

FINAL MINUTES

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

MINUTES

August 17, 2009

1. Call Meeting to Order

Chairman William Campbell convened the meeting at 7:03 pm in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building. Mr. Campbell introduced the other members of the Board: Ms. Julie Gilman, Mr. Matt Quandt, Mr. Bobby Aldrich and Town Manager, Russ Dean. Mr. Bob Eastman was not present.

2. Public Comment-

Gerry Hamel, Little Pine Lane, commented that in light of the tax collection issues that have been spoken about in the last few Board meetings, he does not think that the town should hire another tax collector. He suggested going back to an earlier system of selling tax liens. Jay Childs, Hunter Place, is upset that the printed list of outstanding taxes is a sort of “wall of shame”. He does not believe that another person should be hired to collect taxes, he would rather see the Town find more ways to cut costs. Mr. Campbell clarified that the Board did not encourage or authorize the Exeter Newsletter to publish the list of outstanding taxes but it is a public list that the newspaper obtained and decided to print it. The Board never intended to shame residents. Deb Johnson, Beech Hill Road, addressed the Board to say that she thinks that the Town should reach out and develop relationships with residents to try to resolve some of these tax issues. Jim Knight, Oak Street, had spoken to the Newsletter regarding the timeline of their publishing of the list of taxes due. He found that the editor chose to run the entire list, but that the Finance department complied with the 91A request.

3. Minutes and Proclamations – None.

4. Appointments- None.

5. Department Reports: Finance

Finance Department- Doreen Ravell, Finance Director appeared and advised the Board that the Deputy Tax Collector was at a week-long seminar at the Tax Collector’s Association. She also said that her office always tries to comply with any 91-A request in a timely fashion. Mr. Aldrich also noted that they had checked with the Tax Collector’s Association to provide input and they were advised that such requests must be complied with and that some towns even print this list in their Town Reports.

6. Discussion/Action Items

a. Status of Encumbrance to Lambert Construction

Mr. Aldrich noted that the more specific minutes of December 22, 2008 it is clear that the amount and the intent was clearly discussed and agreed upon. Gerry Hamel, Little Pine Lane, would like to see the Board put these types of jobs out to bid, even though the requirements of the town are now to send out to bid for projects over \$25,000. He suggested that perhaps projects over \$5,000 should be bid. Mr. Dean said that the current system for a job of this size is to get three quotes, not an open bid.

b. Outstanding Receivables Options

Mr. Dean reported that about \$200,000 has been received since the outstanding tax list was published. Mr. Campbell feels that the finance department is understaffed to handle the current volume of work. Mr. Campbell would like to see a town representative call residents to get an idea of the individual

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issues with each overdue account. Mr. Quandt asked for the tax process to be reviewed. Mr. Dean, who also serves as the Tax Collector, reviewed the tax process which calls for tax liens to be placed on a property after any unpaid tax bills, after 2 years the property can be deeded to the Town, the owner has 3 years to repurchase the property and the town has to sit on the property for that time. The Board of Selectmen has to accept or reject the deeds. Mr. Dean noted that some properties are rejected because of very poor condition or contamination. Mr. Quandt asked whether the town would deed a property if the owner is making payments. Mr. Dean said that would be up to the Board of Selectmen to accept or reject the deed. Mr. Dean noted that comparable sized towns have a staff of eight to handle the taxes only, without water and sewer billing and collection. Mr. Dean noted that there has been an idea to move water and sewer billing to Public Works.

Anne Surman, Hampton Falls Road, suggested that the Town take a proactive approach to cutting costs and projects that have been voted on for the past years. Ms. Surman referenced her years on the Budget Committee and suggested a review of personnel, hiring freeze or a wage freeze. Mr. Campbell noted that the Board adopts the budget that the Recommendations Committee submits, with few changes. Mr. Dean noted that regardless of the budget the workload remains the same. Jim Knight, Oak Street, clarified that Mr. Dean is the Tax Collector and asked for clarification about whether the Deputy Tax Collector has been sworn in. Mr. Knight referenced that he has an ongoing water billing problem and he believes that other people in town are having similar problems. Mr. Campbell asked Mr. Dean to find the cost of hiring a temporary person until the end of 2009 to help in the department and where present it at the next meeting. Mr. Dean stated that the cost would be in the area of \$10,000 based on 40 hours per week and 15 weeks of pay. Deb Johnson, Beech Hill Road, said that she thinks that if a new person is hired, it would be a good opportunity to separate water and sewer operations from taxes. Mr. Dean stated that the Munismart software fiber line is being run to DPW soon so that Munismart can be used in that location. Mr. Aldrich thought that the Town may want to look into outsourcing some operations or selling off some of the tax debt. Mr. Hamel thought that selling the tax debt would present 2 problems: the town could lose money that an investor would be making on the interest and penalties for late payments and the Town would lose the ability to show leniency to people that need it. Mr. Childs expressed to the Board that he thought that less people in Town would be in distress if the budget was less and the burden on them was lowered.

8. Regular Business

a. A/P and Payroll Manifests

Mr. Aldrich moved to disburse Payroll dated August 12, 2009 in the amount of \$179,342.01. Ms. Gilman seconds. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Aldrich moved to disburse Accounts Payable dated August 14, 2009 in the amount of \$534,139.39. Ms. Gilman seconds. Vote: Unanimous.

Mr. Aldrich noted that the big ticket items in this warrant were 2 insurance payments to the Local Government Center and \$58,000 for the Stadium well. He also noted that he had one issue with a cell phone reimbursement.

b. Budget Updates- None.

c. Tax Abatements and Exemptions- None.

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d. Water/Sewer Abatements-

Gerry Hamel, Little Pine Lane, is requesting an appeal of the denied water/sewer abatement for his rental property at 26 Highland Street. Mr. Hamel stated that a large puddle was found in the back yard of the property and the toilet tank overflow tubes have since been adjusted. Mr. Hamel noted that the water department checked the meter and found that there was movement on the meter even though it was isolated and he believes that the problem that lead to this issue is related to high water pressure that has been reported since the new water tower was put into use. Mr. Knight concurs that the water pressure is too high and that there is a problem since the new water tank began operations. Mr. Dean stated that the appeal letter has been forwarded to Matt Berube at Public Works for evaluation. Mr. Knight said that a valve (Watts #7) should be installed by the municipality after the meter as an upgrade to stop backflow back into the municipal water supply. Mr. Quandt asked if the Town should be installing these valves.

Mark Mezonotti appeared to say that he has an ongoing problem with a water bill. He said that he has made 55 calls to the town in an effort to pay his bill and 9 of the calls were returned. He quoted a few statistics and distributed a list of his own usage for the past couple of years as well as a chart of his home usage for a number of years. Lorrie Maker, Deputy Tax Collector, notes that there is not enough manpower to change out each meter every 10 years, the meters slow down before they actually die out. Mr. Campbell does not believe that the Board has enough information to make a decision tonight and that the Board should revisit the issue within the next 2 weeks for a resolution. Mr. Mezonotti noted that he will be moving out of Exeter on August 28th, so he would like the situation resolved in time to close on his property.

e. Permits

The Friends of Frank Ginta applied to use the Town Hall with the stage on August 31, 2009 from 6PM onward for a Town Hall meeting.

Mr. Aldrich moved to approve the permit as presented. Mr. Quandt seconded. Vote: Unanimous.

f. Town Manager's Report

Randy Owen from Mercury Associates will begin meeting with town employees next Tuesday to begin the Fleet Study. The Chamber Hiring Committee is in process, and there will be a public forum for the Dam Removal Study on August 26, possibly at the High School where the public is welcome to comment.

g. Selectmen's Committee Reports

Mr. Aldrich reported that the Conservation Commission met to discuss the lease renewal for Raynes Farm. The rails Committee is finalizing their report to submit to the Conservation Commission. The Arts Committee will meet Thursday.

Mr. Quandt will meet with the Cable TV Committee on Thursday at 5:30.

Ms. Gilman had a lot of cancelled meetings this past month. Since the Transcanada proposal, costs have decreased, but there are a few things to work out before the proposal is presented to the Board. She also noted that even if they make a deal with Transcanada, Unitil is still the distributor of the service, which is Unitil.

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Mr. Campbell reported that there was a meeting regarding Capital Improvements last week and it can be seen on EXTV. He noted that in the coming weeks he would like to resolve a number of issues and asked Mr. Dean for the following: Receivables status, decision on property value updates, final employee benefits for the pay plan, an estimated revenue update and possibilities of appropriation reductions, and resolution of the Mezonotti issue.

h. Correspondence

- 1) Copy of letter of compliance re: Sancta Cantrell
- 2) Copy of letter from DES to re: appeal meeting for Waleryszak/Griset/Licata
- 3) Letter from Jeremy Kube re: parking ticket
- 4) ZBA agenda re: variance for 122 Epping Road
- 5) Shoreland Impact Permit from DES re: Tuck Realty
- 6) Newsletter from New Outlook Teen Center
- 7) Invitation to retirement reception for Mary and Charlie Currier
- 8) Decision of Board of Tax and Land Appeals re: Patricia Arline Taylor

9. Public Comment-

Don Woodward, Hemlock Street, said that the Finance Department should help people to pay their bills because people need help at this time.

Mr. Knight, reiterated his dissatisfaction with the inaccuracy of the water and sewer billing.

Ms. Maker said that the Finance Department is working diligently to resolve all billing issues but the lack of adequate personnel has created a large burden on the resources of the department and that she is simply resolving issues as quickly as she can.

10. Non Public Session

Ms. Gilman motioned to move the Board into the Non Public Session under RSA 91: a exception (2a) land acquisition at 9:08pm; Mr. Quandt seconded. Mr. Aldrich called the roll.

Ms. Gilman- aye, Mr. Campbell – aye, Mr. Quandt – aye, and Mr. Aldrich – aye.

11. Adjournment

The Board emerged from non public session and Mr. Aldrich motioned to adjourn at 10:05pm; Ms. Gilman seconded. VOTE: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Geis
Recording Secretary