

TOWN OF PLAISTOW
DELIBERATIVE SESSION
JANUARY 30, 2010

The meeting took place on a cold clear Saturday with about 50 people in attendance plus about 24 different board members. Barry Sargent opened the meeting at 9:03am with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

He then went on to tell the assembly that it was his last Deliberative Session as he did not sign up to run again for Moderator. He explained that he has served 23 years and was probably going to retire from his regular job next year. He stated that it's time to move on. He first ran in 1986 against Cliff Cook, who had served for around 30 years, and lost by a landslide. Barry ran because Cliff's health was failing and within a year Cliff had to resign and Barry was appointed. Barry received a standing ovation from the body in appreciation of his many great years of service.

Next, Barry mentioned the many hand-outs that everyone should have. He discussed that he would be using Roberts Rules of Order. Then he asked non-voters to sit on the left side of the room and read the names of the non-voters who wished to speak. A motion was made by John Sherman to allow them to speak and seconded by Bob Gray. A vote was taken and all were allowed to speak.

Two of the hand-outs were explained, "Small Wind Energy Systems Ordinance" and "Discharge and Connection Stormwater Ordinance". They will be handed out to the voters on Election Day to aid and inform them in making decisions when voting on the zoning articles.

Barry then began the business part of the meeting by reading the Invitation to the Inhabitants to join the Deliberative Session and again to complete the meeting by voting on March 9, 2010. Then Barry read each Article.

P-10-A: Motion: Martha Sumner, second: John Sherman, presented: by Kristin Lewis-Savage.

Kristin mentioned to the public that they would notice that actual expenses for 2009 are lower than the budgeted amount for 2009. The amount of the 2010 Budget is back to the budgeted amount and not lowered. With careful spending in 2009 many items were put off and in 2010 the Town will move forward with those items. She reminded the public that we can't keep putting things off as doing so would impact our streets and other public safety issues.

It was also mentioned that salaries are down in all departments due to the fact that in 2009 we had a 53rd pay week. The total 2010 Budget is down 1.1% from the 2009 Budget.

Bob Gray put forth an amendment to add \$30,000 to be used for additional snow and ice removal. Due to the stormy January a large amount of the 2010 Snow Removal Budget was already spent. The amendment was seconded by Kristin Lewis-Savage. Bob Gray stated that we spend about \$50,000 per month for snow removal which breaks down to about \$1500/hour.

Jason Hoch stated that we can't add money to a specific line, only to the bottom line of the budget which would make the Total Budget \$7,328,045.

Mr. Bell asked what happened to the money if it wasn't needed for snow removal and was told by John Sherman, that it would roll into the General Fund.

A vote was taken to accept the amendment and passed.

P-10-A will appear with the amended bottom line budget total of \$7,328,045.

P-10-B: Motion: Kristin Lewis-Savage, second: Michelle Curran, presented: by Chief Steve Savage.

Public Safety Building was built in 1985; space and security issues are a big concern. Different locations for a new Police Department have been discussed, as well as looking at a stand alone building at the same location.

A vote was taken and P-10-B will appear as written.

P-10-C: Motion: John Sherman, second: Dan Poliquin, presented: by John Sherman.

In the past we have put \$62,000 into the fund, but nothing was put into the fund in 2009, therefore this year the amount was increased to \$66,000. The next anticipated purchase will be a dump truck in 2011.

John Sherman amended the Article to show the correct fund balance in the Intent to be \$50,566 as of January 30, 2010. Seconded by Kristin Lewis-Savage.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-C will appear as amended.

P-10-D: Motion: Bob Gray, second: Michelle Curran, presented: by Bob Gray.

An amendment was presented by John Sherman to update the balances in the Intent:
\$308,303.39 (Balance as of January 30, 2010)

\$ 36,039.56 (Balance as of January 30, 2010)

\$140,756.83 (Balance as of January 30, 2010)

The amendment was seconded by Dan Poliquin.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-D will appear as amended.

P-10-E: Motion: Michelle Curran, second: Dan Poliquin, presented: by Michelle Curran.

No questions or comments.

P-10-E will appear as written.

P-10-F: Motion: Joyce Ingerson, second: John Sherman, presented: by John Sherman.

Cost to replace the fire vehicles is estimated at \$2,287,500 over the next 25 years. Putting away \$88,000 will level out the tax burden.

John Sherman amended the Article to show the correct fund balance in the Intent to be \$126,653.55 as of January 30, 2010. He explained the big increase is due to the fact that money, which was approved in the 2009 election, goes into the fund at the end of each year and has since been moved into the fund. A second was made by Dan Poliquin.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-F will appear as amended.

P-10-G: Motion: Dan Poliquin, second: Martha Sumner, presented: by Charles “Buzzy” Blinn.

John Sherman asked to amend the Article to show the correct fund balance, \$49,679.43 for Conservation Fund and \$31,996.80 for Forestry Fund, both as of January 30, 2010. A second was made by Michele Curran.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-G will appear as amended.

P-10-H: Motion: Dan Poliquin, second: Bob Gray, presented: by Dan Poliquin.

It was explained that the \$45,000 was the total cost including installation. It was discovered during the 2008 ice storm that the current generator was not working. In order to maintain Town Government a generator is needed to run heat, water, elevator as well as computers and phones.

Kristin Lewis-Savage explained that having a generator would create a center for the residents. John Sherman stated there is not a generator at the schools to create a center there. Sean Fitzgerald stated that the Town will look to add generators to the Library and hopefully the school as well. Barry Sargent asked if residents could sleep in Town Hall if needed and was told yes.

P-10-H will appear on the ballot as written.

P-10-I: Motion: John Sherman, second: Kristin Lewis-Savage, presented: by John Sherman.

Funds were spent in 2009, passing this Article will bring the balance back to around \$25,000. He submitted an amendment to show the actual fund balance of \$21,095.97 as of January 30, 2010. The amendment was seconded by Michele Curran.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-I will appear as amended.

P-10-J: Motion: Michelle Curran, second: Dan Poliquin, presented: by Michelle Curran.

Dan Hooper asked about a fund balance, as one wasn't listed. Sean Fitzgerald stated that in P-10-D, the funds are being spent on the water line extension. Jill Senter inquired if this will be spent too or is it to rebuild the fund. Sean Fitzgerald replied that it would rebuild the funds for future projects.

P-10-J will appear on the ballot as written.

P-10-K: Motion: Michelle Curran, second: Jill Senter, presented: by Michelle Curran.

Michelle Curran explained that the Town doesn't have all the answers to the many questions surrounding the purchase and exactly what the Town will do with the property. The opportunity to purchase the property came forth only 3 weeks ago, so the Selectmen made a quick decision to put the purchase on the ballot. Some of the Selectmen, Budget Committee and the Conservation Committee felt that the acquisition of the property would be good for the Town to control and own. They admitted that many of them have questions too.

Many people spoke to the pros and cons of acquiring the property.

Some of the pros are:

27 acres of conservation land in the village district;

Land sits attached to 7 acres that the town already owns;

Little river runs thru the property giving us control of much of the river frontage;

Windows and roof of the home are fairly new;

Home is historic, having housed a printing press and a doctor;

Barn is in great condition and is over 8,000 square feet;

Home is over 6,000 square feet and has 2 boilers, 5 bathrooms, hardwood floors and several fireplaces;

Town could opt to sell of the home and barn recouping some of the cost and still retain control and ownership of the conservation lands.

Some of the cons are:

Cost, in a down economy, the Town has tried to keep a very lean budget and then adds this big ticket item to the ballot;

Future maintenance cost;

Heat and electric cost;

Zoning problems with trying to use the property.

Cheryl Hay, daughter of Elizabeth Smith (prior owner of the property), spoke of her mother putting the land into a Conservation Easement in 1995. She stated that many residents didn't know of the conservation lands nor that they could use and enjoy them. She felt that if the Town owned them the word could better be gotten to the residents so that they could enjoy them. She spoke of the history of the home built in 1840 and of what an asset ownership would be to the Town.

Bob Gray didn't feel that the Town needed to buy the property as the easement is rock solid and the lands can't be used for anything other than agricultural.

Jill Senter of the Conservation Committee asked why the Selectmen and Budget Committee didn't choose to offset the cost to the tax payers. They could offer \$100,000 towards the purchase from a fund in their account which has built up over the years. She put forth an amendment to use that money lowering the total to be raised by taxpayers to \$215,392. The amendment was seconded by Dan Hooper. Jill also explained that part of the Conservations Fund, (not mentioned in P-10-G) are monies from current use sales. That fund has around \$95,000 in it and that portion of the total funds is for land purchase.

Dan Hooper raised the fact that if Conservation Funds are used then the Conservation Committee would have a major say in how the land is used and if the Town could sell the house and barn. Michelle Curran, Dan Poliquin and Sean Fitzgerald spoke to his concerns and it was noted that he had a valid statement. They talked about concerns with legalities of selling off the home when the purchase was made in part by Conservation Funds.

Jill Senter stated that she didn't understand their concerns about the Conservation Committee having a say in the use of the property or sale of the home. The Committee has always worked with the Selectmen in trying to do what is best for the Town's people.

Kristin Lewis-Savage felt that the Conservation Funds should not be used. She was concerned that if the Article fails, then if the opportunity comes along to purchase the conservation easement only, the Town could not do so because of the "no means no" law.

Tim Moore wondered if a change in the amendment could make it clear that the Conservation monies were limited to the land purchase only. Questions still came up about if the Article fails can the Town legally go forth and buy the land only with Conservation Funds if Conservation is involved.

Michelle Curran asked if the Article was approved, couldn't the Selectmen then accept a gift of the \$100,000 from the Conservation Committee and use it to lower the tax rate.

A vote was taken on the amendment and it failed.

Dan Poliquin reminded the body that the owner of the property doesn't have to let residents use the land.

Dan Hooper stated that "as a tax payer, voting on something with all the unanswered questions is very upsetting".

Richard Colcord felt that the Town needs to save money, not spend it. He mentioned that the Fire Department roof has had a leak for 5 years.

Dan Poliquin told him the money is there for the roof.

Peter Bealo is in favor of the purchase and felt that the Selectmen should go forward and get some answers and develop plans before the election. Then get the info to the public before they vote, to better inform them.

P-10-K will appear as written.

P-10-L: Motion: Michelle Curran, second: Dan Poliquin, presented: by Ralph Bolduc.

Mr. Bolduc presented an amendment to lower the amount of the increase to \$150 making the total Veteran Credit \$350. Martha Sumner seconded the amendment.

A vote was taken and the amendment passed.

P-10-L will appear as amended.

P-10-M: Article was not read nor discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 1:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryellen Pelletier

Town Clerk