

**MINUTES
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
AUGUST 20, 2013**

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Members present were Sandra Wilson, Thomas Buckley, Dianna Provencher, Matthew Dennison and Douglas Belanger. There was no Administrator present.

Set Polling Hours – Special Election

Chairman Wilson noted that costs would increase with extended hours, other communities use regular hours for special elections per Town Clerk, who recommends our regular town polling hours of 12:00pm-8:00pm.

MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved to hold polling hours for October 1, 2013 Special Election at Town Hall from 12:00pm – 8:00pm. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved for Board to sign Election Warrant for October 1st ballot question. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

Late Correspondence

- Memo from Sgt Antanavica explaining test call scheduled for 10:00am on Tuesday August 27th with regards to new Reverse 911 notification system "Code Red" start up. Ms. Wilson noted that information is located on Town's website, with link for residents to sign up to have future emergency calls sent to phones or email. She explained that all 892-exchange numbers were automatically transferred to new system. Sgt. Antanavica will assist those in need. FILE
- Estimate in the amount of \$3840 from LB Communications for additional work on site testing of new police radio system, listing three personnel and total of 6-hours involved. She noted that the Fire Dept. did their own testing at no cost; perhaps this dept. could do the same. She further explained that LB Communications was hired as Clerk of Works for installation process, but this would be added work and added cost. Mr. Belanger noted, Sgt Antanavica, who is in charge of this project, feels the amount is reasonable and within budget. The Board discussed the investment of nearly \$195,000 on new radio system, so the project should be done right, and ultimately it would be their call on what Mr. Belanger sees as a relatively low percentage of total project cost to ensure compatibility and efficient results. When asked where funds would come from, it was noted that the project has been funded through Capital project appropriation. Mr. Belanger felt we did not want to ask our officers to do more work by performing these tests themselves, as they are too busy already. Mr. Buckley felt it would be money well spent. Mr. Dennison noted this is a time sensitive project with a tight schedule; we should make sure this is done right.

MOTION: Mr. Belanger moved to authorize expenditure per estimate as presented for police radio project. Mr. Dennison seconded. 4-1, Ms. Wilson opposed.

Proposition 2½ Override – FY'14 Budget

Ms. Wilson stated that Town government will now have to absorb the total \$460,000+ deficit as the Schools will not talk about cuts. Ms. Provencher was astonished, as we have always worked together and usually agree to a 60/40% split on these matters. Mr. Dennison noted that an arrangement was made through meeting of chairs, a collaborative effort. While he may not like the outcome, the important thing that he does like is that we came away with a 5-year plan. But Ms. Provencher felt the Schools would come around and help out some, as we are in dire straits; they always have. She cannot believe they would dismiss any funding responsibility with this deficit looming.

FY'13 level funded budget – Ms. Wilson noted that we must add to the numbers provided by Bob Reed to include any additional appropriations or transfers during that fiscal year. To that end, the budgets were increased as follows totaling \$197,310:

#111	Legal	\$10,000	#220	Fire Dept.	\$18,350
#135	Accountant	\$ 8,000	#420	Highway Dept.	\$15,000
#141	Assessor	\$ 3,760	#423	Hwy snow & ice	\$130,000 (agreed to #)
#155	IT	\$20,000	#510	Board of Health	\$ 8,000
#162	Elections	\$13,200	#543	Veterans Agent	\$ 15,000
#197	Code Dept.	\$ 5,000	#610	Library	\$ 1,000
#210	Police Dept.	\$34,000			

(Since this meeting, it was discovered that a supplemental amount of \$15,000 was added to #543 Veterans budget in October'12 and another \$15,000 was added in May'13. Total to be added is actually \$30,000.)

Mr. Belanger hoped there may be some room to move when Net School Spending numbers are reviewed by Accountant. We do not want to pit one department against another. And we shouldn't start this meeting with a negative. We should work on what we want to cut, first of all. And yes, in the past we have always come to a 60/40 split decision on shared cuts.

Mr. Buckley noted that the Override slide that speaks to School Dept. notes that seven positions will be eliminated should the Override proposal fail, amounting to approximately \$280,000. That amount happens to be about 60% of the deficit, perhaps by coincidence or possibly on purpose.

Mr. Belanger noted the 5-year financial projections plan is what is attractive here. We could avoid an Override for another year and spend down the rest of our reserves, we could manage one more year. But the 5-year plan is what might sell this Override. Mr. Buckley felt it is tremendous to have made this long-range plan between the School Committee, the Advisory Board and this Board.

Review of Override slide show

Police Dept. - Regional Dispatching

Mr. Dennison noted that other communities are not opting for Worcester Regional Dispatching. Mr. Belanger explained that West Boylston is still considering joining with Worcester but their Selectmen have asked them to research other avenues. We still have a generous offer from Worcester, one that West Boylston was not included in. Worcester needs a minimum of two other towns to join for them to obtain the proposed regional dispatching grant. Many towns are talking amongst themselves, there are a number of variations to consider. If the Override proposal fails, however, the decision would be moot. We will need officers on duty as opposed to people answering phones. Mr. Buckley stated that he has been against regional dispatching all along, but should the Override fail, it would be an avenue to pursue. Ms. Wilson noted that the funding for any grants would come from the fee we have been paying for several years on our phone bills, a federal charge that she feels will not be removed in our lifetime. Ms. Provencher felt regional dispatching will happen, with or without an Override. That is the way municipalities have to look at things now. Mr. Dennison stated that he has been against the regional dispatching for Leicester. He too may have to consider such a plan should the Override fail.

Mr. Belanger felt we would not pursue regional dispatching if the Override passes. Mr. Buckley reminded all of our \$3.5 Million police station we are paying for; he does not want to remove our dispatchers or equipment. Ms. Wilson noted that with the 5-year plan and Override passing, we are still behind on staffing of police department, so we cannot consider improving those numbers at this point, not without regional dispatching on the table. Mr. Belanger agreed it is something we must keep on the back burner.

It was felt that police officers will be moving to other communities if things don't improve in that department. We will become the training ground as officers move elsewhere. Mr. Dennison was made aware that officers on layoff would have to be retrained at this point in time before they could be reinstated.

Fire Dept.

Ms. Wilson noted the only place to reduce this budget is in training line. Mr. Buckley asked what the cost for training personnel is each year. Ms. Wilson estimated \$30,000. She noted the Fire Chiefs have already cut back on training due to budget restrictions.

Library

The Board noted that any further cuts in operating hours will cause us to not be certified by State, losing funding and grants. We might as well close the Library altogether if we are not certified, which may be the result should the Override fail.

School Dept.

Ms. Wilson noted that compliance with MCAS testing is due by 2015, or we could pay to bus students to other schools, as we do not have equipment available to accommodate testing procedures. This regulation was ruled not to be an unfunded mandate, by the way. Ms. Provencher noted recent discussions regarding a shared IT staffer. While Ms. Wilson felt that to be a good idea, we are desperate now for IT technology. Mr. Buckley explained that accreditation is at risk without IT upgrades. Mr. Dennison reminded the Board of a grant Mr. Reed was pursuing that would bring us technology consultant. Ms. Wilson explained that was for GIS grant through Central 13 Collaborative and for mapping of assessing records. Mr. Buckley felt at this point, sharing is survival.

Highway Dept.

First of all, Ms. Wilson noted that we have set the Snow & Ice budget to a more realistic \$130,000 as this line item was underfunded each year while we deficit spent and supplemented the appropriation in the spring. Mr. Dennison asked what it costs to pay overtime to employees vs hiring private contractors to clear snow. Ms. Wilson reported \$19/hour for those using Town equipment or \$75/hour for those using their own equipment. Employees are paid regular time or overtime per contract as needed. She feels Mr. Wood does good managing with what he has to work with for equipment and personnel. She noted, even with overtime employees only average \$38,000-\$45,000 per year in wages, not a whole lot. Mr. Buckley felt there are not enough men to cover work during storms. Mr. Belanger noted that clearing of sidewalks by abutters is not mentioned as a cost savings, as we tried that once and it wreaked havoc amongst townspeople.

Council on Aging

Mr. Belanger noted that our many volunteers are getting older; how will we backfill those seats should they decide to stop working. Mr. Buckley noted the additional hours put in by Director without getting paid, just to get more programs in place and keep the senior center open longer hours. It was agreed that she should be paid for the hours worked.

Capital Planning

Mr. Dennison will review FY'14 Capital Plan and determine total cost of outstanding projects. Ms. Wilson asked that we separate the \$4.5 Million for new fire station, as that would hopefully be funded in a different manner should program grants be re-established. All felt the number of projects and total cost for capital plan may help residents understand the situation and perhaps help pass the Override proposal.

(Cost of current FY'14 5-year Capital Plan is \$6,201,120 – determined after meeting date.)

Miscellaneous

General discussion on difficulty determining specific information to bring as hand out, trying not to confuse voters but supply enough info to help them make an informed decision. It was agreed that perhaps the first public forum would give us enough feedback to determine just what information is most desirable. When asked about the slide that Advisory Board was going to include listing revenues lost since 2009, Ms. Wilson indicated that the information was not prepared.

Board Reports/New Business

Selectman Belanger:

- Public auction held today for 81 Waite St property resulted in \$47,500 sale price. He noted that more than \$20,000 was owed in back taxes, fees, etc and the parcel is now back on the tax rolls. The Board hoped for more tax title sales but understands the difficulty with staffing issues to get the job done. But this must be done in the near future, there are many owner-unknown properties and other land-locked parcels that

neighbors may want to purchase. Mr. Belanger wondered if we could use these proceeds as a sort-of "enterprise fund"; seed money to hire someone to complete these land sales. Mr. Dennison stated that he had reviewed Assessors' webpage in an attempt to decipher how much these groups of parcels might bring in but he could not understand what category properties were in. Ms. Wilson noted there is a code system that you need to complete this exercise, which she had obtained from Principal Assessor John Prescott. She felt the Assessors could produce a report in this regard and conduct auction process to a point. Mr. Belanger stated that he had spoken with Bob Reed about this some time ago. Ms. Wilson wondered if we should institute a sub-committee in this regard.

Selectman Dennison:

- Thanked the Town Administrator Search Committee for their work and diligence in getting us through this process and providing us with competent finalists. He is very excited about the prospective of hiring our selection and feels it is a good step forward for the Town. Ms. Provencher echoed his sentiments. Mr. Buckley was impressed with interview process.

Selectman Buckley:

- Ruth Kaminski has an actual doctor's office medical scale available through her recycling program, a valuable instrument that he feels our senior center could utilize.

Selectman Wilson:

- Last summer concert of the series will be held Wednesday evening on the Town Common. She is unable to attend, but it has been a great music series put on by our Bandstand Committee, led by Judy Ivel.
- Schools open tomorrow so please be cautious with children going to and fro during the morning and afternoons.

MOTION: Mr. Belanger moved to adjourn. Mr. Dennison seconded. UNANIMOUS

The meeting was adjourned at 8:06pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan LeChasseur Administrative Assistant