

**MINUTES  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
November 7, 2011**

Present at the meeting that was held at the Hale Middle School library, prior to the special town meeting that evening, were Selectmen Charles Kern, James Salvie, and Laura Spear.

Also present were Town Counsel Jon Witten, Town Administrator William Wrigley, and Administrative Assistant Susan McLaughlin.

Fire Chief Michael McLaughlin and Superintendent of Streets Michael Clayton joined the meeting for the discussion on brush disposal.

Mr. Salvie called the meeting to order at approximately 6:30 p.m.

Selectmen Gary Bernklow and Thomas Ryan joined the meeting in progress.

**Pre-Town Meeting Planning**

Mr. Wrigley reported that Building Inspector Craig Martin was now able to foresee that no additional funds, beyond those already allocated, would be needed to complete the scheduled repairs to the Town Building. Therefore, the Board could move No Action on Article 3, a \$10,000 allocation for the repairs.

There were no other issues to discuss.

**Town Administrator's Report: FY 2013 budget message**

Mr. Wrigley presented his FY 2013 budget recommendation of a 3-percent cost of living increase for employees' salaries and level-services expense budgets for the departments.

**Salary budgets:** He explained that his recommendation is based on the following factors:

- Stow's constituents on fixed incomes will receive a 3.6-percent COLA from Social Security.
- The rate of inflation exceeds 3 percent and is likely to continue to increase.
- The state economy is improving and the unemployment rate is at 7.3 percent and decreasing (compared with a 9.1-percent national rate).
- State income tax revenues are up by 9 percent from one year ago and are trending up.
- The Town has historically high balances in Free Cash (\$1,284,000) and the Stabilization Fund (\$700,000) and an unused levy capacity near \$1,000,000. This is due, in large part, to Town employees' conservative budgeting and spending, and taxpayers have benefited through lower taxes. Stow was one of only a few communities with a decrease in the average FY 2011 property tax bill.
- The impact of a 3-percent COLA to the Town budget is minimal. With today's salaries, each 1-percent increase in COLA increases the budget by roughly \$36,000, a 0.2-percent increase in the total FY12 budget of \$22,850,787.

**Expense budgets:** He will have the departments submit level-services operating budgets, with strong backup for any requests that are substantive increases over FY 2012.

He asked Board members for comments and they supported his plan.

**Discussion of Storm-related Brush Removal**

Highway Superintendent Mike Clayton and Fire Chief Mike McLaughlin visited the Board to update members on clean-up operations from the “Halloween” snowstorm.

Mr. Clayton said there is extensive damage to trees that will take a month to clean up. He has 140 miles of road to cover with one chipper. He and Chief McLaughlin agreed that the Highway crew worked well with the Hudson Light and Power workers to get power restored.

Many residents have inquired about whether the Town will pick up brush from their property. Mr. Clayton said his department does not have the resources to do this but he has offered to accept brush at the Highway barn on weekdays from 7am to 3 pm. Mr. Wrigley advised waiting a few weeks before considering more action to see how this plan works out. Chief McLaughlin noted that, by then, he will know about MEMA support for disaster relief.

It was agreed to invite Ed Brown in, as Stow’s representative to the Hudson Light and Power Department, to discuss any lessons learned from the Town’s and the power company’s responses. Chief McLaughlin restated that both teams working together did a phenomenal job. They should look for ways to improve communication with residents, “getting the word out,” and to emphasize the importance of being prepared, such as having a 72-hour survival kit.

At 6:50 p.m. Ms. Spear moved to recess the meeting; Mr. Ryan seconded, and all voted in favor.

At the conclusion of the Special Town Meeting, Ms. Spear moved to adjourn, Mr. Bernklow seconded; and all voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan McLaughlin  
Administrative Assistant

Approved as written, November 22, 2011