

Minutes
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Monday, April 7, 2003
Police Station Community Room
7:00 p.m.

Chairman Gerard A. Nolet called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Selectmen Gerard A. Nolet and Hal W. Haberman.

Also Present: Town Administrator Susan Wright.

Absent: Selectman Brian M. Ashe.

Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of the March 10, 2003 Special Meeting, March 17, 2003 Regular Meeting, March 17, 2003 Executive Session, March 26, 2003 Special Meeting and March 26, 2003 Executive Session were all accepted as presented.

Visitor Comments and Questions: There were several residents that wished to address the Board of Selectmen. The Board first heard from **Bob Leclair, Assistant Assessor** for the Town. Mr. Leclair wanted to let the Board know he objected to Article 15 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, which would do away with the Vision Appraisal Web Site. The article was submitted by the Appropriations Committee. Mr. Leclair made a case of why he thought the website was important to customers and to the staff in his office as it saves clerical time and is more efficient. Mr. Nolet felt it was a valuable service and after much discussion, it was decided that Mr. Nolet would speak with Mr. Marantz, Chairman of Appropriations, to see if they would consider withdrawing the article.

The Board then took a question from **David Hartman of 50 Williams Street**. He stated that he still did not feel he received an adequate answer to his question from the Town Forum. He wanted to know if there was a future plan to remediate all the asbestos from the DPW site. He felt it was a health issue and the town had a morale obligation to take care of the matter. Mr. Nolet answered that the town has remediated much of the asbestos and will continue working with DEP to improve the facility. Mr. Nolet stated he was not prepared to comment on asbestos exposure matters.

The Board then took comments from **Joseph Occhiuti of 23 Hawthorne Drive**. He stated that he thought the Town Forum went well and he would like to see the Board consider holding additional forums featuring certain departments. He also stated that the Democratic and Republican Town Committees are co-sponsoring a Charter Commission Candidates night on April 22, 2003 at the Community House.

Appropriations Committee and School Committee Budget Discussion: Present for the discussion about the FY04 budget were Steven Marantz, Deb Gebo, Judd Peskin and Russell Moore all members of the Appropriations Committee and Paul Pasterczyk, Town Accountant. Also present were Carol Daigle, Chair of the School Committee and Mary Ryan Kusiak, School Committee Member.

Mr. Nolet began the discussion by outlining the directive given to departments by the Appropriations Committee. He stated that the Appropriations Committee had challenged all of us to reduce budgets by 3% from FY03 inclusive of FY04 salary increases and that the town departments had been met that goal by clipping almost a half million from the town budget. Mr. Nolet indicated that the school budget submitted by the School Committee has created a budget gap of \$1,070,000. Mr. Nolet stated that the majority of residents don't have children in the schools and value all the services the town has to offer. Mr. Nolet stated "This is not business as usual!"

Mr. Marantz, Chair of the Appropriations was invited to speak next. He stated his Committee was surprised by the budget figure submitted by the School Committee and that they were not expecting the School Committee to do this and were not prepared for this turn of events. The Appropriations Committee stated they will speak against the higher school department budget at Town Meeting. If the Schools want support for a higher budget, they should ask for an override. He stated balance and fairness was their goal in setting their budgetary guidelines and they would stand firm that this applies to all departments of the town.

Ms. Daigle, Chair of the School Committee stated that in the last eleven years enrollment has increased 20% yet the school budget has remained the same percentage of the total overall budget. She stated that educational requirements have changed over the years and while there may be fewer children in the school system overall than in the 70's, educational requirements drive the way classes are staffed, etc. She explained that the School Committee had made one round of cuts to bring the budget to 3% below the FY03 budget but in order to include negotiated salary increases and other vital services, they needed to recommend a budget that would be \$1,070,000 over the target figure. The School Committee was not willing at this point to trim the budget and propose larger class sizes. Ms. Daigle suggested that the Board implement a trash fee or look for other areas to make cuts.

Mr. Nolet took immediate issue with the trash fee. He stated his job was to balance the needs of the whole community and that the town had been advised by our financial advisor that it was wise to reserve the trash fee for future flexibility in the budget for the years ahead.

Mr. Haberman asked Ms. Daigle if the School Committee wanted an override. Ms. Daigle responded that they were not asking for one, but the Board of Selectmen should make that decision. Mr. Haberman also asked Ms. Daigle which areas of the town budget she would suggest for further cuts. Ms. Daigle responded it was not her job to determine these things. Mr. Haberman pointed out that a trash fee might only bring in \$600,000 and this would not close the potential gap. Mr. Haberman stated that he would consider the idea of a non-binding referendum to the voters regarding a trash fee but it was noted that a lot of education about the issue would need to be done to get meaningful results from such a referendum.

Discussion on the matter continued and in the end the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen stated he was not in favor of an override or trash fee. The joint meeting ended with the general feeling that the School Committee would be seeking the higher budget number of the floor of town meeting and that it would ultimately be up to the voters. The question of how to balance the budget if the higher school number prevailed at Town Meeting remained unanswered.

Old Business:

1. Fire Truck Financing: The Appropriations Committee and Board of Selectmen reviewed the proposed recommendations for financing the fire truck. After much discussion it was agreed that the funding for the Fire Truck would be borrowed in conjunction with other borrowing that the Town Treasurer would be doing. The short-term borrowing and the plan for financing for the fire truck will allow the truck to be paid incurring minimal additional costs. It was agreed that \$62,500 from last year's capital appropriation for the loader would be reallocated to the fire truck, that \$15,000 from the remaining funds in the Public Safety Complex project would be transferred to the Fire Truck and \$35,000 would be recommended from the Capital Planning Committee's FY03 recommendations.

2. Furloughs: The Board of Selectmen reviewed a response they received from the School Committee regarding furloughs for the School Administration. The Board directed the Town Administrator write a memorandum to the School Committee responding to their questions. The Board clarified that they

suggest a furlough be implemented including the Superintendent, Asst. Superintendent, Business Manager, Principals and any other comparable department heads or assistant department heads.

New Business

1. Draft Annual Town Meeting Warrant: The Board reviewed the Annual Town Meeting Warrant with Town Accountant Paul Pasterczyk and the Town Administrator. Ms. Wright ran through each article. Two were discussed in greater detail:

Article 4: Operating Budget: There was considerable discussion on the Operating Budget and the concern about the higher budget number passing for the School Budget. Town Accountant Paul Pasterczyk advised the Board that if the higher budget figure passes for the Schools the town has three options: 1) Use Reserves to fill the gap such as Free Cash 2) Reduce the budget further such as making additional cuts either at the Annual Town Meeting or another Special Town Meeting 3) Raise Additional Revenues through either an override or a trash fee. Mr. Pasterczyk pointed out that these measures or a combination of these measures could be implemented to balance the budget. Mr. Nolet stated that even without an override taxes will rise 5.4% due to the allowable 2 ½% increase and the debt on the school projects.

Article 15: Vision Website: The Board discussed the possibility of removing this article as per the Assessors request. The article was submitted by the Appropriations Committee. After much discussion it was left that Mr. Nolet would discuss the matter with Mr. Marantz to see if they could come to an agreement about removing the article. If not, the Board was reluctant to take off an article submitted by another Board or Committee and therefore unless agreement is reached with Appropriations, the article will remain on the warrant.

It was noted that the motions will be reviewed at the meeting on May 5, 2003. The Board approved and signed the warrant as presented.

2. Reserve Fund Requests: The Board approved a request for \$15,000 for the legal expenses budget shortfall and a request for \$13,500 for the wage apportionment account to provide FY03 raises to non-union employees.

3. Regional Board of Selectmen Meeting Agenda: It was noted that Longmeadow would host the next Regional Selectmen's meeting Thursday, April 10th and have asked the other Towns for agenda items.

4. Fire Department Request for Approval to Apply for Federal Funds: The Board reviewed Chief Madison's request to be allowed to apply for federal funds to purchase equipment for the Department. Should the application be successful, the Town would need to fund 10% of the cost, or \$10,143. The Board agreed to allow the Chief to move forward with this application.

5. Crossing Guard Application: Troy Ann Cossette Mangold was appointed as a School Traffic Officer on the request of Chief Marchese and Safety Officer Kirby.

6. Request for Use of Town Seal: A request from the Historical Society to reproduce the Town Seal on a canvas bag to be sold during Long Meddowe Days and other events as a fundraiser for the Society was approved.

7. Request from Shaker Road Resident to Plant Grass on Unused Pavement: A request from James Brennan, regarding a house at 272 Shaker Road to remove a small portion of pavement in order to plant grass was reviewed. The area in question is adjacent to the recently abandoned Mill Road. The landscape

plan was reviewed and it was decided that the Board would seek input on the matter from Town Counsel before allowing permission and also check with abutter Mr. Joe Cambi. The Board voted to approve the project contingent on the above approvals.

Town Administrator's Report: The Board reviewed the Town Administrator's report and discussed several items. The issue of sorting the daily mail was discussed. Budget reductions in the Town Clerk, Treasurer and Collectors Offices have prompted Louise Lines to recommend that an alternative for mail sorting be explored. Currently her staff sorts the mail, much of which comes for all town departments to 20 Williams Street. After much discussion it was decided that the mail should be sorted on a rotating basis by all the departments located at the Town Hall. The Venti Property at 463 Maple Road was also discussed and the Board asked the Town Administrator to look into possibly renting the property.

Correspondence

WMECO Petition: It was noted that WMECO has withdrawn its two petitions (South Park Avenue and Ellington Street) since the abutters objected to the location of the transformers proposed to alleviate power problems that occurred last summer. WMECO will try other options to upgrade some existing facilities.

Long Meddowe Days Parade Invitation: Chairman Nolet will attend. Mr. Haberman cannot attend and Ms. Wright will check with Brian Ashe.

East Longmeadow 4th of July Parade Invitation: The Board will individually decide at a later date.

Letter from Mary Gray Re: Sidewalk IFO 47 Warren Terrace: This letter was referred to the Tree Warden and DPW Superintendent with instructions to respond and forward copy to BOS.

Executive Session: At 8:55 P.M. the Board voted unanimously, G. Nolet yes, H. Haberman yes, to enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing Union negotiations and noted that they would not return to Open Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Wright
Town Administrator