

Selectmen's Meeting
23 November 1998
7:00pm

The regularly scheduled Selectmen's meeting was called to order by the Chair, Allen Hines, at 7:00pm. Those present included George Lagassa & Jack Steiner (Selectmen), and Russell McAllister (Town Administrator).

The Selectmen reviewed the regular meeting minutes of November 16th. Mr. Steiner amended the minutes by adding, "The expense of the test borings was the sole responsibility of the owner of the property," to the section under Selectmen's Concerns. Mr. Lagassa made the motion to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Steiner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

The selectmen reviewed correspondence and/or signed:

1. RPC - Corridor Advisory Committee Mtg. on. 12/11/98 at 9-11am
2. Jones & Beach - Boulders Subdivision Bond / draw down request
3. Ruth Griffin - Executive Council Newsletter
4. Coakely - Executive Committee Minutes
5. Office of Emergency Mgmt - Exercise Reimbursement
6. David Chevalier - Trustee Resignation (Cemetery & Trust Funds)

Town Administrator's Report

The TA reported that preliminary projections by the NH Health Trust indicate an increase of 24.1% for the costs of health benefits and 9.7% increase in costs for dental benefits. The Health Trust emphasized that the projected increase represented the maximum amount of the increase. Further discussions and a more thorough review of the proposed rate increases were scheduled for December 10-12th within the Health Trust. The TA commented that he would begin looking around for other providers offering similar health coverage.

A request to draw down to zero the posted bond on the Boulders subdivision by Jones & Beach engineering was briefly discussed. Bob Strout commented that a final walk through was in the process of being scheduled. Mr. Steiner suggested that any decision to permit Jones & Beach to draw down the remainder of the bond be predicated upon a successful final walk through. The other Board members agreed and tabled the request pending a successful final walk through.

Assessing Discussion

Howard Promer, the Town's contract assessor, explained the new assessments to those gathered. Mr. Promer explained that several years ago at Town Meeting it was voted to conduct a Town wide revaluation of real property. The contract was awarded to the NH Department of Revenue Administration. Part of the contract required the DRA to do a follow-up market or sales analysis after the first year's implementation of the new assessments. The market analysis is a means to test the validity of the revaluation while also tracking market trends of various neighborhoods. Mr. Promer pointed out that neighborhoods, in assessing jargon, did not connote a geographical location. Rather, neighborhoods are groupings of homes located throughout Town that share similar characteristics like size and selling range. The assessing system is designed to update assessments on a yearly basis, but further adjustments should not be of the same size as after the revaluation. The reason such adjustments are made on a yearly basis was to insure that tax assessment values are based on fair, proportional, and accurate values for all classes of property. It was asked if Rockingham County as a whole was doing the annual updates. Mr. Promer pointed out that it was a statewide effort and that North Hampton, some twenty-five years ago, was one of the first Towns in the State to hire a professional assessor to insure equitable assessment of all North Hampton taxpayers. He also explained that yearly updates avoid the very high costs associated with a revaluation conducted on a 10-year cycle. The assessing system tracks the sales of houses, both up and down by neighborhood class, and assesses according to prices established by buyers and sellers of real estate in Town. Mr. Promer noted that land value increases accounted for the overall increase in property assessments because land itself was a

finite quantity. The Fuller Mansion was used as a prime example. The selling price of three million was not based on the house value, but rather on the land value and its proximity to the ocean. Those in attendance expressed frustration about not being adequately informed about the new system. The Selectmen acknowledged that frustration and agreed that they had not been on top of the issue as they might have been. The TA asked how people would prefer being notified about assessment changes. It was suggested that neighborhood class be used as a way of tracking changes in site values. The TA agreed to put together a list and post it in the Library and Town Office. Future changes to assessment values would be published in the Library newsletter of newspaper. The Board agreed that there was a need overall to develop better town wide communication.

NexTel Telecommunication Tower

Rob Parsons addressed the Board as a representative from NexTel Communications who is interested in citing a tower on municipal owned property. Mr. Parson explained that the facility was comprised of a monopole tower and equipment shed. The size of the shed was approximately 100-120 square feet with the monopole occupying approximately 6 square feet at the base. Asked why NexTel was not considering the elementary school property, Mr. Parsons explained that the antennae or dish located on the tower needed to be positioned at a particular azimuth or angle in order to transmit or receive transmissions from other towers. If the tower were located at the school site the dish azimuth would be pointed right into a hill limiting the tower's ability to transmit or receive. Mr. Parsons explained that in order to locate a tower on municipal property he would need to negotiate a long-term lease agreement with the Town. It was explained that included in a lease agreement would be provisions for a bond that NexTel would post to cover the cost of dismantling the tower in the future. The Board agreed that a long-term lease would be necessary, but that a warrant article would need to be included on the Town warrant for approval by the voters. The Board asked Mr. Parsons to supply copies of past lease agreements that would in turn be submitted to Town Counsel for review and modification. Mr. Parson's agreed to do so.

Selectmen's Issues

Labor Contract

Discussion concerning the recent labor negotiations with the firefighters ensued. It was explained that the Board had established bargaining parameters that sought to limit the amount of salary increases in the contract to no more than 3% per year during the life of the contract. The total dollar amount of the wage increase, as proposed by the Board for the 3-year contract, was approximately \$27,800. The firefighters proposal called for an increase of approximately \$31,400. In a compromise proposal the firefighters offered to remove longevity pay from the contract. The total amount of longevity pay during the life of the contract was calculated at \$3,600. Subtracting longevity pay from the firefighters' proposal of \$31,400 brought the total dollar increase down to approximately \$27,800. The TA explained that North Hampton was somewhat unique from other Towns because it had a qualification component tied to the wage scale, which ensured that employees needed to be well trained in order to advance in the system. Merit and not longevity was the criteria on which advancement was now based. Mr. Lagassa made a motion to accept the newly negotiated labor contract with the firefighters. Mr. Steiner seconded the motion. The voter was unanimous and so moved.

Records Committee / Management

Mr. Steiner discussed the formation of a records committee to follow-up on the recommendations of the *Inlook Group* concerning the Town's records management system. The TA was directed to look into creating a line item within the budget for records management. The idea of inserting a \$1,000 amount was discussed with no decisions being made at the time. The TA agreed to look at the chart of accounts and create a line item for the budget for records management.

Selectmen's Meeting
23 November 1998
7:00pm

Warrant Article for Tennis Courts

The Board discussed the Recreation Commissions request to insert warrant article in the Town warrant in the amount of \$15,000 for replacing the tennis courts. The Board agreed that it was a good idea, and acknowledged that delaying the funding would only lead to an increase in costs later.

Dead Cow Burial

Mr. Lagassa expressed his dislike for beating a dead horse, but he reported that a constituent had inquired about the legality of burying a dead cow in a field. It was also reported that the local veterinarian was contacted about the issue and he had reported that he was unaware of any trouble with the procedure so long as burial was not near a drinking well.

Questions & Answers

Paul Cuetara explained the reason for the poor print quality on the tax bills. It was the age of the paper forms that were used for the printing of the bills. The forms degraded over time if not kept at a specific temperature and relative humidity.

Mr. Cuetara, as the new planning board chair, outlined some of his goals for the planning board. He noted that there was great need of record management and that the assistance of a part-time clerk was necessary to help carry out the work of the planning board. The part-time clerk would help to file, order, and sort through all of the accumulated planning board materials of the last few decades and bring order to the chaotic state of those records. The clerk would also be responsible for registering plans at the county registrar's office. Mr. Cuetara believed that the position would lead to better tracking of files, records and customer service if a position were available to perform such a function. Mr. Cuetara also thought it a good idea for the various Town boards to get together for a work session that would focus on more clearly defining the roles of the various boards and committees. The Selectmen agreed that it was a good start by the new chair. The Board felt that the combination of an assessing clerk and planning/zoning secretary made good sense. It was agreed that the Town had grown and that there was a lot of additional work, which because of the small staff size, was not being completed in a timely fashion.

The Board discussed the frequency of Board meetings in light of the holiday season. It was decided to meet on December 7th and the 21st, but that any additional meetings would be scheduled as needed.

There being no further questions to come before the Board a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The public meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10pm. Mr. Steiner made the motion to convene in non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) to discuss a personnel issue. Mr. Lagassa seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

Respectfully,

Russell McAllister
Town Administrator