

Board members present: Chairman Cedarholm, Selectwoman Dennis and Selectman Bugbee

Others present: Jim and Lou Ann Griswold, Katrinka Pellecchia, Ron and Cheryl Pitkin, Larry Kindberg, Patricia Jenkins, George and Shirley Walker, Jim and Marianne Banks, Paul and Annamarie Gasowski, Charles Cox, Peg Dolan, Chief Dronsfield, Town Secretary Denise Duval and Town Administrator Julie Glover.

1. Chairman Cedarholm calls the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Chairman Cedarholm opens the meeting up to public comment, reminding everyone that there is a 3 minute limit and to address the Board and not the audience.

Annamarie Gasowski, Library Trustee, states that since the passage of SB2 in Lee there has been an ongoing challenge for the Town and its various commissions and committees to keep residents and voters informed. The Library Trustees have been criticized in the past for not giving residents information about the Library Community Center project. Therefore, the Trustees and the Building Committee use the Town's preferred methods of communicating and informing the public; the E-Crier and the Town Website. Information Sessions and Public Hearings were held as well as weekly updates in the E-Crier. The Building Committee kept the information about the project up to date on the Town Website to allow everyone to access it. The link to that information is provided in the E-Crier. Among the duties of the Library Trustees is advocacy for the Library. They would not be doing what the voters have elected them to do in a concerted effort to inform the voters about this project. From their point of view they are fulfilling that obligation. The Library Trustees meet regularly once a month. The Select Board meets twice a month. The Building Committee was meeting twice a month during the past year. All of these meetings are posted, open to the public and welcome comments. Many are taped for later viewing and minutes are available online. They are committed to this project and informing the public.

Jim Griswold wants to raise a concern he has about the action that the Select Board is considering. He is not here to advocate for or against the Library Community Center Warrant Article. That will be decided by the voters on March 10th. His concern is a broader one that focuses on what the proper use of the E-Crier should be. He was elected Selectman in 2006. Shortly thereafter the Town hired an IT Director and began the process of getting into the 21st century and shifting away from the way it conveyed information from the town government to its citizens. They expanded and enhanced the website and commenced with an email communication on a weekly basis to those who wished to receive information electronically. That email communication was called the E-Crier, an acknowledgement of what had been for decades the principle news of communication that is the hard copy mailed out Town Crier. The E-Crier was conceived initially as a supplement or an addition to the Town Crier though it was soon clear that the E-Crier would soon play a major role in disseminating information. Something it clearly does today. The Board at that time worked very hard and expended considerable effort in defining the proper parameters for its content. For example, the Board determined early on that they would accept no advertising dollars or allow commercial advertisements in the E-Crier. The potential for conflict or even the appear for conflict of interest would be too great. As a Board they decided that its purpose was information and only information. Opinions, advocacy and promotion of political positions had no place in the E-

Crier. As a Board they ascertained that allowing advocacy pieces even for those issues that the Board endorsed was poor stewardship of the Town's resources and a violation of the trust that was given to them as elected officials. The E-Crier was designed to provide information and only information. Voters can decide their opinions. As a Board they were responsible for what went out. The Town Secretary and the Town Administrator did the work, but if something got in that someone thought was an opinion the Board would strive to make sure it did not happen again. Mr. Griswold states that they did take positions as a Board and as individuals; however, they did so using venues other than the E-Crier. For example, he wrote a letter to the editor of Fosters advocating for the retention of the traditional Town Meeting. Other Board members took similar actions on positions they felt strongly about and some in the Town might agree with those positions and some may not. But those opinions were expressed where such advocacy was proper and that is not in the E-Crier. He is concerned that in the zeal to express opinions in this case pertinent to the Library Building Community Center members of the Select Board are considering the use of the E-Crier. He would urge the Board not to proceed down that path. Not for the specific issue of the Library and not for any issue. The E-Crier began and must remain for informational purposes only. People trust the E-Crier because they know that the only thing in there by design is information. It must not become yet another platform for advocacy per Mr. Griswold. That is what the Select Board meetings, the Deliberative Session, letters to the editor and campaign signs are for. If material creeps in that advocates one position over another, it is the Select Board's duty to review the content and act accordingly. Using the E-Crier to express opinions opens a Pandora's Box for abuse and cynicism.

Katrinka Pellicchia states that the Trustees have been diligent about keeping the Town informed about the new Library Community Center. The articles in the E-Crier have been informational only. She agrees that opinions pro and con on any subject have no place in the E-Crier. The purpose of the E-Crier is to disseminate information only.

Larry Kindberg refers to an email that he sent to the TA on February 20th which read "since the funding of the Library complex and the warrant article has become a hot political issue, can the opposing view or perhaps a link to the opposing view website be put in the E-Crier and given equal voice. If not then I would request that any articles such as the one in the current E-Crier requesting to vote for the Library be excluded until after the voting." Mr. Kindberg is unhappy that the church articles are being rejected from the E-Crier specifically the living nativity. He thinks that by letting the Library informational pieces into the E-Crier that this is essentially allowing political advertising into the E-Crier. He thinks that this is questionable electioneering. He does not want to see the E-Crier turned into a political piece. The E-Crier should be about information. Mr. Kindberg submits to the Board that control needs to be taken with regard to the fairness of what articles are put in and that equal voice is given.

Ron Pitkin left the last meeting thinking that the Town would be going for a million dollar bond for the Library and then at the Deliberative Session the wording was changed and the cost went up 30%. Many people do not understand what is going on. He thinks that both the pros and the cons should be allowed in the E-Crier.

Chuck Cox blames lack of communication and doing away with Town Meeting. He thinks the printed Crier was important.

Cheryl Pitkin does not feel the sense of community. When she walks into these meetings she feels the Library group as a clique. She does not feel like she is part of this community and she hasn't for 15 years. She just wants her taxes to be lower. She visited a wide variety of local libraries. This library is too expensive for such a small town in her opinion. She says that when she watched channel 13 she could not hear it very well. Chairman Cedarholm reminds her of the time limit.

Marianne Banks claims that she there was a time when she asked to put a meeting notice for the Cemetery Trustees in the E-Crier and was denied. She goes on to say that there are only certain people who get notifications that the Board of Selectmen is having a meeting. She blames this for the poor attendance at meetings. She thinks that the Board should reconsider just this one time to allow the opposition to post in the E-Crier.

Pat Jenkins questions whether it is right to allow an opinion piece in the E-Crier.

3. Chairman Cedarholm states that the way the agenda item was written was not quite consistent with the actual purpose of this meeting. In his opinion the purpose of this meeting is to discuss whether or not to provide a summary of the reasons why the Board voted to not support this warrant article. He states that they are not necessarily opposed to the project. It was for a variety of reasons that they are not supporting the warrant article this year. He asks to hear from the other Board members.

Selectwoman Dennis reads a prepared statement.

Deliberative Session is over. The Warrant Articles are finalized and the Board of Selectmen has made a recommendation to the voters regarding the Board's position on all warrant articles, not just this one. Further Board discussion is fruitless in my opinion. The Board of Selectmen is the governing body as such we do not get involved with special interest on either side of any issue. We remain impartial and promote the interest of the community as a whole. At this juncture as a Select Board, no further discussion or action should take place replacing any warrant article. It is time for the voters to speak. What is the Board of Selectmen's role in any matter pertaining to the warrant articles at this stage of the game? Absolutely nothing. There is nothing we should be doing. I believe the timing of this discussion is suspicious and may be construed by the public as an effort to sway voters in one direction. And to avoid this public perception and in light of our attorney's guidance that we received this afternoon, I make a motion to end this discussion and adjourn this meeting. Do I hear a second?

If no second, I am going to respectfully request that the record show that I have removed myself from this meeting based on my previous statement (*Selectwomen Dennis left the dais and sat in the audience.*)

Selectman Bugbee thinks that this meeting has turned itself into different things over the course of the last two days. He thinks based on the information they received from the two legal opinions that they received, he would like to propose that the Board follow the 3 recommendations made by Attorney Cuddy.

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Chairman Cedarholm reads the 3 recommendations.

1. Do not run the library trustee article any more between now and the election.
2. Consistent with past custom and practice, include in the (ecrier) editions between now and the election, the town warrant as amended at deliberative session and which includes the Selectmen recommendations.
3. Reference in the article that voters can learn more about the views expressed at deliberative session by the Selectmen and others by reviewing the video of the deliberative session which is available on the town website.

Chairman Cedarholm agrees with Selectman Bugbee and motions to adjourn.

TA Glover respectfully requests that Marianne Banks contact her tomorrow regarding the request that she mentioned. She also wants to point out that Town Hall/Selectmen’s Office is open 5 days a week and that it is the Town Clerk/Tax Collector’s Office that is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Finally, it is obviously time to develop a policy relative to the E-Crier. She will be bringing a draft of a policy to the Select Board meeting on March 16th. Said policy will govern what goes in and what doesn’t go in to the E-Crier. Based on the information that the TA received today from the attorney and other sources, the policy will most likely further limit the information that will be put into the E-Crier. Chairman Cedarholm suggests putting in the upcoming meetings for the following week into the E-Crier.

Selectman Bugbee asks if there is an existing policy for the E-Crier. TA Glover indicates that she has not located one; however, Mr. Griswold statements lead her to believe that there may have been one back in 2006, 07 or 08.

A survey was sent out with the last Town Crier asking if there was any interest in continuing with this publication and there was only one response. This is the one of the reasons that the Town Crier distribution ended. In its place, the Selectman’s office agreed to publish what is called a Voter’s Guide to help people become educated on the warrant articles and send this out to every household in Lee in February.

The Town Report is available on the website at this time and printed copies will be available March 3rd. The E-Crier is available to view at the Library or printed copies may be obtained at the Library or at Town Hall.

4. Chairman Cedarholm again moves to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bugbee, seconds. All in favor. **Motion Carries.**

Minutes transcribed by:

Minutes accepted by The Lee Select Board:

Denise Duval, Town Secretary

David Cedarholm, Chairman

3/16/15



Date

Carole Dennis



Scott Bugbee