

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman Eastman convened the Board at 6:47 PM in the Nowak Room of the Town Office and introduced other members of the Board: Ms. Julie Gilman, Mr. Lionel Ingram, Mr. Joe Pace, Mr. Bill Campbell and Mr. Russell Dean, Town Manager.

2. Work Session

- a. **77 Newfields Road-** Town Counsel, Lynn Morse, Esquire and Doug Eastman, Exeter Building Inspector appeared to update the Board about the current situation at 77 Newfields Road, which was a topic at the last Board meeting. One week ago, Attorney Charlie Griffin of Portsmouth appeared as the counsel for Ken Berkenbush and Lara Bricker of 75 Newfields Road. Mr. Griffin stated that his clients are upset that after a lengthy process, their neighbors at 77 Newfields Road have not yet complied with directives from the Town of Exeter regarding businesses that are operated at that address. Mr. Griffin said that his clients are very concerned about a pile of tires on the neighbor's property that they believe pose a significant health risk due to the fact that tires are commonly used by mosquitoes for breeding. In light of the recent EEE case in Newfields, Mr. Berkenbush and Ms. Bricker are asking the Town of Exeter to force the property owner at 77 Newfields Road to remove the tires. Attorney Morse and Inspector Eastman explained that the State Department of Environmental Safety deemed the tires a health issue last October. At that time, the State suggested to Mr. Berkenbush, who is the health officer for Exeter, that he appoint a deputy health officer. Inspector Eastman states that he was working closely with the potential buyer of the property and was notified a short time ago that the sale had fallen through. Inspector Eastman then called Attorney Morse and they drafted further litigation to serve to the current owners to force them to comply with zoning ordinances. Attorney Morse still plans to file the documents with the Court, but the tires issue is the jurisdiction of the Health Department.
- b. **Primary Place Online-** Selectman Campbell read a Proclamation into the record (attached). Mr. Greenberg, of NH Public Radio addressed the Board to express his gratitude to the Board.
- c. **Meadowood Gravity Sewer Bid Award-** Jennifer Perry, Town engineer, appeared to give her analysis of the Meadowood Gravity Sewer Project. The Meadowood Homeowner Association has agreed to pay \$126,000 up front and if the project goes over budget, they are willing to return to the Board and discuss their portion of any payment for the overage after negotiations with the Town.

Mr. Ingram moved to award the Bid to Park Construction the amount of \$287, 355 for the Meadowood Gravity Sewer; second by Ms. Gilman. VOTE: Unanimous.

Mr. Campbell moved to have up to \$100,000 of the Meadowood Gravity Sewer Project appropriated from the Town Sewer Reserves. Mr. Ingram seconds. VOTE: Unanimous.

- d. **Pay and Classification Plan-** Don Tyler of Human Resources, LLC appeared to discuss the Town's Pay and Classification Plan. Mr. Tyler assisted the Town in creating the current Pay and Classification Plan in 2000 and 2001, and he updates the Plan every 2 years. Mr. Tyler explained how he created the current plan, as well as created Job Descriptions. The concerns with this or any pay plan is attempting to balance Internal Equity and External Equity. Mr. Pace says that he is concerned that, as a Town, we are using blanket percentage increases instead of adjusting the positions as needed. Mr. Eastman believes there needs to be more classifications, up to 25, to keep like things together. Mr. Pace thinks the current plan has worked well so far, but needs to be updated. Mr. Dean would like to identify the Town's goals for the pay plan, and says that classification is very important to this plan. He also notes that mid year adjustments can be unpredictable. Mr. Pace reminds the Board that the labor agreements include pay plan adjustments, and both the Town and the unions take risks in their agreements and he is less worried about salaried employees since the Town still pays the benefits for all salaried employees. Mr. Ingram notices that some towns that are considered "comparable" are not similar to Exeter, such as Hanover, Bedford and Rochester. Mr. Dean notes that compensation and benefits must be looked at in all examples when comparing to any other towns. Mr. Ingram would like to go ahead with reevaluation of the pay plan to address disparities. Mr. Tyler suggests that the Town may want to look into a merit pay plan as well. Mr. Pace suggests that merit pay is not defined enough and that supervision is not consistent enough town wide. Ms. Gilman notes that merit pay can be tricky to appropriate in the budget. Mr. Dean says that there has been no appropriation of funds to re-study the pay plan, but he believes that there is money in the 2008 Budget for further examination of the Plan, and there are currently 3 positions that are recommended for adjustments. The Board is in agreement that the Pay Plan is in need of a larger update.
- e. **Fire Department Staffing-** Fire Chief Brian Comeau, Asst. Chief Eric Wilking, and Asst. Chief Ken Berkenbush appeared to discuss the possibility of hiring 4 new firefighters. Chief Comeau stated that the Department's overtime budget has escalated in recent years. In 2006, the overtime budget was \$363,000, in 2007, \$433,000 was budgeted for overtime, and they would have to budget for \$470,000 in 2008. Chief Comeau believes that if he were to hire 4 new firefighters, the current overtime budget could absorb the cost of those individuals for the rest of 2007, and then he would not need to budget for so much overtime. He also plans to request 4 more new hires in 2008, to even further reduce overtime. The additional staffing on each shift will allow for a person to call out sick or take a vacation day and the shift will still be staffed, and not have to call in an overtime shift. This will also help in having well rested firefighters for each shift, and increases public safety. Mr. Pace is concerned that the firefighters count on overtime, and will the Town lose firefighters that lose overtime? Chief Comeau is comfortable that the opportunities for overtime will still be there, but nobody will be forced to work a required overtime shift. Mr. Campbell wonders what the secondary costs are for these new hires in terms of uniforms and gear, and is there enough space in the station

for added staff? Chief Comeau is comfortable that the secondary costs can be paid out of current and 2008 funds. Mr. Pace believes that coverage and the quality of care are more important factors than funding. Mr. Eastman is concerned that hiring new firefighters is considered to be spending without appropriation? Mr. Dean believes that the Town has the right to move these funds from an overtime account to a regular salary account, and still be well within the State statutes. Mr. Eastman would prefer to hire a Human Resource Director to hiring the additional firefighter, and wait on the firefighters until January with the 2008 Budget funds. Mr. Ingram believes that if the Fire Department can hire the new positions out of currently budgeted funds, they should go ahead. Mr. Pace is in agreement, as is Ms. Gilman. Mr. Campbell is leaning toward waiting until January. Chief Comeau does not believe that waiting until January will be problematic to the hiring process as well as a budgeting problem. The Fire Department has a viable list of candidates and a plan to save money in the next fiscal year, and timing is very important to this plan. The Board will vote on this request at the next regular meeting on September 24, 2007.

- f. **Town Office Staffing-** Mr. Dean would like the Board to consider a floating worker in the Town Office for coverage of breaks and vacations. Mr. Dean believes that the service level in the Town Office will be helped tremendously. Mr. Eastman is wondering when the current Administrative Assistant position will be posted for the Town employees, and when it will be made a full time position. Mr. Ingram thinks that the Board should look carefully at all these positions (Floating Clerical worker, Human Resource Director, Administrative Assistant, Firefighters) and discuss them further at the next meeting.

3. **Public Comment-** Wayne McRae asks if the Town would fire the new firefighters if the 2008 budget were to fail? Ms. Gilman explains that the Department has funds for the new or default budget in their overtime account. Mr. Arthur Baillargeon would like to know what is the cause of the overtime, is it fire calls or ambulance calls. Ms. Gilman explained that overtime is for proper coverage for the station, not necessarily any type of calls.

4. **Adjournment-**

Mr. Pace moves to adjourn. Mr. Ingram seconds. VOTE: Unanimous.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Geis
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