

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 28, 2009 BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman David Canada, Selectmen Bruno Federico and Tim Copeland, and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

The meeting was opened at 7:48 PM after a meeting of the Stratham Hill Park Association.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Kevin Peck noted that he had a deficit balance in the general checking account of \$1,487,860 as a result of two checks written, one each to the School Districts. He also; however, had \$3,500,000 in investments. He would not release those two checks to the School Districts until such time that he had transferred money from investments to the general checking account.

Mr. Deschaine discussed his concerns regarding the cash flow needs of the Town in expectation of the tax bills being issued after November 1, 2009. If that were to be the case, he suggested that a Tax Anticipation Note might be needed. Mr. Federico suggested discussing with the School District Treasurers to see how much leeway the Town may have in delaying payments to them. Mr. Peck will look into all these matters and report back to the Board.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Assessing: Andrea Lewy was present to report on her activities. She stated the only Board of Tax and Land Appeals filing that she was aware of was done by Soft Draw, also known as Golf Club of New England. This was a follow-up based on their prior filings for prior tax years with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals.

She then reviewed the remaining abatements that were to be acted upon. Please see the attachment for her recommendations. The Board approved all of Ms. Lewy's recommendations for abatements as presented.

Ms. Lewy presented the Discretionary Preservation Easement for the Wiggin Barn on Squamscott Road, Tax Map 3 Lot 46. The Board had previously approved the preservation easement after meeting on August 31, 2009. The Board then signed the easement as presented. Ms. Lewy had prepared, and presented, a Barn Easement Application information packet at Mr. Canada's previous request. Although it continues as a work in progress, she will ultimately post the packet on the Assessor's web page.

There was discussion of the results of the review of the applicants for the Assessing Assistant's position. That review resulted in a selection of people to be interviewed to occur this coming Thursday. Any Board member was welcomed to participate.

Ms. Lewy then reported on the status of the upgrade of the Tax Maps to a digitized form. This project is complete and the new maps will be presented to the Town in a week or two.

Ms. Lewy stated the Notices of Preliminary Values would be coming out soon. Hearings will be scheduled thereafter. Mr. Federico asked if she could characterize the changes in assessments.

Ms. Lewy said the values are going up from the 2003 values and they may rise to the level of the values found in Town in 2006. Obviously, values of properties were higher after 2006, but the subsequent decreases in the present values have brought them back to the 2006 level. Mr. Canada observed that residential properties went up uniformly; however, the commercial properties have been more volatile. Mr. Federico asked if neighborhoods have changed that would result in the values changing regardless of any sales history. Ms. Lewy said that that was possible as they were evaluating all data that was on file for properties in Town. Mr. Canada followed up by asking if there were any significant changes in the ratio between residential and commercial. Ms. Lewy said she would not characterize those changes as significant. Ms. Lewy is targeting October 8, 2009 as the date the Notices of Preliminary Values will go out. They will be scheduling hearings for the following two weeks depending on the volume of calls and how long it takes to handle each inquiry.

Parks and Recreation: Tara Barker was present and gave a report on the Recreation Revolving Fund. She explained that the reason for a lack of income posted in August is that the deposit is made in the first week of September.

Ms. Barker then reported on the work on the Babe Ruth field at Stevens Park. She had a proposal for fencing at \$27,985. She gave the dimensions quoted by AAA Fencing. She noted specific items contained in the quote for the proposal. The cost for installing foul poles was estimated to be \$90 per pole. Mr. Copeland disputed that number. He asked what gauge the fence wire was. She stated it was not clear from the proposal. Mr. Hutton told her that due to the rains of last week they are not finished and are not ready for the fencing this week. Depending upon the rains expected this week, they may or may not be ready for any fencing by next Monday. Mr. Federico asked if another fence quote was available. Ms. Barker said she did not obtain one based on the recommendation of the Baseball Board who said they only use AAA Fencing. Mr. Canada suggested validating the AAA Fencing quote by getting one or two other quotes with a similar gauge fencing wire. Jim Scamman, from the audience, suggested giving AAA Fencing one more chance to improve their proposal. Ms. Barker will follow up on the matter. Ms. Barker discussed the configuration of the outfield. There are two basic shapes to consider. One is a continuing curve with a set radius; the other would have two straight lines joining in the middle at an obtuse angle. The angled configuration will allow a more versatile use of the field in that two youth soccer fields could be set up in the outfield whereas the curved field would allow just one soccer play area. Mr. Federico asked if the angled field was acceptable to the Babe Ruth Field Advisory Committee to which Ms. Barker replied yes.

Ms. Barker has also obtained two quotes, one from Aquatech and the other from Hillside, for irrigation installations. The Aquatech proposal was for \$11,380 and the Hillside quote was \$11,162. She noted they are essentially the same, except for Hillside would not be installing isolation ball valves for each zone. Her recommendation would be to accept the Aquatech proposal since they are a known commodity, but she wanted to consult with John Bell, of Bell & Flynn, regarding timing of installation and his dealings with Aquatech. Mr. Canada moved to authorize Ms. Barker to accept either proposal at a cost not to exceed \$11,380 once she had her discussions with John Bell. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Ms. Barker said she is also getting quotations for the irrigating of the softball field. She would expect those quotes to be available next week. The hydro seeding proposals will also be available by then.

Mr. Copeland asked about the benches that are inside the playground at Stevens Park. He noted that some of them were sponsored by individuals in memory of others. He felt this conflicted with the Board's previous decision of not having memorials on Town property. The Board agreed to have a discussion on that matter at a later date.

At 8:58 PM, Mr. Federico moved to enter into non-public session to discuss negotiations of contracts with Ms. Barker. Mr. Canada seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. At 9:10 PM, Mr. Copeland moved to come out of non-public session and to seal the minutes due to the negotiation of contracts that were discussed. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Administration: Mr. Deschaine presented the recommendation by the Public Works Commission to enter into a contract with Wright Pierce Engineering for a fire suppression district study within the Commercial District, also known as the Gateway Commercial District. John Boisvert was present to discuss the recommendation as Chair of the Commission. Mr. Canada agreed the work was essential to the future success of the Gateway proposal. Various utilities such as water supplies, wastewater and storm water would need to be addressed if we are going to have additional densities in the Commercial District as proposed under the Gateway Master Plan. Mr. Canada moved to authorize the Town to enter into a contract with Wright Pierce Engineering at a fixed sum of \$32,700. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine provided the Board with a form to make the appointment of Lincoln Daley to the Technical Advisory Committee official. The Board signed the form.

Mr. Deschaine also presented the lease agreement for the Board's signature for the Park Ranger's house. The Board then executed the agreement.

Mr. Deschaine then discussed the possibility of establishing a Pandemic Response Plan in anticipation of the possible swine flu outbreak. Mr. Deschaine had also provided copies of various plans created for other towns. Mr. Federico will look at those plans and into the matter.

Mr. Deschaine discussed the potential of sending a letter of intent to the Department of Transportation for improved resolution aerial photos as they fly over the Town. Mr. Canada questioned the value of the incrementally better resolution of the aerial photos. Mr. Federico thought that it was valuable in many respects, particularly for the Planning Board. The Selectmen agreed to file the letter of intent while they investigate the usage of the aerial photographs by the other Departments.

The Board reviewed the final drafts of the Employee Manual as provided by Mr. Deschaine. The Board agreed to these final drafts. Mr. Deschaine will forward these drafts to Town Counsel

Abby Sykas when he can determine when she wanted the document, given the Board's intention to pay for her services in January of 2010.

Mr. Federico stated he has submitted the Energy Consultation Grant application to the Clean Air Cool Planet for an energy inventory program. Lincoln Daley has a copy of the application.

Mr. Federico stated he spoke to Colleen Lake about not parking in the Fire Department's driveway. She stated she would discuss the matter with her contractors.

Mr. Copeland stated that he had spoken with Acting Chief Richard Gendron concerning the Board's spending limit, which he now understood.

The discussion turned next to the so-called spiking provisions of the New Hampshire Retirement System as it affects Stratham. Mr. Deschaine said that it was not clear at this time how the legislature dealt with that issue. He believed there was a study committee looking into the effects of last year's legislation assessing towns for the added costs in retirement benefits due to spikes in salary caused by the payment of accrued benefits to a retiring employee. Once the study committee reports to the legislature next year, it would be a better time to address the issue.

Mr. Canada suggested getting quotes for logging the area behind the softball field at the Municipal Center. This would allow for the expansion of a second softball field and a location for the fill created by the added parking lot that was discussed last week. The Board agreed to obtain estimates for the logging.

Mr. Federico asked about responding to the Attorney General's letter regarding the Stratham Fair. Mr. Canada and Mr. Deschaine are working on a recommendation to be sent to the Fire Department for their consideration.

Mr. Canada suggested taking the stop sign evaluation report off the agenda and returning the report to the new Police Chief for evaluation. The other Board members agreed.

Mr. Canada inquired as to the status of a general staff meeting the Board requested on June 1. Time constraints caused by various hiring efforts throughout the summer have delayed that effort but once the Assessing Assistant is hired, the meeting will be set up.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED THIS WEEK/MEETINGS TO REPORT ON:

The Board then reviewed the meetings that were scheduled in the coming week and the report on meetings held during the past week.

Mr. Canada reported that about twenty people attended the Heritage Commission's Historical Inventory Training Seminar that occurred last Saturday.

It was reported that the Library would have an open house on November 13 providing an opportunity for the public to tour the new facilities.

OLD BUSINESS:

Lissa Ham presented to the Board the Transportation Enhancement Grant Application that was submitted on September 15, 2009. She stated the ranking of the application placed it ninth out of eleven that were submitted. Mr. Deschaine noted that of the eleven projects, if you removed the top three, the remaining projects are within six points of one another. Ms. Ham felt some of the scores were subjective and could be improved upon if contested at the Policy Committee Meeting on October 14, 2009. She hoped that Stratham's representative on the Planning Commission, which functions as the Policy Committee, could make those arguments on behalf of the Town. The Board thanked Ms. Ham for all her work on getting the application together. She acknowledged her thanks and hoped to assist in lobbying the members of the Policy Committee for a higher rating.

PARK PERMITS/MUNICIPAL CENTER RENTALS:

The following Park permits and Municipal Center rentals were authorized:

Kelly Foster for a birthday party at the Scamman Pavilion on October 3, 2009.

Mansi Saksena for a birthday party at the Municipal Center for about fifty people on October 31, 2009.

Eric Browne and/or Mary Petroski for a birthday party at the Municipal Center for approximately thirty people on October 25, 2009.

At 10:47 PM, Mr. Canada moved to adjourn. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reviewed By,

Norma Corrow
Recording Secretary

Paul Deschaine
Town Administrator