

**Board of Selectmen's Meeting
March 31, 2011, 8:00 AM
Sanford Hall, Town Hall
155 Village Street**

Present: Chairman Dennis Crowley, Selectman John Foresto, Selectman Glenn Trindade, Selectman Dunne, Selectman Andrew Espinosa and Town Administrator Suzanne Kennedy.

Also present: Melanie Phillips, Treasurer-Collector; Carol Pratt, Town Accountant; Sue Ellis, Human Resources Director.

At 8:08 AM Chairman Crowley called the meeting to order, and the Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment: None

Discussion – Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Chairman Crowley asked about transferring free cash to reserve. Town Accountant Carol Pratt responded it was not necessary. Discussion followed. Town Administrator Suzanne Kennedy stated the Town may get funds from FEMA to offset costs from the big storm, and those funds would go to free cash.

Brief discussion followed on Article 6, changing the wording to include "other assessor surplus".

Regarding changes in Article 4, Ms. Kennedy stated this was due to another installment stemming from a settlement with the Town of Franklin. This money can be used for sewer easement litigation costs. She stated that two easement matters might soon be resolved at a cost of around \$90,000. Selectman Espinosa expressed concern that money is being co-mingled, and that Town-wide money is being used for specific purposes. Ms. Kennedy clarified that the fund is within the general Water and Sewer Account. Discussion followed. Melanie Phillips, Treasurer-Collector clarified further that debt exclusion costs are coming out of the general fund, not enterprise funds. She emphasized that all accounts are audited at the end of every fiscal year to make sure funds are accounted for appropriately. Discussion followed.

Selectman Trindade moved the Board accept the Special Town Meeting Warrant with the change to Article 6, Line 3, to reflect "and any other assessor account surplus"; Selectman Dunne seconded. No discussion. All ayes, 5-0.

Discussion – Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles:

Regarding Article 13, Town Administrator Kennedy read from email from the Director of the Department of Public Services. Chairman Crowley wondered why a separate article was necessary. Selectman

Foresto stated that the funding is already secured, and this article allows the movement of the funds. Ms. Kennedy will add a description of what the money will be used for, which will help residents understand. Discussion followed.

Selectman Espinosa suggested reviewing the articles one by one. The Board agreed.

At Selectman Dunne's suggestion, the Board agreed to flip Articles 1 and 3.

The Board then discussed articles as follows. If a particular article is not mentioned, there was no discussion.

Article 2- Appropriation: FY12 Operating Budget: Brief discussion on the provision for a Reserve Fund. No money can be spent from this fund without Town Meeting action.

Article 5- FY12 Capital Budget – Water/Sewer Enterprise: Selectman Trindade expressed concern for the road being worked on for too long for water main replacement, especially if the rest of the road project may be still two years away. Chairman Crowley suggested changing the article to reflect engineering costs. Selectman Foresto suggested dividing it into two articles. It was suggested that the Water Resources Management Plan should come out and reference West Street only.

Article 6 – FY12 Capital Budget – Ambulance Enterprise: Selectman Foresto asked what might trigger replacement of an ambulance. Ms. Kennedy stated the Town tries to replace them every five years; they are five and ten years old respectively. Ms. Pratt stated only \$159,000 is available. Selectman Dunne suggested looking for a vendor who would accept the \$159,000 instead of \$175,000. Ms. Kennedy stated she would like to borrow the whole amount. Chairman Crowley asked Ms. Phillips for breakdown of costs. Ms. Kennedy stated paying cash depletes reserve funds. Selectman Trindade suggested waiting a year, given the increased salary for a new fire chief.

Article 7- Appropriation: FY12 Water Enterprise Fund: Selectman Espinosa suggested changing the wording to "for the operation of the Water . . ." Ms. Phillips stated there is only enough revenue anticipated to cover costs. Additional revenue comes in with increased water usage and future consumption cannot be predicted. Selectman Trindade asked for figures for all the different funds.

Article 13 -- Water Supply Projects Account; Article 14 -- Water Distribution Projects Account and Article 15 -- Sewer Collections System Account: Selectman Trindade asked where the suggested amounts came from. Ms. Kennedy stated she would ask the Director of the Department of Public Services to meet with the Board to explain. She will also send a copy of Mr. Holder's email.

Article 18 – Funding of Police Contract: Ms. Ellis stated she proposed a change in sick time connected with the union to prevent unnecessary use of sick days, but it is not part of their contract. Discussion followed. There is no need to allocate funds for the contract outside of the FY12 operational budget.

Selectman Espinosa moved that Article 18 be removed from the Annual Town Meeting Warrant; Selectman Trindade seconded. No discussion. Split Vote – 3-2; Crowley and Dunne, oppose.

Article 21 – Charter Amendment: Board of Library Trustees: Ms. Kennedy reviewed the article and what each provision means, predominantly regarding library staff reporting to Town Administrator, as well as the Town Administrator having the authority to implement regionalization. The matter will come before the Board for further discussion on April 11. It was suggested to delete section about appointment to the Board of Trustees. It was also suggested that this matter take the form of a non-binding ballot question. Ms. Kennedy will look into it.

Article 22- Amend General Bylaw: Abandoned/Foreclosed Properties: It was noted that this is for only residential properties at this time. The Board asked for a copy of both versions to see changes from the original text.

It was agreed to meet on Monday, April 11, at 6:00 PM. Chairman Crowley requested that the revised warrant be distributed on Thursday, April 7, to allow more time for review.

Budget Discussion:

The Board continued its budget discussion from the public session on Monday, March 28, 2011.

Ms. Carol Pratt distributed updated FY12 Budget Projections with Operating Stabilization.

It was agreed that the revenue number would stay the same.

Ms. Kennedy reviewed the changes she made since the last draft. Retirement expenses were reduced. The issue on the Town Clerk's salary is still To Be Determined. She has met with the Treasurer-Collector regarding unemployment expenses, and noted that retirement will have an impact on health insurance costs. Regarding health insurance costs, she stated she met with the agent and Insurance Advisory Committee, who indicate the cost might come down to a 8 or 9% increase. Any increase still requires union agreement which may not occur until May or later. Selectman Dunne suggested that if unions hold up the process, the Town should publicize that fact to residents that the opportunity to reduce it was not Town's fault.

Continuing with her review, Ms. Kennedy stated salary reserve is also tied to union contracts. The Fire Department account was amended due to the retirement of the chief. Eight thousand was added to the library account for cleaning services. EMS enterprise account was reduced by \$29,000. Selectman Dunne asked Ms. Pratt to add a line separating enterprise account totals as well as showing sources of revenue. Ms. Pratt agreed to prepare a presentation encompassing everything, showing grants and other sources of revenue, in addition to the accounting-type version. Selectman Trindade suggested adding information specifying how various monies are restricted in their use. Chairman Crowley clarified that residents will vote on the accounting version. While an information sheet explaining what other sources of revenue might be helpful for residents, it cannot be voted. Selectman Foresto stated he had no issues with Ms. Kennedy's changes.

Discussion followed on personnel issues. Department of Public Services has three vacancies, one of which is a highway superintendent funded from three different sources. There is also an environmental supervisor and a water system operator, the salaries for which are included in 2011 and 2012 budgets.

Selectman Trindade wondered if automated meter reading decreased staff workload significantly. Chairman Crowley suggested that the Director be allowed to manage his own staff and acknowledged that there are many tasks that occur behind the scenes. The recycling operation has been upgraded. Selectman Foresto stated he believes in management by walking around, and noted that he saw Mr. Holder at the transfer station on a Saturday morning looking at the way things were happening.

Selectman Foresto moved that the Board accept the Department of Public Services budget as presented; Selectman Espinosa seconded. No discussion. Split Vote – 4-1; Trindade, oppose.

Selectman Foresto suggested that the DPS Director be allowed to move forward with filling existing vacancies. Selectman Trindade reiterated concern that economic times may force layoffs within months of their hire. Selectman Dunne suggested filling the open positions but not create new ones.

Selectman Dunne moved that, based on the budget as presented, the Board allow operational department heads to fill existing vacancies, but no new positions be created without authorization; Selectman Foresto seconded. Selectman Trindade offered a friendly amendment that no new positions are created without the Town Administrator seeking and getting Board of Selectmen approval. Selectman Dunne agreed to the friendly amendment. All ayes, 5-0.

Ms. Kennedy stated that Mr. D'Amico, Deputy Director, Department of Public Services, informed her that energy costs could go up significantly in the coming year. The amount would be reflected in the affected accounts.

Regarding the Selectmen account, Ms. Kennedy wanted to transfer the night board secretary function into the Town Administrator's budget and make them responsible to her. Selectman Trindade expressed concern that those salaries are paid for night secretaries and not for something else in her department. Ms. Phillips clarified that a stipend system was being considered. Chairman Crowley asked for a breakdown for each secretary for informational purposes.

There was a brief discussion regarding \$8,000 for in-house custodial services at the library.

Selectman Dunne moved that the \$8,000 be shifted from the library budget to the DPS budget as a maintenance expense specifically for cleaning the library; Selectman Trindade seconded. It was suggested that expenses be tracked in order to better budget this in the future. All ayes, 5-0.

There was a brief discussion regarding Camp Sunshine and related transportation expenses.

At this time, Ms. Kennedy distributed information on grades and steps for the Town Clerk position.

Selectman Dunne asked if all department heads are included on grades and steps. Ms. Ellis stated she is trying to establish some sort of salary table. Salaries are often negotiated and not necessarily coming in at an established rate. The Town Clerk has seen the salary calculation sheet; it is public information. Ms. Ellis stated she considered salaries for similar positions in other communities in putting together the table. Discussion followed on salary being performance-based rather than by time spent in position, commitment to high salary in difficult economic times, and possible tethering to union agreements.

Selectman Dunne suggested a salary of \$59,300.80 going forward, then tether increase to whatever the unions might receive. Chairman Crowley suggested rounding it to \$60,216, then move forward with unions. The Town Clerk is elected for a three-year term with two years remaining on existing term. Discussion followed.

Selectman Dunne moved that the Human Resources Director offer a salary of \$60,216 for the balance of the Town Clerk’s existing term, with the condition that she accept benefits accrued to unionized employees, and further, if the offer is not accepted, the Town Clerk will have to propose any salary increase at Town Meeting; Selectman Trindade seconded. No further discussion. All ayes, 5-0.

School Department Budget:

Selectman Espinosa stated he had reviewed the School Department budget posted in MUNIS on March 18 and wanted to know if the Board of Selectmen was basing all decisions on this. The answer was no. He stated that the budget posted on February 11 contained an undefined bucket of money, which has now been spread throughout the rest of the budget, but he has been unable to locate the changes. Ms. Pratt will get that information to him. Selectman Espinosa wanted to know if this was the official document. The response was that the budget presented does not meet what is termed the “needs” of the School Department, and they may seek additional appropriation at a fall Town Meeting.

Selectman Dunne stated the Finance Committee asked him about the budget books. He indicated they would like books made for them, in addition to a soft (electronic) copy. He stated he advised them to contact the chairman with respect to the number they would need.

At 10:26 AM Selectman Foresto moved to adjourn; Selectman Trindade seconded. No discussion. All ayes, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanette Galliardt
Board Secretary