

~ PLYMOUTH BOARD OF SELECTMEN ~

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2013

TOWN HALL MAYFLOWER ROOM

The Selectmen held a meeting on Tuesday, January 8, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall in the Mayflower Room.

Present: Mathew J. Muratore, Chairman
John T. Mahoney, Jr., Vice Chairman
Sergio O. Harnais [arrived 7:25 p.m.]
Belinda A. Brewster
Kenneth A. Tavares

Melissa Arrighi, Town Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Muratore called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Muratore held a moment of silence for two well-known Plymouth residents who served their community as elected leaders – Alba Thompson and Oliver Durrell III. Alba Thompson, he noted, was a schoolteacher and WWII Veteran who was known to many as Plymouth’s first female Selectman, serving on the Board from 1986 to 1992. Oliver Durrell, he said, provided a number of years of service to Plymouth as a Town Meeting Representative for Precinct 12 and as a member of the Industrial Land Study Committee and Plymouth-Carver Aquifer Advisory Committee.

Selectman Tavares spoke further about Mrs. Thompson and Mr. Durrell and the ways by which they brought their unique personalities and perspectives to their work as elected officials and community servants. Mrs. Thompson, he said, will be remembered as a notable Plymouth teacher and citizen who had a remarkable talent for the written word and a resolute sense of duty to her country, community, and family.

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Recent Developments and Property Acquisitions – Town Manager Melissa Arrighi reported that the Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council recently approved two Tax Increment Financing (“TIF”) agreements for the Mirbeau Inn & Spa (at the Pinehills) and Cranberry Crescent projects. In addition, she said, the Town has closed on the following properties that were approved for purchase through Community Preservation funds at the 2012 Fall Town Meeting:

- 25½ Court Street / Greater Plymouth Performing Arts Center – recorded on Dec. 4th
- Quinn Property / 350 acres off Old Sandwich Road – recorded on December 20th
- Weston Property / 19 acres off Center Hill Road – recorded on December 20th
- Harvey Property / 36 acres at Bloody Pond (gift to Town) – recorded on December 21st

Solid Waste – Ms. Arrighi informed the Board that the trial curbside pickup program is set to begin the week of January 7, 2013. Carts were recently distributed at the 14 participating households, she said, and recycling pickups will occur on the first and third Thursdays of the month, starting on January 17, 2013. Ms. Arrighi indicated that staff will hold an internal working session to evaluate the details, assumptions, and potential financial figures with which a budget can be developed for the proposal to maintain one drop-off transfer station (with Pay-As-You-Throw) for the public, if the Board chooses to opt for the curbside pickup program. Vice Chairman Mahoney and Selectman Tavares, she noted, have agreed to participate in this working session. Ms. Arrighi announced that the final presentation on Solid Waste Options will be held during the Selectmen’s meeting of February 12, 2013.

COMMITTEE LIAISON / DESIGNEE UPDATES

Community Preservation Committee – Vice Chairman Mahoney was pleased to report that Burial Hill has been included as one of the five projects that the Community Preservation Committee will bring forth to the 2013 Spring Town Meeting.

County Commissioners’ Meeting – Vice Chairman Mahoney told the Board that he attended the January 7, 2013 meeting of the Plymouth County Commissioners to reiterate the urgency of addressing the environmental issues at the South Street Transfer Station. The Commissioners, he said, allowed him to speak at the end of the meeting, at which time he requested the opportunity for both boards to meet jointly on the matter. Vice Chairman Mahoney reported that County Commission Chairman Dan Pallotta has invited the Board to attend its January 17, 2013 meeting.

Chairman Muratore asked the Selectmen’s Assistant to post a meeting of the full Board for the Plymouth County Commissioners’ meeting of January 17, 2013.

Jordan Hospital Medical Building – Chairman Muratore noted that, on January 7, 2013, he attended a ribbon-cutting event for the medical building that will be constructed on the campus of Jordan Hospital. The project, he said, is expected to be complete within a year.

LICENSES

[Continued on Page 3.]

SURRENDERING OF LIQUOR LICENSE

On a motion by Selectman Tavares, seconded by Selectman Brewster, the Board voted to accept the voluntary surrender of an Annual Wine & Malt with Liqueurs & Cordials Liquor License from the following establishment. Voted 4-0-0, approved.

- ❖ **The Wine Cellar, Inc. d/b/a The Wine Cellar**, 690 State Road

POLE PETITION

On a motion by Vice Chairman Mahoney, seconded by Selectman Brewster, the Board voted to approve the following pole petition for NSTAR and Verizon, as detailed, below. Voted 4-0-0, approved.

- ❖ **NSTAR/Verizon Petition 1904781** – One petition covering the installation of one New Push Brace on Herring Pond Road, necessary to stabilize pole 90/38 on Herring Pond Road.

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

Meeting Minutes – The Board approve the minutes of the October 9, October 16, and October 20, 2012 Selectmen's meetings.

New England Collegiate Baseball League – The Board approved an agreement between the Town and the New England Collegiate Baseball League, for use of the Town's athletics fields.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael Brandon of 32 George Street brought forth a request that the Town pave and install drainage on George Street. The road, he said, is in such bad condition that a 100'x42' puddle will develop during rain events, to the point where vehicles cannot access the street. Mr. Brandon indicated that residents of George Street have brought their concerns to the Roads Advisory Committee a number of times. Though DPW staff has been courteous and crews have pumped out the flooding on the street following significant storms, he explained, nothing permanent can be done without the approval of the Selectmen.

COMMITTEE INTERVIEWS AND APPOINTMENTS

On a motion by Selectman Tavares, seconded by Vice Chairman Mahoney, the Board voted to appoint the following individuals who applied to serve on Town committees, as detailed, below. Voted 4-0-0, approved. *[Continued on page 4.]*

GREATER PLYMOUTH PERFORMING ARTS: 1 SEAT AVAILABLE, 1 APPLICANT

Tiffany Park 9 Robinson Street New Applicant Term exp. 6/30/2015

PLYMOUTH ART GUILD: 1 SEAT AVAILABLE, 1 APPLICANT

Denise Lebica 9 Whiting Street New Applicant Term exp. 6/30/2015

ROADS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: 1 SEAT AVAILABLE, 1 APPLICANT

Timothy Bennett 33 Arlington Road New Applicant Term exp. 6/30/2015
Experience Required Seat

ENERGY COMMITTEE

Chairman Muratore explained that the Board would consider appointing two (2) citizens to the Energy Committee, for terms effective January 9, 2013 through June 30, 2014. There were three (3) applicants for the two open seats (listed below), thereby prompting the Board to hold brief interviews.

Kerry Kearney 63 Treetop Way New Applicant
Darren Mansfield 24 Dyer Pass New Applicant
Jeanne Carey 8 Vernon Street New Applicant

Chairman Muratore invited each applicant to interview before the board, one by one. During the interview process, it was determined that one of the applicants, Jeanne Carey, did not attend the meeting.

Following the interviews, Chairman Muratore called for a vote. The Board unanimously voted (4-0-0) to appoint Kerry Kearney. Darren Mansfield was appointed with three votes (Muratore, Mahoney, and Tavares). Jeanne Carey received one vote from Selectman Brewster.

By majority vote, Kerry Kearney and Darren Mansfield were appointed to the Energy Committee, for terms effective January 9, 2013 through June 30, 2014.

JOINT MEETING: FY2014 BUDGET PRESENTATION

Chairman Muratore opened a joint meeting between the Board of Selectmen, School Committee, and Advisory & Finance Committee to hear and discuss the Town Manager's presentation on the FY2014 Town Budget. *[Continued on page 5.]*

FOR THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Dennis Begley, Chairman
Michelle Badger, Vice Chairman
Mary Waltuch, Secretary
Deb Betz
Robert Bielen
Kim Savery
Gary Maestas, Superintendent of Schools
Gary Costin, Business Administrator

FOR THE FINANCE & ADVISORY COMM.

Robert Nassau, Chairman
John Moody, 1st Vice Chairman
Rich Gladdys
Elaine Murray
Charles Stevens
Jim Sweeney

Dennis Begley called a meeting of the School Committee to order at approximately 7:30 p.m. Robert Nassau, Chairman of the Advisory & Finance Committee (“FinComm”), noted that, with only six members of his committee in attendance at the meeting, a quorum was not present.

Ms. Arrighi began her presentation on the FY2013 budget by thanking Chairman Muratore, Chairman Begley, and Chairman Nassau for their assistance in setting guidelines for the development of the Town’s budget.

[Note: Selectman Harnais arrived and joined the meeting at this time.]

Ms. Arrighi explained that she and the Town’s Department Heads were very conscious of the way by which constituents rely on her staff’s careful perusal of costs and cautious approach to revenue projections—and the way by which the budget impacts the lives of Plymouth’s citizens through service provision. During the budget exercise, she said, all involved in its development tried to identify the services that would be considered absolutely necessary to meet the needs of this community.

Ms. Arrighi stated that she has reviewed and evaluated the proposed budget from a number of perspectives, while taking into account the many challenges that are currently confronting the Town, such as:

- Personnel Costs
- Rising Fixed Costs through Debt Service and Health Insurance
- Escalating Maintenance Costs that cannot be set aside
- Growing Complexity of State and Federal Statutes
- Continuing Unfunded Mandates

Ms. Arrighi emphasized the efforts that the Town’s Department and Division Heads made to develop their respective budgets in a realistic and professional manner. Staff, she said, was given the directive to focus on making fiscally responsible reductions that will not sacrifice the quality of service provision, in accordance with the following criteria:

- Maintain current levels of service for the residents and students of Plymouth
- Increase services in certain areas, such as the Senior Center
- Minimize the cost of providing those services without sacrificing quality
- Maximize revenue sources other than property taxes

Ms. Arrighi acknowledged the challenge that elected and appointed officials face when reviewing staff recommendations and ensuring that tax dollars are well distributed and spent as fairly and efficiently as possible. Staff, she said, takes the responsibility of developing the budget very seriously, and the commitment to this responsibility should be evident in the budget that is being presented.

Finance Director Lynne Barrett resumed the discussion with a PowerPoint presentation detailing the budget development process and the financial information on which the budget was based. In her presentation, she provided and discussed:

- The FY2014 budget building exercise
- An illustration of the sources of General Fund revenues and the way by which the General Fund is distributed
- A chart displaying the distribution of salaries versus expenses (Town and School combined)
- Information on the impact of fixed costs, such as health insurance claims, pension appropriations, unemployment compensation, Medicaid reimbursements, etc.
- An outline and graph explaining the Town's debt service
- The Town Manager and Finance Director's budget recommendations
- A pie chart illustrating the distribution percentages that will govern the FY2014 budget

Ms. Arrighi described her budget as "precautionary," noting that, though the tax rate is currently estimated to increase by 77 cents (from \$14.43 to \$15.20), it is anticipated that the actual rate will come in at a lower amount. Ms. Arrighi reported that she and the Finance Director are optimistic that the Town's borrowing rate will come in lower, but it would be irresponsible to make such assumptions when building the budget at this time. Because the tax rate is certified in late 2013, she mentioned, there is time to make adjustments before tax bills are issued.

If everything projected within the recommended budget remains constant, Ms. Arrighi explained, the owner of an average priced home will see an overall increase of \$231 in next year's tax bill (an increase of \$59 per quarter). Again, she noted, this amount will decrease if actual fixed costs and debt service are reduced.

Ms. Arrighi outlined the ways by which the Town may be able to strategically reduce its debt service and fixed costs:

- Changes in educational incentives and reductions in vacation time that have been made for new employees coming in to the system
- Cross training and job sharing activities at the clerical and mid-management level
- Changes in health insurance co-pays
- Technology efficiencies
- The pursuit of new development projects and the initiation of 'business friendly' measures to attract new business to Plymouth
- The establishment of an Entergy Mitigation Fund that will help to alleviate the burden on the taxpayers when the power plant ends its active operation

Ms. Arrighi made note that, though the budget presented is slightly higher than the 2% target threshold, it accomplishes the initiatives that are important to Plymouth. Unlike many other towns, she said, Plymouth's leadership has managed to garner public support for such worthy projects as the new school and senior center, all while balancing taxpayer burden with the maintenance of core services that residents have come to expect.

Chairman Muratore acknowledged the efforts made by the Town Manager and Finance Director to develop a budget that recognizes the burden shouldered by taxpayers. It is clear, he said, that Plymouth is seeking to encourage efficiencies, plan proactively for the future, and encourage economic growth. Chairman Muratore remarked upon the way that the decrease in Plymouth's valuations has affected the tax rate, noting that such valuations are a direct result of the current economic recession.

Chairman Muratore opened the presentation to questions and comments from the Selectmen, School, Committee, and FinComm.

Robert Nassau complimented the Town Manager and Finance Director for their work on the budget. Though he would like to see a lower tax rate, he explained, he does not want the Town to sacrifice the essential services upon which citizens depend. It is reassuring, Mr. Nassau said, to see that the Town is making an effort to plan for the future (i.e. Other Post Employment Benefits).

Vice Chairman Mahoney made an observation that all four of the Town's enterprise funds were self-sufficient last year. This is a proud accomplishment, he told the Board, despite the fact that the wastewater treatment facility still does not operate at full capacity. Vice Chairman Mahoney stated that Plymouth's "fiscal cliff" will be the eventual closure of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station, and he commended staff for initiating plans to mitigate this future loss of revenue.

Selectman Harnais noted that he is pleased to see a number of efforts to plan for the future included in the FY2014 budget. While no one wishes to pay more in taxes, he said, citizens may not want budget cuts to deplete the services on which they depend. Plymouth, he noted, has held its own in the midst of an economic downturn, all while opening a brand-new high school and senior center. Selectman Harnais advised his colleagues on the Board to remain cautious in its approach to the budget, but he recognized the conservative approach with which staff has developed the budget, thus far.

Dennis Begley expressed his gratitude for the School Department's executive staff, whom he said have led the charge on attaining a number of energy-saving efficiencies and significant grants that have helped to offset budgetary shortfalls and maintain important services.

School Superintendent Gary Maestas discussed the energy-efficiency initiatives that the School Department has undertaken to reduce costs, including the bulk purchase of energy and gas and the retrofitting and/or replacement of equipment to decrease consumption. He expressed his admiration for the way his staff has stepped forward to identify efficiencies and reduce expenditures. Superintendent Maestas stated that he would

continue the pursuit of grant funding to enhance School programs while holding the line on budgetary spending.

Selectman Brewster expressed her deep concern that the tax rate is estimated to increase from \$14.43 to \$15.20 in one year. Considering the number of forthcoming changes to the Federal tax code and the current state of the economy, she said, the Town must do more to hold the line on budgetary spending. Selectman Brewster noted that \$4.8 million in certified free cash from the previous year is already spoken-for in this year's budget, leading her to question whether the Town truly understands the impact that a 70-cent increase to the tax rate will have upon Plymouth's residents. Plymouth is great place to live, she told the Board, but people are struggling to stay here, and it seems as if the Town is budgeting itself out of being an affordable place to live. Selectman Brewster asked those residents who feel that their taxes are too high to communicate their needs to the Board and specify what services they would be willing to do without.

Chairman Muratore noted that an increase of \$1 million in the Town's budget equates to approximately 10 cents on the tax rate. In order to keep the tax rate at its current level, he explained, the Town would need to cut nearly \$8 million from its budget. As this will inevitably affect services, Chairman Muratore said, it will be important for residents to indicate to the Board which services are the most and the least important to them.

Selectman Tavares noted that, in his many years of service as a Selectman, there has never been one easy budget development process. Nearly 50% of the Town's entire budget is allocated to the Schools, he explained, while 80% of the overall budget constitutes salaries. So often, Selectman Tavares pointed out, Town officials have heard the outcry from residents to keep their neighborhood fire station open, sustain classrooms at nearby schools, maintain police patrols in their neighborhoods, plow their streets, etc. It is important for residents to understand that, in order to maintain such services, the Town must fund them. Selectman Tavares talked about the way by which government regulations and unfunded mandates (e.g. nuclear power regulations and requirements for customized school services) have an adverse affect upon the Town's budget, urging residents and Town officials to advise their legislators to enact changes at the State and Federal levels.

Selectman Brewster offered a suggestion that the Town assemble a temporary, cross-government task force, similar to the Industrial/Commercial Land Study Committee, to investigate new revenue streams and efficiencies. Chairman Muratore asked the Town Manager to look into creating such a task force, with staff participation.

Mr. Nassau acknowledged the merits of Selectmen Brewster's intent to create a cross-government task force but offered his viewpoint that it may be more effective to look, instead, at the productivity of the current delivery of the Town's services, to evaluate whether there are things that could be done more cost effectively.

Chairman Muratore reiterated his support for Selectman Brewster's idea to create a revenue-researching task force, noting his belief that there should be participation in the task force from both Town and School officials. Because the budget books were just

recently released, he said, it would be prudent for the Board to delay its decision on the FY2014 budget, to allow everyone an adequate opportunity to review each line item.

On a motion by Selectman Tavares, seconded by Selectman Harnais, the Board voted unanimously (5-0-0) to table its decision on the FY2014 Budget until the meeting of January 15, 2013. Chairman Muratore noted that the School Committee and FinComm would not be required to attend the Selectmen's September 15, 2013 budget discussion.

Seeing no objections from his fellow members, Mr. Begley adjourned the meeting of the School Committee at 8:47 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS / LETTERS / NEW BUSINESS

Acceptance of Private Roadways – Selectman Tavares made a request that the Department of Public Works and Roads Advisory Committee provide the Board with updated information on the Town's current process of accepting private roads as public ways. It is important, he said, for the public to understand this process and the reasons why the Town cannot easily address problematic, unaccepted roads such as George Street.

DPW Director Jonathan Beder responded that his department has done its best to provide services to George Street within the legal parameters of spending public dollars on an unaccepted way. Recent legislation (initiated by the Town and approved by the State Legislature) will allow the Town to provide some relief to residents on roads similar to George Street, he said, but citizens must keep in mind that what the Town does for one it must do for all. With limited resources, Mr. Beder explained, it will take years for the Town to resolve the myriad of unaccepted roadways that require improvement.

Presentation on Memorial Hall Business Plan – Selectmen Brewster inquired about a previous request from Selectman Tavares for an update on the Town's management plan for Memorial Hall. Chairman Muratore responded that a presentation is scheduled for January 15, 2013.

Clarification on EMS Contract with Brewster Ambulance Service – Ms. Arrighi clarified that, with regard to the Town's decision to hire Brewster Ambulance Service for the provision of emergency medical services ("EMS") to the Town of Plymouth, there is no connection between the company and Selectman Brewster or her family.

ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

On a motion by Vice Chairman Mahoney, seconded by Selectman Brewster, the Board voted to adjourn its meeting at approximately 9:00 p.m. Voted 5-0-0, approved.

Recorded by Tiffany Park, Clerk to the Board of Selectmen

A copy of the January 8, 2013 meeting packet is on file and available for public review in the Board of Selectmen's office.