9:40pm and stated that a vote would be taken at the February 11, 2004 meeting.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

Donald Duford, 191 West River Road, Re: Elderly Exemption and revaluation. Duford requested the status of the elderly exemption and stated he didn't like the idea of a subcommittee to study it. The Council should simply pass it and whoever is eligible should get the credit regardless of the impact on the rest of the Town. A letter to the editor will be written.

D. St. Pierre stated that when he writes his letter to the editor he should take into consideration the impact this will have on others such as a family of four with one income and how this will affect them.

Much discussion ensued. Chairman DiBitetto stated a subcommittee had been created to look into it.

Duford stated the revaluation has caused many charges to homeowners with a complete disregard to the residents.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Hilltop Acres bond reduction: Town Administrator A. Packard presented a bond reduction on Hilltop Acres. The builder is Robert LaPierre. This bond has been signed off by our engineering firm Dufresne & Henry and the Highway Department Manger Dale Hemeon. The reduction is from \$168,534.50 to \$61,179.08 for bond # 7130074.03.

M. Jolin moved to approve the requested bond reduction. Motion seconded by D. Belanger. Roll call vote carried unanimously.

Sewer Department - sludge removal process trip: The Sewer Department Superintendent Bruce Kudrick will be going on a conference trip to Nova Scotia to review this process. The Council is invited \$1,000 per person for a two-day one-night trip.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

Judith Casey, 65A Farmer Road, re: Elderly exemption and revaluation: Stated that she agreed with D. Duford on the revaluation and is concerned about the process because the increase was large. The increase went beyond the means of residents and they will be forced to sell their homes. The elderly were hurt in this. While visiting the website many discrepancies were noticed in the comparison of homes.

Chairman DiBietto stated that the Town has relied on these paid professionals and wondered if an inquiry or investigation should be done to determine if the Town got what they paid for.

D. St. Pierre stated this process is the way it is and that many towns and cities are involved in the same process. Anything south of Concord, NH has increased dramatically with growth and valuation. Hooksett could fine-tune the process, but we are not unique to the explosion of cost of living and cost of home ownership. Everything from Hooksett to the Massachusetts border is going through the same thing.

G. Longfellow stated that the revaluation company used in 1988 was the same company and very off base. It took the Town five to six years to get back to normal.

Chairman DiBietto stated that assessing in the state is tied to the market. The Assessing Director has stated Hooksett is at a 95% valuation. Values are increasing and Hooksett's already under valued. The NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) acts as the overseer of this process. If there was a dereliction in the methodology, that would be cause for concern and investigation, but to argue the values itself using the State's method is not.

D. Belanger stated 1988 was a cusp year in real estate with a plunge in the market several years later.

M. Ruel stated she supports looking into this to see if what we received and what we paid for in the contract were different. The issue isn't the value of the house, but the process itself.

Chairman DiBietto stated that we anticipated an increase of 50% in assessments which is written in previous minutes. The assessments have increased 51% on average for residential. Our basis for making those changes were valid. We increased the exemption by 50%. The problem is that it doesn't compensate fully for the increase in value. The new taxable value is still generally higher than it would've been under the old. Our estimates were very good. Not every house went up at a predictable rate. At least 50 elderly families pay zero property tax because the exemption exceeds the value of the property.

D. Belanger stated he has used Visions revaluation figures in his business for replacement costs and they were in line with inspection figures from other insurance companies. Market value of those clients in Hooksett were in line with what the market value should be for those houses.

After much discussion it was the consensus of the Council to have the Board of Assessors appear before the Council at the next meeting to answer these questions about whether the Town got what they paid for, were procedures followed properly, and to ask their opinion if they saw any problems.

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Budget Committee: M. Ruel reported that the school wants the money that was cut from their budget to be put back in. The assumed default budget will be discussed at the next meeting. The DRA gave confusing guidance on default budgets, which will be discussed at the next meeting.

Facilities: P. Loiselle reported there hasn't been a meeting in awhile, but one will be scheduled in February. Insulation issues have been discussed with Harold Murray concerning the Safety Center.

Heritage Commission: Chairman DiBitetto reported the commission is preparing to put together a history of the town. They're working on a release form for every person to sign that they interview.

Perambulation: D. Pichette-Volk reported that Duval Surveying was hired to work on the Hooksett/Manchester line issue. The Hackett Hill Road point is in question because the identifying marker is unknown. Work is still being done on this.

Police Commission: M. DiBitetto reported the board voted to raise the cruiser rental rate from \$6.00 to \$10.00 per hour.

Solid Waste Advisory Board: G. Longfellow reported they've discussed the budget. As of December 31, 2003, the revenues were \$53,359.46. Tipping fees were discussed in conjunction with a default budget. A photocopier is needed for the Department. Superintendent Kemp Holt has given his retirement notice, effective April 19, 2004. The authority was changed at the Department.

ZBA: D. Belanger reported that the Holt case was remanded back by the Superior Court. The Planning Board and ZBA are going to do a joint walk concerning the next parcel.

Charter Amendment: P. Fitanides reported that there would be a meeting on January 27, 2004 at the Library. Discussion so far has involved reducing the number of town councilors on the board, qualifications of councilors, noninterference with town administration, inquiries and investigations, initial districting, changing/redistricting. Recommendations will be forthcoming.

Elderly Exemption/Veteran Exemption: P. Loiselle reported that the first week in February a meeting would be held.

Cable: P. Loiselle reported that the second week in February would be a follow-up meeting with Comcast on the renewal of the contract.

Legal Counsel: P. Loiselle reported that he would like to reactivate this dormant subcommittee and have a meeting in the second or third week of February.

**OLD BUSINESS:** M. Jolin requested the status of renaming Garland Road.

A. Packard stated that the resolution was that it would not be renamed, but left as is.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

P. Loiselle moved at 9:05pm to enter into nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3,II,(a) “The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining or such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.” and RSA 91-A:3,II,(b) “The hiring of any person as a public employee.” Motion seconded by M. Jolin. Roll call vote carried unanimously.

M. Jolin moved at 9:35pm to exit nonpublic session. Motion seconded by G. Longfellow. Roll call vote carried unanimously.

The Council issued a statement that the nonpublic minutes would not be divulged at this time with the exception of the amended and approved minutes.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Elizabeth Dionne  
Assistant Town Administrator

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Mary Ruel  
Town Council Secretary