

Selectmen's Minutes
28 June 1999
7:00pm

The regularly scheduled Selectmen's meeting was called to order by the chair, George Lagassa at 7:00pm. Those present included Jack Steiner, (Selectman), and Russell McAllister (Town Administrator). Allen Hines was on an excused absence due to business.

The Selectmen reviewed the meeting minutes of June 14th. Mr. Steiner made the motion to accept the regular minutes of June 14th. Mr. Lagassa seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

The selectmen reviewed correspondence and/or signed:

- a. Minutes - June 14th
- b. Payroll
- c. Manifest
- d. Fire Fighter's contract - Board signatures
- e. DOT - William Hickey (Driveway Permit extension)
- f. Coakley minutes
- g. PUC - HWW rate increase request July 15th 10am
- h. Media One Correspondence (new channel lineup)
- i. DES - Landfill Closure Grant
- j. Property abatement - Carter & Margaret Bishop
- k. Congdon Real Estate - purchase town owned land

The TA presented a property abatement request by Carter & Margaret Bishop dated June of 1999. The TA explained that the deadline for filing the application was March 1st. The Bishop's impetus for filing originated from a change of address request initiated by the Bishop's with the former Tax Collector. The request for address change was never acted upon and tax bills were subsequently mailed to the Bishop's out of state address. The Bishop's tax bill was therefore received late and resulted in interest penalties. The wrong address and lateness of receipt of the tax bill prompted the Bishop's to file for abatement of interest on their tax bill. The TA noted that all tax bills are sent with address forwarding and return receipt. The additional cost of postage also insures that any new forwarding address is mailed back to the tax collector. Mr. Lagassa noted that the Bishops had owned the property since 1994 and had a record of paying previous tax bills and that they were familiar with the Town's semi annual tax billing. After further discussion wherein it was agreed that ownership of property also carried with it the responsibility for paying property taxes, Mr. Hines made the motion to deny the abatement request. Mr. Steiner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

The Board next reviewed an elderly exemption request for Elizabeth Jewel who qualified for the 80 years of age and older exemption. Her son presented the request on her behalf. The request was filed late because her son, Mr. Jewel, was unaware of the exemption. To allow the exemption to be implemented during the current tax year required action by the Board. Mr. Steiner made the motion to approve the exemption for Ms. Jewel. Mr. Hines seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

The Board briefly reviewed an offer tendered by a real estate firm on behalf of a third party to purchase town owned land. The property was taken by tax deed some years ago. An offer of \$11,100 was tendered on a land locked parcel consisting of approximately 4 acres. Other conditions of the sale listed by the seller included that the assessed value be no more than \$11,000. Howard Promer (Town Assessor) reviewed comparable prices of other properties and made a recommendation. The Board authorized the TA to negotiate the best deal possible and return with the details for review and final approval by the Board. The TA agreed to do so.

North Hampton Sustainable Development

Robert Neville

Mr. Neville began his presentation by recapping the results of the Little River Watershed Project. The project was a citizen driven process that looked at the long-term social, economic and environmental sustainability of North Hampton. Land use conditions within the watershed were identified and mapped. A subsequent build-out analysis was performed. Utilizing current land use regulations development within the watershed was projected into the future including the goals crafted by the participants. Some of those goals included a Town center that was more pedestrian accessible. Green spaces and conservation easements along the Little River were linked together to form walking paths and bike trails that would form an alternative transportation network for in Town use. It was noted that development within the watershed will ultimately impact the conditions for water, open space, recreation, habitat, housing, economic development, and transportation alternatives for in Town. The goals of the pilot study were to ask citizens what they envisioned the optimum conditions to be for above mentioned. Mr. Neville explained that he was now a consultant for Wolfe & Mason and that on invitation of Mr. Steiner he had developed a scope of services for performing a similar study on a Town wide basis. The Little River Watershed Project (LRWP) looked at 46% of the Town, but did not address the remaining part of Town. The cost of the proposal was 25k. While the LRWP was funded by a USDA grant for 20k (10k match from the Town), the total costs were approximately 55k. The additional costs were not derived by actual expenditures, those additional costs were calculated by service hours provided for GIS analysis, modeling, photo interpretation of aerial photographs and the like. These technical services were provided for free by USDA Forest Service personnel. Mr. Hines commented that longer range planning with an emphasis on how to preserve the Town's rural character and community values was necessary. Mr. Steiner agreed and suggested that the LRWP results be included in the Master Plan. Mr. Steiner saw the LRWP as a tool that could be used to avoid the pitfalls and associated costs of suburban sprawl. Mr. Lagassa agreed, but wondered about the mechanics of implementation of the plan if accepted and approved by the Town. Further discussion of topics such as "new urbanism" and "sprawl" ensued. The Board thanked Mr. Neville for his presentation. Further action on the proposal was tabled pending further review.

Selectmen Issues

Education Funding Lawsuit

Mr. Lagassa provided a brief synopsis of activity associated with the lawsuit. Mr. Lagassa explained that a decision whether or not to join the lawsuit, had been postponed until the full Board was available to vote on the issue. Mr. Lagassa commented that he supports the coalition communities' lawsuit, but felt that the specific intent of the appropriation needed to be addressed as well. Board members agreed that there were inequities in the statewide system of assessment that adversely affected North Hampton. Board members expressed concern over the use of the education money transferred from North Hampton to recipient communities that went to lower tax rates, rather than funding schools. Mr. Hines noted that the Board was not a legislative body and did not make the decision regarding the adoption of tax systems. However, he stressed that NHNH must be taxed proportionately and uniformly as proscribed under the state constitution. The current system does not, in the opinion of the Board, meet the constitutional requirements. Mr. Lagassa explained that the Board was prepared to support the technical aspects of the lawsuit, which will fund the equalization study that will be performed by Almy, Gloudemans, Jacobs & Denne. Mr. Steiner made the motion to encumber 10k from the current fiscal year's legal budget (4153 account group), and carry that amount into the next fiscal year's budget, for the purpose of funding the equalization study portion of the coalition communities' lawsuit. Mr. Hines seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved. In a related action Mr. Steiner made a motion to issue a check in the amount of \$3,000 to fund the equalization study. The remaining amount (\$7,000) to be paid upon receipt and review of the study plan submitted by the firm of Almy, Gloudemans, Jacobs & Denne. Mr. Hines seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

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Mr. Steiner briefed the Board on the Planning Board's appointments to the Heritage Commission. Mr. Steiner explained that a previous act of Town meeting proscribed the method of choosing the Heritage Commission membership. The Planning Board made appointments to the Heritage Commission and the Board of Selectmen subsequently reviewed and approved those appointments. Mr. Steiner noted that after a complete list of membership was developed the Board would act upon the planning board appointments.

Gail Walters was publicly recognized and complimented for her contributions and efforts in organizing Old Home Day activities. The Board thanked Ms. Walters for her service and noted that Old Home Days was a great success.

Mr. Hines reviewed the permitting aspects of the fire and safety issues associated with recent events at Centennial Hall. Mr. Hines stressed the importance of the plan review responsibilities of both the Fire Department and Building Inspector. The respective responsibilities entail plan review only. Town employees and departments do not provide building design services. Design services are the purview of architects and builders. Appropriate Town employees are trained to use their knowledge of building and fire codes to appraise the relative health and safety risks of building designs. Knowledge of building and fire codes does not an architect make.

Mr. Lagassa expressed interest in having the Police department begin their work force analysis. He reminded other Board members that they would need to review the Chief's report by mid year in order to make a recommendation to add, or not to add another officer to the department. Mr. Lagassa wondered about the appropriateness of having a citizen commission charged with developing the information. The TA suggested that the Police Chief produce the report because it was part of his managerial responsibilities. A citizen's commission would be the appropriate body to review the report. The TA agreed to get together with the Chief to review data collection and analysis methods and report back to the Board concerning the status of the product.

Questions & Comments

Gail Walter commented about the pigeon waste on the Town Hall Tower and the amount of poison ivy along the road and whether the Town could spray round-up to get rid of it.

There being no further business to come before the Board the public meeting adjourned at approximately 9:25pm. Mr. Hines made a motion to convene in non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) to discuss a personnel issue and employee compensation. Mr. Steiner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

Respectfully,

Russell McAllister
Town Administrator