

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of December 9, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Phil LoChiatto, Vice Chairman Kathleen DiFruscia, Selectmen Al Letizio, Ross McLeod and Roger Hohenberger were present, as was Town Administrator David Sullivan and several department heads. Mr. LoChiatto called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

BUDGET WORKSHOP:

Tax Collector – Mr. Sullivan noted that the Tax Collector budget has minimal changes from the previous year and asked if the Board would like to meet with Ms. Robertson, as she is currently in the process of wrapping up tax collections this evening, and the Board noted that they do not need to meet with Ms. Robertson.

Recreation – Ms. Haas, Recreation Coordinator, noted several members of the Recreation Committee were in the audience, and presented the budget, beginning with the special projects listed in field maintenance, which contains \$20,000 for two projects. Mr. Sullivan noted that the Committee initially requested \$30,000 for three projects, however, Administration reduced the line item to include only \$20,000 and let the Committee prioritize which of the projects they felt were a priority for 2014. The budgeted amounts are based on general estimates at this point. Ms. Haas explained the funding request pertaining to the Nashua Road tennis courts. She noted that they are in tough shape and portions are cracked and unsafe, thus she is estimating \$10,000 is needed to repair these areas. She noted that the courts have been patched in the past, but this funding is to dig up and resurface the areas of the courts that are in the most disrepair, and to repaint and reseal the remaining areas.

Ms. Haas deferred to Mr. Senibaldi to discuss the Griffin Park swale project. Mr. Senibaldi reminded the Board that earlier this year the area adjacent to the center pathway by the multi-purpose building was repaired to remove the “mud-filled” swale next to the soccer fields. The initial repair was made to install drainage and fill in order to remove the standing water from the area. However, the area needs additional fill to be graded level with the playing field, in order to extend the soccer fields in that area, as well as additional irrigation would need to be installed in the “new” portion of the field. Mr. Senibaldi noted that the project would include working with the Highway department again, and have a estimated cost of \$10,000.

Mr. McLeod noted that he hopes the Board will discuss each of the special projects proposed in the Recreation budget, but he will recuse himself from any vote on these projects due to the direct benefit to Windham soccer regarding the Griffin Park swale.

Ms. Haas noted that the Recreation Committee Chairman, Tim Kelleher, had joined the meeting in the audience. She then discussed the Wonderland project, outlining the plan to sand and seal the playground equipment, noting that some work had been done about five years ago, but it was time to do this again to avoid splintering, and decay of the wood.

Further discussion ensued regarding the various projects and Ms. Haas answered several questions from the Board. She noted that in terms of priority, she would prefer that Nashua Road tennis courts be addressed this year. Mr. Hohenberger motioned to further reduce this line item by \$10,000 and complete one out of the three projects. Mrs. DiFruscia seconded for discussion. Discussion turned to what work could be done by volunteers, such as boy/girl scouts, and whether the work could be deferred, noting the playground was built in the late 1980’s and the initial refinishing was long overdue. Mr. Senibaldi noted that the Committee is looking for more extensive work than could be done by volunteer groups. The Board voted on the motion 1-3-1, with Mr. LoChiatto, Mr. Letizio and Mrs. DiFruscia opposed, and Mr.

McLeod abstained. Mr. Letizio noted that he would like the Committee to prioritize the projects, as they all appear necessary, and would consider putting that portion of the line item back to \$30,000. Mrs. Case approached to note the playground was built in 1991.

Mr. LoChiatto noted that the Board had received an email from Ms. Haas this afternoon indicating that members of the Recreation Committee may be bringing a proposal to the Board tonight to begin a winter ice skating program at the area where the skatepark previously was. Mr. Hohenberger indicated he did not receive it. Mr. LoChiatto noted that he is bringing it to the attention of the Board because Ms. Haas and members of the Committee are present, and time is of the essence when it pertains to ice skating. Mrs. DiFruscia noted that the use of the former skatepark area was not listed on the agenda for tonight's meeting and she does not feel it should be discussed at this time. She noted that there are a lot of ideas out there and that the Recreation Committee should address it first. Ms. Haas noted that she was not informed of the discussion intended for tonight and noted that she felt her reputation is affected by this because she has told many residents that when the time comes to discuss the use of the former skatepark there would be an advertised public discussion at a Board of Selectmen meeting. Mr. LoChiatto asked about emails that had been sent and Ms. Haas maintained there were no emails or discussions pertaining to this ice hockey concept among the entire Recreation committee.

Mr. Senibaldi noted that a group approached a member of the Recreation Committee looking for a pilot project for this winter, but before investing time and effort into a full proposal, if the Board has no interest, they would like to know. He noted that there is no money in the Recreation budget to do anything with the concrete pad this year, so he agreed to ask the Board if this is something they would have an interest in pursuing. He also noted that he did ask Ms. Haas for this to be included as an agenda item tonight. Members of the Board reiterated that the Recreation Committee should address the proposal first and to come to the Selectmen with a proposal, and follow the appropriate process.

Mr. Kelleher approached the Board and reiterated that the hockey group and members of the Recreation Committee would like to know if the Board will allow a temporary project there, or expects the committee "stand down" for this winter. Mr. McLeod and Mrs. DiFruscia both noted that they do not have enough information tonight to make any decisions, and that the Recreation Committee must go through a process first and then present a formal plan to the Board. The Board noted that the Spruce Pond CIP article will be discussed later in the evening.

Library – Mr. Sullivan noted that this is a budget that the Board of Selectmen does not have the ability to adjust, outside of putting the entire budget into a separate warrant article, and noted that in the past, the Trustees have generally worked with past Boards to present a reasonable budget. Carl Heidenblad, Library Director, noted that the operating side of the budget is approximately \$2,000 less than the prior year, but that the overall increase as proposed is contained in the personnel and benefits line items. Mr. Heidenblad explained that they are looking to increase the Young Adult Librarian position from 30 hours per week to 40 hours, noting that this is a highly utilized area of the Library and the Trustees feel strongly that this position is needed as full-time. Further discussion ensued regarding the programs and services that would benefit from the additional hours.

Mr. Letizio asked about the \$175,000 allocated to the Library as part of this year's CIP and discussion ensued regarding the nature of the projects and past library projects done through the CIP. Discussion turned to the new position and whether the increased hours could be delayed. Mr. Heidenblad noted that this is something he feels very strongly about. Mr. Sullivan asked if the increase could be delayed until later in the calendar year and Mr. Heidenblad indicated that he could be agreeable to this. Mr. Sullivan noted that the delay in the increase to full-time to July 1, would equate to approximately \$10,000 in savings as compared to starting April 1. Mr. Heidenblad also noted that if the HVAC is replaced in the upcoming year, he could reduce the property maintenance line item which contains HVAC maintenance

costs. Mr. Hohenberger would like to see the CIP funding cut in half, to do the HVAC project for \$95,000, and would also like to see a reduction in the property maintenance budget, but recognizes that the HVAC article will stand alone and may not pass. Mr. McLeod noted that he would like to see the CIP articles move forward and maintain the assets, rather than add staff hours. Discussion turned to whether the cost of the additional hours proposed for this position could be put on the warrant as a separate article and Mr. Heidenblad noted concerns about doing this and would rather delay one of the two CIP projects. Mr. LoChiatto felt that these two items are not able to be “swapped”. Mr. Letizio made a motion to maintain the budgeted funds for the position to go from part-time to full-time, and keep the HVAC CIP item, but delay the carpet replacement item until a later year, effectively reducing the overall funding by \$80,000. Mr. McLeod seconded. Mr. Hohenberger agreed, if we could also extend the start date of full-time to July 1. Motion passed 4-1 with Mr. Hohenberger opposed.

Elections – There were no questions from Board, other than Mrs. Bottai noting that there are three elections in 2014 versus one in 2013.

Town Clerk – Mrs. Bottai presented changes to her budget from the previous year noting there is a small addition for a part-time clerk to work the extended night/weekend hours (approximately 20 hours per month), so that there are a minimum of two people in the building at all times. Discussion ensued regarding flexing the two full-time clerks’ hours and additional funds to cover overtime while the Town Clerk is on maternity leave. Discussion turned to other line items in the budget and no changes were made. Mr. Letizio motioned and Mrs. DiFruscia seconded to support the Town Clerk’s budget as proposed. Mr. LoChiatto inquired as to what other ways the office can be automated to assist with saving the clerks’ time, however, Mrs. Bottai noted that even the electronic registration process requires manual handling by the clerks. Motion passed unanimously.

Cable – After a brief discussion, Mr. Letizio motioned and Mr. McLeod seconded to support the Cable budget as proposed. Passed unanimously.

Conservation – Mr. Sullivan noted that the only change to Conservation was to add the Minute Taker position and reallocate the Park Ranger position to the budget, which was previously funded from the Conservation Land fund. Mrs. DiFruscia motioned and Mr. Letizio seconded to support the Conservation budget as proposed. Passed unanimously.

Searles – Mr. Sullivan noted that the Searles operating budget has been level funded. Mr. Sullivan then noted that the Committee had asked that the bond article that had been previously approved through the CIP for \$78,100 be removed from the warrant. On a net basis, this will have no impact on the overall budget increase because the appropriation was to be offset by bond proceeds. Marion Dinsmore explained that in light of what occurred with the bond article in 2013 failing, that the Committee does not wish to take that risk again this year and plans to use funds raised by Margaret Case, as well as property trust funds and the Searles Special revenue fund to complete the needed maintenance projects.

Mrs. Dinsmore noted that several projects were completed with the donated funds including: new windows in the East Room, repairs to the second floor of the tower, purchase of new Sally’s, and painting of the exterior. Mrs. Case then asked if the standard maintenance/marketing article could be increased due to the fact that the bond payment will no longer be required and, with revenues increasing, that whatever comes into the fund can be spent. Mr. Sullivan noted that this will be finalized when we have all revenues in for the year, prior to the final budget/warrant being posted, but that it could be increased to \$25,000-30,000. Raising a higher amount, such as \$50,000, would pose a risk if voters do not understand that it is coming from the revenue fund.

HDC – Mr. Letizio noted that the HDC had presented a concept to the CIP, but that it was withdrawn because it didn't qualify as a capital item. Mr. Griffin approached the Board to explain the concept which included writing an edition to the Town's history, modeled after "The Rural Oasis", and asked for some funding to be put aside between now and 2017, in advance of the Town's 275th anniversary. The initial outlay for publications was estimated at \$15,000, with the total project estimated at \$28,000 for printing of booklets. In 2014, Mr. Griffin noted they would begin with \$3,000 for editing consultation costs. Discussion ensued regarding ways to fund the overall project.

The Board discussed use of remaining 2013 funds for sign purchases that were initially designated for 2014. Mr. David Appleby, Chairman, agreed that the historic marker sign could be purchased out of the 2013 budget funds. He also noted that the Commission intends to sell the books in order to offset the printing costs. Mrs. DiFruscia motioned to add \$1,500 to the 2014 HDC budget (a total of \$3,000) to fund the editing costs. Mr. Letizio seconded, and motion passed 4-1 with Mr. Hohenberger opposed.

Assessing - Mr. Sullivan noted that the only significant change in the Assessing budget is \$100,000 in Contracted Services to fund contracted assessing technicians in order to prepare for the Town's required 5-year Assessment Review by the NH Department of Revenue which will take place in 2015. Mr. Norman introduced David Cornell from the Property Appraisal division of the DRA, who was in the audience and available to answer any questions pertaining to the DRA's review. Mr. Norman discussed the various factors that are assessed by the DRA as part of their review, as well as the various guidelines and statistics that the Town will need to be in compliance with. Mr. Norman noted that the last full measure and list of the Town occurred in 1995 (which would cost approximately \$263,000 if the Town hired an outside firm in one year). The Assessor has been doing "quartering" analysis since our last DRA Assessment in 2010, however with the increase in development and having a one person to do the assessments, the Town is at a point where additional assistance is needed, in order to avoid the Town being ordered to perform a full revaluation. Further discussion ensued and Mr. Norman addressed questions from the Board. Discussion turned to the DRA and what a community would be faced with if they do not fund this effort, that the DRA could ultimately turn it over to the Board of Tax and Land Appeals. For this type of ordered revaluation, the BTLA would select the company, oversee the contract and add the cost to the Town's tax rate directly. After additional discussion, Mrs. DiFruscia motioned and Mr. Letizio seconded to support the Assessing budget as proposed. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Norman then presented a series of administrative abatements representing billing errors as a result of the bridge between the assessing and collection systems, for a total of \$82,316.80. These amounts have been incorrectly billed, but will be adjusted in the tax billing system, but require formal approval by the Board. The Board signed the abatements as well as the 2013 Equalization certificate.

Spruce Pond CIP Item - Mr. McLeod recused himself from the discussion due to the potential benefit to Windham Soccer Association. It was noted the CIP has recommended this project at a cost of \$275,000. Mr. Senibaldi discussed the project status and permits that are in place, and what the plans are for constructing the fields, as well as the extensive work that has already been done in preparing this area for future fields. Mr. Senibaldi confirmed the project would be put out to bid, once approved. The project cost includes site work, fencing, loam and sod, the sprinkling system and associated pump house and water storage tank, as well as an area for off-street parking. Mr. Senibaldi noted the cost estimates have been reviewed by the Highway Agent as well. Mrs. DiFruscia asked about continued use of the golf course property, but Mr. Senibaldi noted the terrain was difficult, it could only be used for practices and they were told at the time that it was for last season only. Discussion turned to whether the project could be done in phases, as well as the financing options and the required 60% approval with a bond vote.

Mr. Hohenberger noted that he cannot support the article this year. Mr. Letizio motioned to support the project and put the article on the warrant by funding through a three-year bond, for an approximate net appropriation of \$95,000 for 2014. Mrs. DiFruscia seconded for discussion. Mr. Letizio asked Mr. McLeod to weigh in on the option of a full article or three-year bond, and Mr. McLeod respectfully declined. Mrs. DiFruscia noted that she is torn due to the overall budget increase, but at this point she is in favor of moving this article forward as a bond article, but noted that in the end she might not be able to support it. After further discussion, the motion passed 3-1 with Mr. Hohenberger opposed. Mr. LoChiatto noted that ultimately it will be up to the voters.

Mr. Sullivan noted that the one remaining article to be discussed is the Water Study proposal and our intention would be to invite the WEDC when that item is discussed. It was noted that the meeting on December 19th is posted as a budget workshop for the purposes of discussing this article, as well as any other items Board members wish to revisit in order to wrap up the budget.

Mr. McLeod motioned and Mrs. DiFruscia seconded to adjourn. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Call
Asst Town Administrator-Finance

NOTE: These minutes are prepared in draft form and have not been submitted to the Board for approval.