Selectmen’s Meeting Minutes
December 16, 2013 5:000 p.m.
Corner Meeting House

Chairman Ron Cormier called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. also present was Selectman Jon Pike, Selectman Ruth Mooney, Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin, Administrative Assistant Cary Lagace, Wallace Rhodes, Ken Knowlton, Commissioner John Thomas, County Administrator Debbie Shackett, Rick Ball, Nick Coates and media member Gail Ober.

Those present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Belknap County Commissioners – Budget Discussion

Rep. John Thomas and Debbie Shackett with Belknap County Commissioners were present to review with the Board the 2014 Belknap County Budget. Rep. Thomas highlighted the following significant changes in revenue sources: Gunstock – Prior to 2011 we received a small percentage of profits, in excess of $300,000 but since 2011 now receive $175,000; Registry of Deeds – Transfer tax was as high as $821,000 in 2009 and now we are projecting high at $775,000; Restorative Justice – Used to receive a grant from the State for approximately $25,000 to offset the cost of the program, that ended in 2010; Nursing Home – Medicaid revenues are down approximately $500,000 since 2009 and the Fund Balance – continues to deteriorate. The County is consistently using $2,000,000 and again in 2014. Projections show that access to this “tax rate stabilizer” will not be available within 2 to 3 years.

Rep. Thomas highlighted the following significant changes in expenditures/program: County Attorney – personnel costs have increased this cost of service; Administration – personnel and legal costs have increased this service. Reduced training by half, cut travel & office supplies; IT – remains consistent, have eliminated $35,000 for county wide police/sheriff software(IMC) and we maintain a PC replacement program; Deed – personnel costs have increased; Maintenance – total contained by eliminating new equipment purchases; Sheriff’s Department – increase in personnel cost, eliminated one vehicle for lease, additional part time deputy, special ops tactical vest and 2 radar units; Corrections – all costs increasing; Restorative Justice – proposing to convert one part time position to a full time. This service has a direct impact on reducing the jail population; Health & Human Services – cost increased by the State by approximately $230,000; Capital Projects – have to put off many capital improvements in order to fund operations. Top priority is the surveillance system; and Nursing Home – no program changes, but several reductions in equipment and improvements. It was noted that there have been approximately 40 jobs have been eliminated in the past several years.
Chairman Cormier expressed that it looked like they were doing a good job holding the line. Selectman Pike asked if they weren’t replacing staff how they are going to maintain the level of service. Rep. Thomas explained that there are better business practices being utilized. Debbie Shackett explained that BCNH has one of the highest staff/patient ratios in the state which is a good thing but it also leaves room for this type of change; the nursing home administration is on board with the staff position eliminations.

It was discussed that the proposed jail is still a work in process with several options to reduce the cost being considered. Debbie Shackett encouraged the Board to participate at the delegation meetings.

**Minutes**

Selectman Pike moved to accept the minutes of November 18, 2013 as written. Selectman Mooney seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Manifests/Abatements/Intents**

Chairman Cormier moved to approve the intents and abatements as presented. Selectman Pike seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Conservation Commission – Warrant Article Request**

Ken Knowlton and Nick Coates were present for the Conservation Commission to discuss two proposed warrant articles. Ken explained that the Commission wanted to donate to a local coalition of the Belknap Mountains when they discovered they couldn’t which is what prompted the proposed warrant articles. Nick went on to explain that this is not an expansion of power for the Commission but allows participation in other conservation efforts without the cost and responsibility of maintaining a project. The article will allow for a contribution to a qualified organization. The first article would allow the Commission to contribute to the Belknap project and the second would grant authority to expend funds for project that benefit taxpayers and requires a public hearing. Ken explained that they are prepared to assure taxpayers that they are not just looking to buy property wherever. Chairman Cormier commented that the Commission has been a good steward of the Conservation funds. The Board agreed they were ok with the warrant articles as written.

**Deliberative Session Date**

TA Beaudin discussed with the Board options for the deliberative session and the Board agreed that they wanted to stick with the Saturday morning session and decided to hold the deliberative session Saturday, February 1, 2014 at 10:00 am.

**Sargent Fund Meeting, Selectmen’s Representative**

The Board agreed that Selectman Mooney with sit as the Selectmen’s Representative for the Sargent Fund meeting. She would prefer a Wednesday or Thursday early evening meeting.
Receipt of Petition Warrant Article – Zoning Amendment RSA 675.4

The Board acknowledged receipt of a petition warrant article regarding the demolition of historic structures. The petition had 26 signatures, verified by the Town Clerks office. The Planning Board will have to hold a public hearing regarding the petition as it pertains to a zoning amendment.

Selectman Pike moved to accept the petition warrant article as submitted. Selectman Mooney seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

2013 Encumbrances

TA Beaudin presented the Board with a memo listing the funds requiring encumbrance from the 2013 budget.

Selectman Pike moved to accept the list of encumbrances for 2013 as presented in the memo from TA Beaudin dated 12/16/13. Selectman Mooney seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

LRFMA Contract for Services

TA Beaudin discussed with the Board the proposed contract with LRFMA in order to protect the Town if it were to end up in a default budget situation. Selectman Pike expressed his concern with the fact that the only representative for the Town regarding the budgeting for LRFMA is the fire chief and other fire chiefs. He feels there was more oversight and a means to express budget concerns when it was handled through the County budget. TA Beaudin indicated that the fire chief could report to the Board prior to a vote on the budget. Chairman Cormier commented that they could be treated like other outside agencies and asked to present and explain their request to the Board. It was noted that the Belmont’s contribution to the LRFMA budget is made up of population, valuation and other fixed factors. Chairman Cormier felt like the contract was very vague and the Town could potentially end up with additional costs. TA Beaudin indicated that she would have the Town Attorney review the contract and include language to the Board’s satisfaction and bring forward to their next meeting.

WFD Expression of Interest

The Board reviewed the one expression of interest for the WFD submitted by Winnisquam Marine. Chairman Cormier explained that Winnisquam Marine submitted a proposal to purchase the property for $240,000 with interest in renovations to allow utilization with their current business.

Selectman Pike moved to accept the proposal as submitted subject to approval at Town Meeting. Selectman Mooney seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

The Board discussed and agreed that they would like to see the funds from the sale of the WFD if approved be allocated to the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve account. TA Beaudin will draft the warrant article for town counsel to review.

2013 Taxes Collection

TA Beaudin explained that the Tax Collector has indicated that 91.6% of the 2013 tax amount has been collected to date.
BPS/Port One Proposal & Scope

TA Beaudin advised the Board that BPS/Port One provided a proposal of $28,000 to do a preliminary study to include: existing conditions plan & assessment of space; review services to be housed in the proposed facility and how they interact; programming with the administration and staff; conceptual design concepts (up to 3); attend meetings as required and create engineering narratives.

The Board agreed to go ahead with the proposed scope of work for preliminary information.

VoIP Proposals

Chairman Cormier explained that there had been 11 responses to the request for proposal for VoIP phone system. He and TA Beaudin interviewed 3 of them today and are recommending PHD Communications to work with. They believe that the Town can reduce their cost by $500 to $600 a month. The initial hardware and rewire is proposed at $31,000 and there was discussion of a lease option that could be paid out of the operational phone budget. It was noted that the system has an estimated life of 15-20 years and is expandable as well as movable. At this point he is asking for authorization to negotiate further with PHD Communication in order to determine the cost savings.

Selectman Pike moved to authorize moving forward in the process with PHD Communications. Selectman Mooney seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

CMH Floor Replacement Proposal

The Board reviewed a proposal from John Deware for $12,800 for the repair of the floor of the lower level of the CMH. As previously discovered that wood floor is deteriorating and needs repair. Mr. Deware’s proposal includes removing the portion of the floor that is wood, shoring up the walls and pouring a complete floor. The Board agreed with the proposal and discussed that the funds for the project would come from the Municipal Facilities Capital Reserve account.

BRATT Discussion

TA Beaudin discussed with the Board 2 warrant articles that are being proposed relating to the finishing of the BRATT trail. The first article is to propose the repurposing of the Phase II account the second is to gross appropriate $142, 050 with offsetting funds from the DOT grant and other private donations and $$47,500 to be raised through taxation, which it is only necessary to raise funds through taxation if the first article fails. There was discussion of how to clearly word the articles for the best possibility of passing. Rick Ball explained that the plan is ready to go with the exception of a few miscellaneous items. Chairman Cormier expressed that he was thrilled to hear the plan is ready to go. There was a brief discussion regarding the maintenance of the trail once it is built.

The Board agreed to move the articles forward to the Budget Committee and voters.

Next Meeting

The next regular Board of Selectmen’s meeting will be Monday, January 6, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. at the Corner Meeting House at which time they will conduct architectural firm interviews.
Adjournment

Chairman Cormier moved to adjourn the Selectmen’s Meeting at 6:45 p.m., motion was seconded by Selectman Ruth Mooney and the motion passed unanimously.

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Ronald Cormier, Chairman

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Ruth P. Mooney, Vice Chairman

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Jon Pike