

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

January 7, 2008, 5:00 p.m.

Corner Meeting House

Chairman Cormier called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., also present were Selectman Caldwell, Selectman Jon Pike, Town Administrator K. Jeanne Beaudin, Administrative Assistant Cary Lagace, Police Chief Vinnie Baiocchetti, Public Works Director Jim Fortin, Fire Chief Jim Davis, Deputy Fire Chief Sean McCarty, David Morse, Donna Cilley, Linda Frawley, Brenda Paquette, Eric with the Winnisquam Echo and Ray Carbone(5:35) with the Daily Sun.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

Selectman Caldwell moved to accept the minutes of the December 11, 2007 meeting as written. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Health Insurance Benefits – Part Time

Town Administrator Beaudin explained that she has been approached by a part time employee requesting the ability to purchase at their full expense insurance though the Town insurance plan. At this time elected officials are allowed to purchase insurance and it would be similar for part time employees. The Board of Selectman can vote to authorize part time employees to purchase insurance per guidelines set by LGC. The only affect on the Town would be the experience factor.

The Board discussed what the hour requirements would be, Town Administrator Beaudin pointed out that the minimum would be half of what is considered full time by the Town. Donna Cilley indicated that this had been considered in the past with one of the concerns being the experience factor. Chairman Cormier expressed that he didn't feel that was a concern. They discussed that the individual would only qualify if they have regularly scheduled hours.

Selectman Caldwell moved to allow part time employees to purchase health insurance coverage through the Town in accordance with the guidelines established by LGC. This would include only regular permanent part time employees; they must work a minimum of 24 hours per week but less than 35. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

National Forensic Academy Memo

Chairman Cormier noted that the Board had received a memo from Chief Baiocchetti regarding an exceptional opportunity that has presented itself. Chief Baiocchetti went on to explain that he had been looking for investigative school for Detective Moulton but the local schools were full so he expanded his search and came up with another great option through the University of Tennessee. The cost of the program at \$6500 was too much to pull off this year so he was going to apply for a grant and try to get her enrolled for the Fall, however during discussions with the school he was able to make arrangements for Detective Moulton to attend the current class for free. They had not had anyone from NH go through the program yet and they had a last minute cancellation that allowed them to work a deal with the Chief. She has gone off to Tennessee and will graduate from the program on March 14th.

He added that although her absence will be felt, there is coverage and this really is an opportunity of a lifetime. He assured the Board that through discussions with Detective Moulton she has no plans of leaving the department. The Board agreed that this is a great opportunity for Detective Moulton and the Police Department.

Town Administrator's Report

Economic Development Non Capital Reserve Appropriation Request

Town Administrator Beaudin asked the Board to encumber the funds from the Economic initiative. Through discussion with the Planning Board they are in favor of transferring the \$20,000 to the non capital reserve Economic Development account for future Economic Development initiatives and Master Plan chapter.

Selectman Caldwell moved to encumber \$20,000 for Master Plan Economic Development chapter into the non capital reserve Economic Development account. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Linda Frawley commented that the Economic Development chapter of the Master Plan should cost nowhere near that amount. Chairman Cormier noted that he was certain the Planning Board would utilize the funds properly.

Comstar Warrant Article Approval

Town Administrator Beaudin reviewed the four Warrant Articles regarding the discontinuation of the Comstar Capital Reserve account. The first article discontinues the Comstar fund; the second establishes a Public Safety Capital Reserve account, the third for the purchase of a ladder truck from newly established Public Safety Account and the fourth for the purchase of an ambulance from the newly established Public Safety Account. She noted that she is still waiting for the balance of the Comstar account to determine the amount of funds to be transferred.

Selectman Caldwell moved to accept the four warrant articles as written. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

BRATT Encumbrance Phase I

Town Administrator Beaudin asked the Board to encumber \$69,942 for the BRATT project Phase I. Selectman Caldwell moved to encumber \$69,942 for Phase I of the BRATT Trail project. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Beaudin explained that Ron Mitchell may come before the Board in the near future for additional discussions regarding the recently received estimates for the project.

Legal Budget Encumbrance (Arbitration/Mediation)

Selectman Caldwell moved to encumber \$10,000 from the Legal Budget for arbitration/mediation. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Enforceable Building Codes

Town Administrator Beaudin explained that Building Inspector Steve Dalton recently published a notice regarding building codes, indicating which ones are no longer in effect and those that are in effect and will be enforced here in Belmont. These changes are also being given to anyone completing a building permit application.

Traffic Ordinance - Draft

The Board reviewed the draft Traffic Ordinance which goes along with the recently changed Snow Ordinance. The Traffic Ordinance will allow for enforcement of parking bans. The Board will hold two Public Hearings relative to this proposed ordinance.

Conservation Commission Appointment Request

Ken Knowlton has submitted a letter to the Board explaining that his term of Conservation Commissioner is about to expire and his desire to be reappointed to the Conservation Commission. The Board discussed his strong interest in conservation and his many years of hard work and how committed he is. They all agreed that it would be a great benefit to reappoint him to the commission.

Selectman Caldwell moved to reappoint Ken Knowlton to the Conservation Commission for a three year term to expire in March of 2011. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Aquifer Ordinance Information

Ken Knowlton also supplied a letter regarding the proposed aquifer ordinance that the Board will review and provide Ken with any feedback that they might have. Chairman Cormier expressed that he was happy to see the Planning Board putting forth a reasonable ordinance.

Quit Claim Deed – Owner Unknown

Town Administrator Beaudin explained to the Board that a quit claim deed is before them to transfer a parcel of land from Owner Unknown status back to Lyman Brewer who has been determined to be the rightful owner. She noted that in addition to the research that Normandin, Cheney and O'Neil has done Rick Ball also researched the information and determined it to be true.

Selectman Caldwell moved to sign the quit claim deed giving ownership of Map 209 Lot 001 to Lyman Brewer Properties. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Gambling Forum Reminder

Town Administrator Beaudin reminded everyone of the Public Forum on January 14, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. for discussion of placement of a non binding referendum relative to expanded gambling on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. She noted that she had heard from Senator Sgambati, Representative Thomas and Representative Millham that they will be attending. Linda Frawley suggested that a representative of the Pari-mutual commission be contacted regarding the forum. Town Administrator Beaudin indicated that she is sending a refresher reminder to all the representatives and senators again.

Budget Changes

Chairman Cormier explained that at the Budget Committee meeting January 3, 2008 the committee expressed concern that the proposed budget would increase the tax rate by approximately \$1 and asked the Board of Selectmen to re-look at the proposed budget and make some cuts if possible. Town Administrator Beaudin added that she went back to Department heads and asked them to look at their requests again to help determine if there were areas where cuts could be made. She presented a list of budget items (see attached) that the Departments Heads felt they could cut, noting that some would require additional funding in the future to complete. The list represents a reduction of \$419,604 from Capital and operating budgets. Chairman Cormier commended the Department Heads for making these hard decisions. Chairman Cormier expressed that he really didn't want to see the Recreation Programs budget cut, there had been too much hard work establishing these program for them to be cut now. Following discussion the Board agreed that the pedestrian walkway at the beach could remain on the cut list but the programs needed to be added back into the budget.

Selectman Pike asked what the Ladd Hill cut was; Town Administrator Beaudin explained that the drainage work had been reduced as well as half of the budget funds for the Old State Road project had been cut as there has been no additional communication with the State regarding that road since the improvements that were made there. Town Administrator Beaudin noted that the Fire Inspector salary request had been reduced to reflect a 39 week pay period. Chief Davis also added that they are considering added fire inspection fees in the future that would help offset that expense. He and Deputy McCarty have done research that shows many areas communities charging fees for fire inspections. Selectman Pike noted that they should take careful consideration of the fees so as not to discourage potential businesses. Deputy McCarty explained that they initially are considering just the time consuming inspections such as sprinkler systems.

Chief Baiocchetti noted that he has removed the flooring request from his budget, following a department meeting it was agreed that that could be cut and he will look into other options and get firmer costs and bring it back next year.

There was discussion regarding the road work projects and how the cuts affect them. Town Administrator Beaudin pointed out that the engineering work has begun with the bid documents prepared to go out. If there are going to be changes at this point the engineers would have to rework the bid specs. Selectman Pike indicated that he feels the Town should get solid bids before a decision is made.

Library Trustee David Morse asked the Board to also cut the Library Capital Reserve account from \$50,000 to \$25,000 and the Cemetery request from \$12,000 to \$7,000. The Board was very appreciative of David's offer and thanked him for those reductions.

Donna Cilley commented that this revaluation has significantly affected the middle class citizens and an increase in the tax rate by this budget will most likely increase the problem.

David Morse indicated that he was concerned with the wording of the warrant article for the creation of the Public Safety Capital Reserve account indicating that the funds would be distributed at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen. Town Administrator Beaudin explained that this is the same as any other capital reserve account. There was discussion regarding how the funds would go into the General Fund until such time that the Board of Selectmen asks the voters to transfer a specific amount into the Capital Reserve account. David expressed that there was a lot of money there at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen. Chairman Cormier noted it is his opinion that there are areas that the Board of Selectmen should have more authority and added that the Board always prepares warrant articles for the voters to decide on purchases even when it is not necessary. It is not the intention of the Board to be deceptive. Where the Board has already approved the warrant articles for Town Meeting there was discussion of them amending the wording and David indicated that he would rather see the Board edit the warrant article than have an amendment come from the floor of Town Meeting. Chairman Cormier indicated that he will have a discussion with the Budget committee before making a decision.

There was additional discussion of adding the Police Cruisers to the purchases to be made from the proposed Public Safety Capital Reserve. The initial concern was that if the warrant article for the purchase of cruisers were voted down that the cruiser purchase program would be jeopardized. Town Administrator Beaudin noted that there would have to be a contingency if Article 1 were to fail. Donna Cilley asked if the Fire Chief supported the change to the Comstar fund, Chief Davis indicated that he does support it and that the change is a great benefit to the Town.

Following the discussion Selectman Pike moved to add a warrant Article to have the cruisers purchased from the proposed Public Safety Capital Reserve account. Selectman Caldwell seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board expressed that they would like to leave the roadwork as proposed and send the amended budget cuts to the Budget Committee. Linda Frawley commented that the last Budget Committee meeting was one of the more productive ones. She suggested that the changes be mailed out to the Budget Committee, Town Administrator Beaudin expressed that she would send them out to the committee.

Selectman Caldwell moved to accept the budget cuts list as amended (see attached). Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Special Town Meeting Reminder

Town Administrator Beaudin reminded everyone of the Special Town Meeting on January 15, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. at the Belmont High School Cafeteria for consideration of the purchase of the Brown property at 154 Main Street. Linda Frawley noted that she had just forwarded to Jeanne the information from the Heritage Commission for their support of the purchase. David Morse noted that he had recently interviewed with the Winnisquam Echo for an article regarding the property and highlighting the area that was previously known in Town as the "Commons" and how the historical information may enhance the desire to the Town to own the property again. There was discussion that the initial perception that the building was being torn down right away rather than it being a consideration or option for the future may have initiated the petition.

There was discussion that as put of the whole plan that perhaps a subcommittee for the use of the land be established and that the positive aspects of the purchase he highlighted in the media. Donna Cilley noted that she has heard a lot of negative talk because there is the thought that a bank should go back into that location and that businesses are being pushed out of town. Chairman Cormier added that he feels that an investment needs to be made into the community to draw businesses and by the Town investing in this property the potential for that to happen is there. Selectman Caldwell noted that he hopes that all the people that have showed verbal support of the purchase come to the Special Town Meeting.

Next Meeting

The next regular Board of Selectmen's meeting will be Monday, January 14, 2008 at 5:00 p.m. at the Corner Meeting House.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Ronald Cormier, Chairman

Reginald Caldwell

Jon Pike