

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 8, 2010 BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman David Canada, Selectman Tim Copeland and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine. Selectman Bruno Federico arrived at 7:55 PM.

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7:30 PM.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Kevin Peck reported he had \$4,228,520.17, of which \$4,000,000 was invested.

Mr. Canada then opened the Public Hearing concerning the 2010 Town Warrant. A draft Warrant was provided (Please see attached.). He welcomed everyone who was present. He noted that there was a Public Notice posted regarding this Public Hearing, which began with Article 5, the 2010 budget. Mr. Deschaine and Mr. Canada summarized items within the budget including the 1% COLA for most employees. Taking public comment, John Sapienza noted that Town employees have had two increases over the past two years in their medical and dental contributions, but only a 1% increase over those two years; consequently, employees are being hit with decreases in their take-home pay. He noted that at least two patrolmen have left during 2009, which may have been due to the lack of pay increases and better compensation for the new positions taken. Mr. Canada said that the Board did evaluate the total compensation of employees and the cost of providing benefits is significant this year; consequently, cost-of-living adjustments had to be taken minimally. Hearing no further comment on the Article, the Chair moved to Article 6.

Article 6 was the Capital Improvements Program. Mr. Canada reviewed the individual items being proposed for 2010. Mr. Canada asked for any comments. Hearing none, he moved on to the next Article.

Mr. Canada read the proposed Article 7, which concerned acquiring two defibrillators and cardiac monitors for the sum of \$38,000. Mr. Canada said that this request came from the Fire Department and asked if any Fire Department member present was willing to speak to this request. Mr. Sapienza described the use of the units and explained that they are proposing to use the EMS Fund to pay for these items. Mr. Copeland elaborated on these items, which are similar to an EKG monitor and, in the future, would have the ability to transmit this vital information to the hospital before arriving by ambulance.

Hearing no further comments, Mr. Canada asked Mr. Copeland to read Article 8, which was a request for funding for EMS training. Mr. Copeland explained how the funds are also available from the EMS fund for this purpose. Mike Welty asked what the balance was in the EMS fund and what the annual income was. Mr. Canada said that the income has been averaging around \$65,000 a year. Mr. Deschaine stated the EMS fund balance as of December 31, 2009, was \$116,804. There were no further comments.

Mr. Canada read and explained Article 9, which clarifies the relationship between the Public Works Commission and the Board of Selectmen. He stated it was only to clarify the authority

the Board already had concerning the formation of a water or sewer district. There was no further comment.

Mr. Canada then read the draft of Article 10. Mr. Canada explained the effort to date to expand and enhance the Commercial District. It is hopeful that the Gateway District, with its Form-Based Code, will also increase the value of properties within the Commercial District. He noted the ratio of residential to commercial assessments was approximately 85% to 15% of the total assessed value of the Town. This places a larger than normal burden on residential properties to meet the tax burden of the Town. He stated the State average is closer to 80% residential and 20% commercial. Mr. Deschaine summarized the effort undertaken to use last year's appropriation. He then introduced Rick Davee, of Wright Pierce, who then gave a presentation on the preliminary results of their study funded by that appropriation. Mr. Canada asked for questions from the audience. John Sapienza asked what was the status of Route 108 crossing with the waterline from Market Basket to Kings Highway Plaza. He understood that there were problems preventing that crossing. Mr. Canada explained the logistics that have stopped the project and that it should be starting again given the work of the Board. Mr. Deschaine explained the private contributions towards that effort and the expectation to bond future work to establish the water system. Mr. Canada added that the ratepayers would be expected to pay the expenses relating to the bond and its repayment. Andy Meckel of Pinewood Drive asked if there was any effort to recruit other businesses into Town. Lincoln Daley explained the recruitment and retention efforts to date and the desire to perhaps restart the Economic Development Committee. Hearing no further questions, the Chair moved to proposed Article 11.

Mr. Federico read Article 11 and introduced Tom Palma of Unitil to discuss the solar project. Also present were Caroline Robinson and Mike Welty. Mr. Deschaine explained the history of the initial offer to provide the Town with a \$300,000 system to be placed on the roof of the new Fire House; however, the PUC was not receptive to that proposal. Mr. Palma from Unitil then explained the current lease terms that the PUC was more likely to support. Mr. Welty explained this has been an effort during the last three to four years, even before the Fire House was built. Elements of the lease, including a 30% tax credit and depreciation expense write-offs for Unitil made the lease project more desirable in the eyes of the PUC. Mr. Palma mentioned that the only cost to the Town under this proposal was the wiring conversion costs at the end of the twenty-year lease when the system would be turned over to the Town. The only other expected expense is the replacement of the power inverter, which they have agreed to replace before turning it over to the Town. Mr. Sapienza stated that this proposal has changed dramatically from the initial proposal and that the lease rate was significantly less than the original estimates of free electricity. The maintenance costs also make this proposal less desirable. Although he supported the initial proposal, he now objected to the current one. Lissa Ham asked if a new transformer was needed which will make the Town Center more unsightly. Mr. Palma said that it still needs to be engineered and is yet to be determined. He also noted that the removal of snow should be minimal as part of the Town's maintenance cost. He would anticipate only if we had two feet of snow would it require checking the panels to see if snow removal was required. Mr. Welty said the future engineering would consider the weight of the solar array and the snow load to insure the structural integrity of the roof. Andy Meckel asked why the maintenance work could not be transferred to Unitil. Mr. Palma said that there was very little maintenance required other than occasional cleaning. Unitil does not employ the type of personnel to do that and then

questions of access made it more logical for the Town to be required to perform the maintenance. Lucy Cushman asked what the purpose behind the original proposal was. Caroline Robinson answered that it was to get ahead of rates by acquiring a cheap and more reliable energy source. With that, there were no further questions.

Mr. Canada then read the proposed Article 12, which was to form a committee in anticipation of celebrating the Town's 300th Anniversary. He thought this was a good way to start interest in this very important event. There were no comments regarding the Article.

Mr. Canada then read Article 13, which concerns funding for the Expendable Trust for employee termination liabilities. Mr. Deschaine explained last year's use of the fund and the projected use of the fund in the coming year should there be some retirements. There were no further comments on the Article.

Mr. Copeland read the draft of Article 14, which was to change the purpose of the Land Conservation Fund. Mr. Copeland explained the expansion of purposes that the Conservation Commission was proposing. Mr. Sapienza asked what the balance of the Land Conservation Fund was. Mr. Deschaine reported that \$467,280 was the balance of the fund as of December 31, 2009.

Mr. Canada then asked Mr. Copeland to read the proposed Article 15, which was to rename the Town Forest after Gordon Barker. There were no comments on the proposed Article.

Mr. Canada then read Article 16, which was a Petition Warrant Article to request a statewide vote on the definition of marriage. Katie Meckel advocated changing the Article would negate its purpose. She then asked how the Article could be changed and discussed. Mr. Deschaine advised those present that at Town Meeting the Article would be fully discussed and could be amended from the floor of Town Meeting.

That concluded the discussion of the current draft Warrant Articles. Mr. Deschaine asked the Board if they wanted to have an Article on this year's Warrant to revise a previous Town Meeting vote not to post the Town assessments in the Town Report every five years. This had been a suggestion of the Budget Advisory Committee. The Board discussed the continuation of this action and whether it was advisable to continue and when to make a change. Mr. Sapienza mentioned that a public terminal was available in the Municipal Center, which was extremely useful. The Board decided not to include that Article this year but would consider it in future years now that the Town Report and other such reports could be posted on the new Town website. Hearing no further comment relative to the Public Hearing, the Chair closed the Public Hearing at 9:10 PM. After a small recess to allow the room to clear, the Selectmen reviewed each draft Article to determine if they were going to recommend or not recommend them. The Board elected to recommend every Article except for Article 16. Under discussing Article 16, various Board members questioned whether the Board should make a recommendation at all. Mr. Canada moved not to make a recommendation on Article 16. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed with two for and one against. The Board asked Mr. Deschaine to make sure that the Warrant reflects the new starting time for Town Meeting, which was 7:00PM.

PARK PERMITS/MUNICIPAL CENTER RENTALS:

The Board then reviewed the following Park Permits and Municipal Center rental requests.

David Emanuel, on behalf of the Exeter High School Class of 1990, for use of the Park for their 20th Reunion on July 3, 2010. The Board approved the request.

Dick Rugg, on behalf of the Greenland Veterans, for a lobster bake at the Park on September 12, 2010, was also approved.

Nicole Tremblay, for a birthday party at the Municipal Center on March 13, 2010, was disapproved, as she was not a resident of the Town of Stratham.

Mr. Canada requested, on behalf of the Tri-Town Republican Committee, to use the Park on August 22, 2010. That use was approved.

Troop 185 requested use of the Park on October 3, 2010 for their annual car show. The Board approved the use with the conditions placed during last year's car show, which included paying \$50 to the Fire Department for the use of propane at the food shacks, that the food shacks be cleaned after their use and any other conditions previously attached to this use. The Board approved the use with those conditions.

The request of the Stratham Fair to use Stratham Hill Park was approved for July 10, 2010 through August 1, 2010. The fee was waived.

Heather Benoitti for use of the Park for a graduation party on July 10, 2010, was approved.

Melissa and Robert McClany request to hold a pet talent show at the Park was also approved.

One Sky Communications, Inc., a non-profit, requested the use of the Park on June 25, 2010, and asked that the fee be waived. Mr. Copeland requested that that organization come before the Board since it stated that over 350 people are expected. Mr. Deschaine will arrange to have them come before the Board at a future date.

The Collie Rescue League's request to use the Park on June 5, 2010, was approved.

The Sprucewood Homeowner's Association's request to use the Municipal Center was approved and the fee was waived as part of the Board's previous policy.

OTHER:

Mr. Canada reported that he had a very poor response to the article that was published in the Exeter News Letter regarding the possibility of having a ham and bean supper prior to Town Meeting. He suggested polling people at Town Meeting to see if there was any interest.

Mr. Canada asked if any other Board members had suggested material for the dog notice letter that the Town Clerk/Tax Collector publishes each year. The only thing he could note was promoting the new website and publicizing the fact that Town Meeting would start at 7:00 PM instead of 7:30 PM. No one else had any other proposed additions.

Mr. Copeland discussed with Police Chief John Scippa the State's continued use of the Fire Tower for their communication system. Mr. Deschaine stated he had a conversation with Chief Scippa also. Mr. Copeland has also asked the owners of Webster at Great Bay to update their timetable in using the former Great Bay Community College site for their development. He has yet to hear a response.

At 10:09 PM, Mr. Canada moved to go into non-public session to discuss a personnel matter. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. At 10:40 PM, Mr. Federico moved and Mr. Copeland seconded the motion to come out of non-public session, to seal the minutes due to personnel discussed and to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Reviewed By,

Norma Corrow
Recording Secretary

Paul Deschaine
Town Administrator