

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES - FEBRUARY 23, 2009**

7:00 p.m. - Selectmen's Meeting Room, 63 Main Street, Northborough, MA

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dawn Rand, Chairman  
Jeff Amberson, Vice Chairman  
Leslie Rutan, Clerk  
Fran Bakstran  
William Pantazis

\*Pledge of Allegiance

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 9, 2009 REGULAR MEETING**

Selectman Amberson moved the Board vote to accept the Minutes of the February 9, 2009 Regular Meeting; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**7:00 p.m.      JUNE HUBBARD-WARD, TREASURER/COLLECTOR  
AND KEN LOMBARDI, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS  
SPECIALIST FROM EBS FORAN**

- Presentation on Preliminary GASB 45 Study.
- Discussion of MGL 32B, Sections 18 & 18A.

Treasurer/Collector June Hubbard-Ward and Employee Benefit Specialist Ken Lombardi from EBS Foran were present. Ms. Hubbard-Ward made a presentation on the results of the preliminary GASB 45 Study. She informed the Board that the Town was required to conduct an actuarial study in FY09 to determine our cost for post employment benefits, including the cost of medical and life insurance for retirees.

Ms. Hubbard-Ward stated that the results of this study indicate that the estimated accrued liability for the Town's active and retired employees is significantly higher than that of comparable municipalities. One of the factors that account for this higher than average liability is that Northborough has not adopted Chapter 32B, Section 18 or 18A. By not doing so, our retired employees are allowed to remain on the higher cost HMO plans, thereby driving up the cost of the health insurance premiums.

Following Ms. Hubbard-Ward's recommendation that the Town consider the adoption of Chapter 32B, Section 18 or 18A in order to reduce the cost of health insurance premiums, Mr. Lombardi then made a presentation on Chapter 32B, Sections 18 & 18A.

Mr. Lombardi spoke about the two separate scenarios between Sections 18 and Section 18A. He informed the Board that if the Town were to accept Section 18, all retirees will be required to leave their retirement plans and change to Medicare. It is projected that the Town's health care budget could be reduced by about \$200,000 with this option. If the Town were to accept Section 18A, all existing retirees would be grandfathered, and only future retirees after its acceptance would be affected. Both would have a favorable impact on the GASB 45 evaluation. He cautioned the Board that although Section 18 would result in the maximum savings, it is extremely complicated and emotional for those retirees that will be affected by it.

**JUNE HUBBARD-WARD CONT. . .**

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that Health Insurance alone is expected to increase \$450,000 for FY10. Mr. Coderre added that because of this unfunded liability, it's our fiscal responsibility to address this issue. He agreed that this will be a very personal and emotional issue for our retirees and he stressed the need to be sensitive to that fact. With that being said, informational meetings are being scheduled on March 10<sup>th</sup> for retirees and March 17<sup>th</sup> for active employees. The goal is to make plan design changes for our health insurance that will not simply shift the premium costs, but reduce them for both the Town and its employees.

In response to a question by Selectman Rutan, Ms. Hubbard-Ward stated that the Town budget for health insurance includes 394 employees, including both active and retirees – with an estimated cost of \$4.6M for FY10.

**7:20 p.m.      KATHY JOUBERT, TOWN PLANNER**  
**RICK LIEF, PLANNING BOARD CHAIRMAN**  
Presentation on Zoning Bylaw Project.

Planning Board Chairman Rick Lief informed the Board that the proposed changes will bring certain areas of our zoning bylaws in line with the Town's current development needs. The changes will also serve as a better guide to the development of our town center. Based on comments received over time from residents and from information developed during the completion of the Community Development Plan in 2004, it became apparent that our zoning provisions should allow for a mix of business and residential uses in the business zones and in residential areas that are near the town center. The proposed changes include:

- Renaming the Business A District to the Downtown Business District, allowing small business sizes, allowing more options for mixed business/residential uses, and providing better pedestrian access.
- Renaming the Business B District to the Business East and Business West Districts, allowing medium business sizes in the East and larger business sizes in the West, and allowing more options for mixed business/residential uses.
- Creating a Business South District to bring the zoning in line with business uses existing in the Lawrence/Otis Street area of town.
- Eliminating the Industrial B District and replacing it with the Downtown Neighborhood District to better reflect the residential nature of the district while allowing limited, small business uses and limited multi-family housing.
- Creating a Main Street Residential District in a small area which abuts the Downtown Business District to allow limited, small business uses and limited multi-family housing.
- Creating new zoning provisions for the Southwest Cutoff area to bring the zoning in line with the commercial uses being developed in the southern part of the area and the residential uses existing in the northern part of the area.

**ZONING BYLAW DISCUSSION CONT. . .**

Town Planner Kathy Joubert spoke about the importance of community involvement and informed the Board that community meetings to discuss these proposed changes will be held in February and March. Notices of these meetings will be placed on the Town's website, in local newspapers, and letters will be sent to the residents and business owners in each district.

**7:50 p.m.      JOHN CAMPBELL, OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE CHAIR  
TODD HELWIG, CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Presentation on possible purchase of 481 Howard Street.

Open Space Committee Chairman John Campbell and Conservation Commission Member Todd Helwig were present. Mr. Campbell informed the Board that the Open Space Committee has maintained a list of parcels for potential acquisition regarding open space and natural resource protection, including nineteen acres of land located at 481 Howard Street. This land directly abuts Conservation Commission land on Mt. Pisgah and the addition of this parcel would add to the wildlife corridor in that area. The trails in this area are widely used by Northborough residents. Mr. Campbell stated that funding for this purchase will be provided by the Conservation Commission Fund.

Mr. Helwig added that the Conservation Commission voted unanimous to support this. Selectman Amberson, a former member of the Conservation Commission spoke in favor of this as well.

Chairman Rand clarified that the Board of Selectmen is only being asked to place this item as an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant in order to put this conservation restriction on the land. The authority to purchase the land does not require Town Meeting or Board of Selectmen approval.

Selectman Amberson moved the Board vote to place an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to see if the Town will authorize the Board of Selectmen to grant a perpetual conservation restriction on land located at 481 Howard Street, Assessors Map 12 Parcel 2 in accordance with the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 44B Sec 12(a) and M.G.L. Chapter 184 Sec 31-33 and to enter into all agreements and execute any and all instruments as may be necessary on behalf of the Town of Northborough to affect said conservation restriction; Selectman Rutan seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**REPORTS**William Pantazis

- No report.

Fran Bakstran

- Noted that the Interview Committee met with applicants for the Wind Committee. See below for further discussion and appointments.
- Announced the various Boards, Committees and Commissions that have openings.

Leslie Rutan, Clerk

- Noted that the high school students are excited about the Wind Committee and are motivated to learn more and get involved.
- Announced the recent appointment of Wendy Ricciardi to the position of Assistant Town Accountant. Mr. Coderre added that Ms. Ricciardi is a long-time employee of the Town and was recently working part-time in the Treasurer/Collector's Office. By making this appointment, the Town was able to reduce the number of staff in the Treasurer/Collector's Office and reduce the hours of the Assistant Town Accountant from 40 to 30, while at the same time offering a part-time employee additional hours.
- Extended her sympathies to the high school colleagues, students and to the family of High School Music Director Dennis Wrenn, who passed away while on a trip to Greece with the High School Jazz Band. Spoke about the impact that Mr. Wrenn and his music teachings had on so many Northborough and Southborough students and stressed the importance of music in our schools.

Jeff Amberson, Vice Chairman

- Extended his condolences to the Algonquin community and to the family of Dennis Wrenn.

Dawn Rand, Chairman

- No report.

John Coderre, Town Administrator

- Informed the Board that several Town employees have recently organized a group known as the Wellness Committee. Announced that the Committee is holding a Community Blood Drive on February 27<sup>th</sup> from 1-7pm at the Trinity Church. Mr. Coderre commended the employees that serve on this Committee and extended his appreciation for all that they have done for the community and their fellow employees.

**WIND COMMITTEE DISCUSSION ON ALTERNATE MEMBERS**

Under her report, Selectman Bakstran informed the Board that the Interview Committee met with thirteen applicants for the Wind Committee. Given the workload and the interest from the community, both the Interview Committee and the Town Engineer would like to request that the Board add two alternate positions to the seven-member Committee.

Selectman Bakstran moved the Board vote to add two alternate positions to the seven-member Wind Committee; Selectman Pantazis seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**WIND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

Selectman Bakstran moved the Board vote to appoint the following individuals to the Wind Committee; Selectman Pantazis seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Joseph McNamara	three-year term
Robert Giles	three-year term
Edward Cahill	two-year term
Richard Kane	two-year term
William Halter	two-year term
Ron Parker	one-year term
Richard Jones	one-year term

Selectman Bakstran moved the Board vote to appoint the following individuals as Alternate Members to the Wind Committee; Selectman Pantazis seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Maggie Harling	three-year term
John Cragin	three-year term

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Brian Smith of 97 Main Street and David Murphy of 43 Main Street were present in the audience. Mr. Smith informed the Board that he and a group of concerned citizens have formed a group called *Citizens against Northboro Gridlock*. Mr. Smith expressed the group's concern about the proposed zoning bylaw changes and asked the Board how to best make their presentation against them. At the suggestion of the Board, that he and/or his group attend one of the informational meetings hosted by the Planning Board, Mr. Smith expressed his opinion about the lack of advertisement for these meetings.

Mr. Coderre clarified that notices of these meetings will be placed on the Town's website, in local newspapers, and letters will be sent to the residents and business owners in each district.

Selectman Bakstran stressed the fact that the main reason these informational meetings are held is to hear the concerns of the public and to address them if appropriate. She strongly encouraged them to attend one of the upcoming meetings and make their concerns known prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

**UPDATE ON PRELIMINARY FY10 BUDGET**

Following a brief review of the steps being taken to complete FY09 in the black, Mr. Coderre provided the Board with an update on the preliminary FY10 Budget. He informed the Board that in order to maintain the current level of municipal services for FY10, a 7.8% increase would be required. Unfortunately, the budgets for the Municipal Budget, the Northborough K-8 Schools Budget, and the Assessment for the Algonquin Regional High School will only be allowed to increase 2.3%. He noted that for the municipal side, this represents a \$350,000 increase. Health Insurance alone, as it stands right now is expected to increase by \$450,000.

**UPDATE ON PRELIMINARY FY10 BUDGET CONT. . .**

Mr. Coderre reviewed the following items that are being considered when preparing the FY10 Budget:

- ❑ Modifications to the existing Debt Schedules.
- ❑ Freeze two DPW positions that became vacant during FY09.
- ❑ Reduce staffing in Treasurer/Collector's Office and Accounting Office.
- ❑ Make significant reductions in the Library Budget. As a result, we may lose state library aid and it could affect our inter-library loan program if a state waiver is not granted.
- ❑ Maximize revolving fund accounts.
- ❑ Defer the purchase of police cruisers.
- ❑ Reduce departmental training and travel budgets.
- ❑ Eliminate all merit increases for non-union employees as well as the Northborough Municipal Employees Association employees.
- ❑ Work with various civic groups in an attempt to buy down operating budget increases. For example, the Friends of the Senior Center will supplement the FY10 operating budget for the new senior center by donating \$60,000 towards an expected increase of \$80,000.
- ❑ Infuse \$700,000 of one-time free cash reserves into the FY10 Budget.

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that with all of the above, there remains a shortfall of about \$400,000. He stressed that the only way that the Town will survive budgeting for FY10 and FY11 is to take a very strong approach on making the plan design changes in health insurance that was talked about earlier this evening. He reminded the Board that the State is forcing communities to make these changes by threatening to cut future State Aid if changes are not implemented. He assured the Board that he will continue to work towards an option that will ultimately close the \$400,000 budget gap. All active employees and retirees will be fully educated. Mr. Coderre stated that he is cautiously optimistic and hopeful that the cost savings that will come from the plan design changes will not only save the Town money, but will extend down to the employees themselves.

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that he will continue to provide updates on the ongoing budget preparations. If the budget gap of \$400,000 cannot be closed through the plan design changes in health insurance, he warned the Board to expect some serious discussions on where additional cuts must be made.

In response to a question from Selectman Rutan, Mr. Coderre stated that he will work on the process of trying to make the plan design changes and looking at where additional cuts can potentially be made concurrently. He anticipates going to Town Meeting with the plan design change savings budgeted. If the needed changes to health insurance are not able to be implemented, and the budget savings not realized, then comparable cuts will need to be made.

**UPDATE ON PRELIMINARY FY10 BUDGET CONT. . .**

Mr. Coderre ended his presentation praising the Town's employees for their dedication and desire to deliver the highest quality of service to this community.

Members of the Board thanked Mr. Coderre for his diligent work in preparing the FY10 Budget and for his update this evening.

**REVIEW OF DRAFT TOWN MEETING WARRANT SUMMARY**

Mr. Coderre presented to the Board the draft warrant for the Annual Town Meeting and reviewed each article in detail.

**LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

Mr. Coderre informed the Board that the entire Legislative Delegation has been invited to attend the Board's March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting. Prior to this invitation, all department heads were asked to provide their input on what they thought should be the legislative priorities. The information from their input, along with input from the Manager's Association and the Massachusetts Municipal Association was then compiled and included in the draft legislative priorities letter that was presented to the Board for their review this evening.

In response to a request from Chairman Rand, Mr. Coderre spoke about the overly restrictive and out-dated procurement laws and how they affect the Town of Northborough. Following the Town's number one priority of gaining greater control over health insurance, the second priority is to modernize the purchasing and procurement laws by raising the threshold and standardizing requirements for all projects under \$100,000.

The Board thanked Mr. Coderre for his efforts in this regard and agreed to send the legislative priorities letter to the Governor and Legislative Delegation prior to their attendance at the Board's March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**APPROVAL/EXECUTION OF CEMETERY DEED A800**

Selectman Pantazis moved the Board vote to approve and execute Cemetery Deed A800; Selectman Bakstran seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Selectman Amberson moved the Board vote to adjourn; Selectman Pantazis seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane M. Wackell  
Executive Assistant to the  
Board of Selectmen