

Selectmen's Minutes
1 November 1999
7:00pm

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

The Selectmen reviewed the meeting minutes of October 18th. Mr. Steiner made the motion to accept the regular minutes of October 18th. Mr. Lagassa seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

The selectmen reviewed correspondence and/or signed:

Administration/Business

- a. Minutes - October 18th
- b. Payroll
- c. Manifest
- d. Property Tax Abatement - James & Donna Wilbur (1209.22)
- e. Veteran's Exemption - Ed Berry
- f. DES - Little River Salt Marsh wetland permits

The TA briefed the Board on the status of electing planning board members this year. A letter from the town attorney indicated that all 7 members were to be elected at once. The statute provides for the initial staggering of terms so that subsequent annual elections fill only three positions. Therefore, the March 2000 election will have specific terms. Three positions will be for three-year terms, two positions will be for two year terms, and two other positions for a one year term. Candidates for election must specify which position they are running for. At the end of each expiring term that position will convert to a three-year term.

Selectmen Budget Review

The Board reviewed those budget accounts that had increases. Within the General Government account group, the Town Clerk budget increased approximately \$3,000. Voter Registration was up approximately \$1,300 due to the number of elections occurring in the next fiscal year. Tax Collection was up a little more than \$13,000. It was noted that benefits, retirement, training and tax collector certification costs were now part of the account and that those costs represented the increase over last year's budget of \$29,600. The TA explained that the increase was offset by the decrease in the amount of overlay the Town now needed to raise. The amount of overlay previously required to cover the costs of abatements was \$65,000. The amount of overlay to be raised through taxes to cover the costs of abatements was now \$35,000. Mr. Steiner asked if the decrease in overlay costs was due to better tax administration. The TA replied that it was and that those savings will continue to accrue year after year. The Treasures budget was up from approximately \$1,800 due to a salary increase of \$800 and the additional requests for training and subscriptions. Mr. Lagassa supported the idea of training and believed that it was well worth the cost. The Planning Board budget increased approximately \$16,000 dollars because of the addition of a part-time planning and zoning board secretary. The salary for the position had been removed from the TA's budget and transferred to the planning board budget. A new line item for the Heritage Commission had been included in the PB budget to cover postage and office supplies. The Code Enforcement budget also increased by \$8,000 due to salary increases for the Building Inspector. It was noted that Paul Charron wears the three hats of Building Inspector, Code Enforcement and Health Officer. The Board agreed that Paul was doing a fine job. Debt Service was up per the bond requirement. The principla payment increased \$5,000 from last year's total of \$40,000. The interest portion had decreased \$3,500 from last year's total of \$25,000. Warrant Articles included \$22,500 for a new cruiser, \$2,000 for a heritage commission brochure, \$15,000 for tennis court reconstruction, and \$35,000 for transfer to capital reserve for fire truck

replacement. The total budget was up 3% over last year's total of \$2,811,942 to this year's proposed total of \$2,908,011. The Board agreed to continue reviewing the budget.

Mr. Steiner talked about the request from the Recreation Commission for a full time director for the program. He noted that there were a number of issues that needed addressing. The impact of an additional position on the organizational structure, the additional space needs and the relationship of a recreation Director to the Youth Association.. The Board did agree that the change would be significant and that there was genuine concern that the program was getting too large for volunteers to manage and direct alone. The Board agreed that the idea should be flushed out in more detail and that a warrant article may be the best way to gauge public support.

The Board briefly discussed the possibility of including a warrant article for road reclamation. There were some concerns regarding the timing of road reclamation and the potential increase in traffic as a result of the Route 1 road work in Hampton planned for next year.

Selectmen's Concerns

Mr. Lagassa reviewed the status of the PUC rate case and the retention of the professional services in the case. Mr. Lagassa noted that at the last meeting the Board had not authorized an increase in the \$2,000 cap for Dr. Silkman's services. Mr. Lagassa had since researched the issue and talked with the Town Attorney regarding the merits of Dr. Silkman's contribution. Several issues raised by Dr. Silkman concerned the depreciation schedule used by the HWW and the relevancy of the contribution of cost by Salisbury to the HWW from the perspective of both entities existing as subsidiaries of American Water Works. Mr. Lagassa noted his initial disappointment with the slow response of Hampton and Dr. Silkman in the case. However, Dr. Silkman had attended the recent PUC hearing and raised the above mentioned issues. Mr. Lagassa believed that Dr. Silkman was likely to bring greater credibility to the Town's case by raising issues that were not easily raised by others. Mr. Steiner asked what it was that convinced Mr. Lagassa of the appropriateness of hiring Dr. Silkman. The issue in question was a rate case before the PUC and the PUC would make a determination on the merits of the increase based upon supporting evidence of costs. Mr. Lagassa noted that cost issues were comprised of complex and sophisticated financial data and assumptions. Dr. Silkman's work in the field brought credibility and expertise to the issue that the Town would need to safeguard the interests of ratepayers residing in town. The additional expertise was well worth the additional \$3,000 cost. Mr. Steiner made the motion to increase the cap from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Mr. Hines seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

Questions & Comments

Mr. Henry Mixter commented that the Town now had the wetland permits necessary to move ahead with the Little River Salt Marsh restoration project. Mr. Mixter was excited about the progression of the project and was hoping to develop a timeline of events associated with construction and restoration activities. Mr. Mixter queried the Board about their thoughts regarding a warrant article that raised money for the conservation fund to support the acquisition of conservation land throughout town. The money might also serve as matching funds for other grants. Mr. Hines noted that the conservation commission already had money from the land use change tax that they were not utilizing. Mr. Hines expressed concern that a resident who paid tax money for the warrant article may not receive any benefit from it prior to moving out of town, particularly if the taxpayer resided in town for a short time. Mr. Mixter noted that there was a linkage to the Recreation Commission in regards to acquiring land for fields. Mr. Lagassa agreed that there was linkage between the two, but that the Board viewed that particular issue from a broader budgetary perspective..

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There being no further business to come before the Board the public meeting adjourned at approximately 9:05pm. Mr Lagassa made the motion to convene in non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) to discuss personnel issues. Mr. Steiner seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and so moved.

Respectfully,

Russell McAllister
Town Administrator