

April 24, 2006

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
APRIL 24, 2006**

Present: Arnold Wilson, Chairman
Hal White
Ted Goodwin
William Emrich
Steven Halterman
James Malloy, Town Administrator

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at Tantasqua High School Cafeteria.

A.Wilson suggested the Board discuss the differences between the Board's recommendations and the Finance Committee's recommendations.

The Town Administrator's salary: The Board recommended \$105,000; the Finance Committee recommended \$108,150. W. Emrich suggested that the Board go forward with its original vote of \$105,000. H. White said that the Finance Committee is showing a 3% increase over a number that was never voted by the Board. He said that the amount it should be is \$98,165. It was the consensus of the Board to have a substitute motion of \$105,000.

A.Wilson said that the Town Clerk had gone to the Finance Committee for extra hours for her assistant, and they funded it at 19 ½ hours/week. J. Malloy said that nothing was provided to the Board to justify the additional hours. H. White said that information should be provided to the voters. It was the consensus of the Board to put a hold on it.

A.Wilson said that there will be another figure for the Landfill and Recycling Salaries item. J. Malloy said that he would put a hold on it and explain it; it should be \$68,484.

MOTION: To reconsider the Tantasqua Town Share item, by T. Goodwin.
2nd: S. Halterman
Vote: All in favor.

T. Goodwin expressed concern about the impact of the cuts on the school system. He had discussed the matter with the Superintendent and teachers and member of the School Committee. H. White said that in looking at the class sizes at the high school, some of them may have more than 30 students because of scheduling; if students are switched from one class time to another class time, the overcrowding issue disappears. T. Goodwin noted that the Dept. of Education recommends no more than 17 students per high school class. H. White asked what the school administration has done to address the matter of

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balancing the size of the classes. He also said that bringing in students from outside also drives up the class size.

S. Halterman said that another issue is the loss of faculty. J. Malloy said that when they moved into the new high school, they hired a lot of new teachers who were later let go. He said that there was a spreadsheet that illustrates the increases. He noted that the Town is at a point where it is spending more than it is able to raise, and there is a 7% increase in the school budget, which is substantial. He said that the schools are eating up more and more of the Town's budget every year, and next year there could be an \$800,000 deficit. He noted that there is an operating deficit estimated for FY07, but to increase it beyond where it is right now is dangerous. He said that the amount of new growth is even decreasing.

MOTION: To support the number that the School Committee recommended: \$4,788,749, by T. Goodwin.

2nd: S. Halterman

Vote: Three in favor; H. White and A. Wilson opposed

MOTION: To recommend a substitute motion for Article #5 Southbridge Fees at \$206,400, by H. White.

2nd: W. Emrich

Vote: All in favor.

Regarding Article #12 General Bylaw Amendment – Animal Control, J. Malloy said that the Animal Control Officer wants to redraft a lot of the animal control bylaws for next year's Annual Town Meeting. It was the consensus of the Board to take no action.

Regarding Article #32 SATA, S. Halterman said that he would like to see the items broken down.

Regarding Snow & Ice Control, H. White suggested putting a hold on overtime and purchase of services, while leaving the supplies account at \$60,000.

Regarding Article #7 Town Hall & Center School Renovation, J. Malloy said that he would explain what the situation was a few years ago, what the cost of renovation was then and how much it has increased. He will also explain about the lack of storage space, the structural issues, the need for conference rooms, the need for a new roof, etc. He noted that the vault is not entirely fireproof. It was the consensus of the Board that the work certainly needs to be done.

H. White said that he would have to recuse himself for the discussion regarding health insurance. He noted that it was recommended by the Board and voted by the citizens, but because of the composition of the Board last year, the Board could not vote on it because three of its members had a conflict of interest.

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A.Wilson suggested the Board hold on the matter, and that it could be worked out through negotiations. Mary Blanchard commented that health care had not been used as a bargaining point, and rightfully so. A.Wilson suggested that the Board wait until after the recount before going ahead with it. It was the consensus of the Board to hold action until the meeting on May 1st. H. White rejoined the Board at 6:50 p.m.

J. Malloy announced that there will be a public meeting regarding construction plans for McGilpin Road on Monday, May 22nd at 7:00 p.m. at Sturbridge Town Hall.

MOTION: To adjourn, by H. White.
2nd: T. Goodwin
Vote: All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date