

## **Board of Selectmen's meeting**

**February 12, 2009**

Present: First Selectman Woody Bliss; Selectman W. Glenn Major; Selectwoman Gayle Weinstein; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito.

**This meeting was recorded and video taped and the tapes are available in the Selectmen's office.**

Mr. Bliss called the meeting to order at 7:32pm.

**Pledge of Allegiance-** Hal Mathews lead the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance

**Discussion/decision regarding the reappointment of Naomi Bleifeld to the Historic District Commission for a term to expire December 31, 2013-**

Ms. Weinstein made a motion to reappoint Naomi Bleifeld to the Historic District Commission for a term to expire December 31, 2013. Mr. Major seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding the appointment of Susan Moch as Moderator and Robert Uzenoff as Alternate Moderator for the Annual Town Budget Meeting on April 21, 2009.-**Ms. Weinstein made a motion to appoint Susan Moch as the Moderator and Robert Uzenoff as Alternate Moderator for the Annual Town Budget Meeting on April 21, 2009. Mr. Major seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding proposed final design for Valley Forge Bridge project. David Stock, Maguire Group-** David Stock updated the Selectmen on the status of the project. Mr. Bliss said that the project started two years ago. When Cartbridge was wiped out in the rain storm of April 2007, this project was stopped, because we could not have two bridges out across the Saugatuck River at the same time.

The project will consist of flattening the curve in Valley Forge Road, constructing a new bridge over the river with a retaining wall on the south side, and then rejoining the existing Valley Forge Road a short distance down from the bridge. The new bridge is going to have an arch similar to the existing bridge.

By rule of ConnDOT, and because this is part of the federal bridge program, they are required to develop s schedule for the project. Right now it is scheduled for a nine month construction from date of authorization to the final clean up. The road will not be closed for that long. Mr. Bliss said that they have the summer months to work, but it is a major route for school buses and the hope is that this can be open as soon as possible in the fall.

Mr. Stock said they completed the semi final design and submitted it to the state's liaison engineer seven weeks ago. They are still waiting for DEP comments. When he spoke them, they said that their comments were almost complete, but they have sent some items to ConnDOT and they have not heard back from them. Mr. Bliss he would contact ConnDOT if he needed to, because we have to start in June.

Mr. Stock said the bulk of the construction will take three months and the road will be closed for at least three months. The planned detour route uses Davis Hill Road instead of Valley Forge Road. There will probably be a period when school is in and the bridge will not be finished.

**Discussion/decision regarding a Custodial Agreement between the Town of Weston and Wachovia Bank, National Association.** Mr. Darling said that this was related to GASB45 OPEB Trust fund. The custodial agreement is for Wachovia to manage the fund and the daily operations of the fund. The agreement has been reviewed by Cohen and Wolf and has been fine tuned and is agreeable to both parties.

Mr. Major made a motion to approve the Custodial Agreement between the Town of Weston and Wachovia Bank and to authorize the First Selectman to sign the agreement. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding the appointment of Rick Darling as the Treasurer.** Mr. Bliss said it has been apparent that we could give the duty to Rick Darling of being Town Treasurer and at the same time save about \$19,000 a year by having Mr. Darling assume that duty. It has been vetted by the Town Attorney and Bond Counsel.

Ms. Weinstein asked how you verify the separation of duties. Mr. Bliss said we have an auditor who reviews that and secondly, unlike a private corporation the opportunities for the Town to invest money are extremely limited. Ms. Weinstein asked if they had spoken to Mike O'Brien about it. Mr. Bliss said he has not but thought that Mr. Landry had.

Mr. Major said he felt that there should be a non employee, someone who does not answer to the Town Administrator that has some sort of an oversight role. Mr. Bliss said under the Town Charter the Board of Finance does have the oversight responsibility for all the financial functions. Mr. Major said that we need to develop a procedure that gets the Board of Finance actively involved in the process.

Mr. Major said between now and July 1<sup>st</sup>, the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen with Mr. Darling and Mr. Landry needs adopt a procedure so that it is very clear what the rolls and responsibilities are and that there is sufficient oversight. Mr. Bliss said they should come in and explain their current procedure and then see if we need something additionally. Mr. Bliss said he would invite Mr. O'Brien in to discuss this at a Selectmen's meeting.

**Discussion/approval of the Board of Selectmen meeting minutes of January 22, 2009 and Executive Session for February 5, 2009.** Mr. Major made a motion to approve the Board of Selectmen's minutes for January 22, 2009 meeting as submitted. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Weinstein made a motion to approve the minutes of the Executive Session dated February 5, 2009. Mr. Major seconded and the motion passed unanimously

Janey Tracey, a student at Weston High School presented a petition to the Selectmen with 209 names urging sufficient funding to reinstate the Teen Talk program, including the position of Bonnie Rumilly, Weston's High School's representative for Kids in Crisis.

**Board of Selectmen review, vote on and transmit First Selectman's and Board of Education's budgets to Board of Finance.** Mr. Bliss said that the recommendations are reductions in the Arts Commission of \$278; Veteran's Committee of \$500; Tree Warden's \$500; Assessors account of \$300; Legal Retainer of \$1,800; Legal Litigation of \$2,200; Fire Department Equipment of \$6,014; SW CT Emergency Medical Services of \$40 and Ravenwood Electric of \$1,000.

There is an open item of \$1,540 for the SW CT Mental Health Board. Mr. Landry said he spoke to them and this is not a mandatory assessment. The person he spoke to said she would have a conversation with Ms. Hillman. Mr. Bliss suggested that this be taken out of the budget for the coming year.

Mr. Bliss said all of the department heads and the elected officials who receive salaries from the Town have voluntarily agreed to have a flat salary this year. This means they will not take any steps or increases. He thanked them for that. He said he is recommending that the First Selectmen's salary be reduced by 2.5%. Mr. Major asked where we were in the operating budget. Mr. Landry said \$10,818,044 which is an increase of 1.80%.

Mr. Bliss said that you have to consider the operating budget and the capital budget together. In order to get to a zero percent increase he is going to make some cuts to the capital budget. He wants to reduce the replacement amount for fire engine #4 to \$150,000. There is an increase on police vehicles from \$44,000 to \$47,333. Wetland mitigation, reduce the request of \$100,000 to zero.

Ms. Weinstein said she has a real problem with that, because we know that it is something that we have to do in the next year and a half. She did not want to start of the year asking for that amount as a supplemental appropriation. Mr. Bliss said about 3/4 of next years supplemental are spoken for. Mr. Major said that given the concept that we do not have to spend that until the next fiscal year is not that far fetch. He said that we need to know that it is on the capital list for next fiscal year. Ms. Weinstein said she wanted Mr. Landry to be comfortable

Mr. Landry said this was something that they know they have to do and would have expected to have done it by now. He said he really could not tell you if the number was too high or to low. Mr. Major said he hates the thought on taxing on something that is that much of an unknown.

Ms. Weinstein said in the budget for the Commission for the Arts since they do not have a program for the \$2,072 that she is comfortable taking that amount out of the budget. Ms. Weinstein said that she would like to give up the \$600 expenses she gets as a Selectmen.

Betsy Peyreigne read a letter to the Selectmen that she and Teri Gaberman wrote. They issued a challenge to the other Boards and Commissions to be creative as they had done in paring back expenditures. They want the other Boards and Commissions to make their budget a true reflection of the economy.

Public Works- Line 301 gets decreased by \$300 and that brings us to a zero budget.

Mr. Major made a motion to forward the Board of Selectmen's budget to the Board of Finance for a total of \$10,814,850 and a Selectmen's Capital Budget of \$832, 333. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bliss recommended that the Board of Education reduce this year's health care increase which was \$763,945 by \$600,000, because there is almost 2 million dollars in the reserve account and if they run over that amount then they can take the money out of the reserve account. Ms. Weinstein said she agreed with the reasoning, but thought it was too aggressive. She said she did not want to artificially deflate their budget so much that next year they have an issue with the percent increase.

Mr. Bliss said that the bids are coming in on the 24<sup>th</sup>, so the Board of Finance will have a much better read on the situation, because they will have the benefit of the bids.

Mr. Major asked Mr. Belair if there were any modification that the Board of Education had come up with since their last discussion that would change the request that are bring made. Mr. Belair said that they shared a reduction of \$51,000 on the fuel. He said that they did speak to the health insurance reserve account. This budget is a work in progress and it would have been great if they had the bids by now, but one of the safety valves that they have with the projected increase in cost is looking at the reserve account to reduce the increase.

Mr. Major said taking out the \$600,000 and the \$51,000 that would now leaves an additional \$503,287, which would now be the proposed increase. Mr. Major said he has never had so many people in Town be very concerned about the budget increases. He said he personally feels that it should be a flat budget and the television studio for \$35,000 should come out.

Ms. Weinstein said she felt we need to be responsive to what people said at Speak-Up and the letters in the forum. We also need to be responsive to the people who have been sending us emails supporting the school budget as well. She said the budget needs to be carefully combed and needs to be responsible both to the taxpayers as well as the students. She agreed about not funding the studio. She said that the Board of Education came in lower than the 3% that they were given to work with, but there are additional cuts that can be made to the budget. She did not want the cuts to impact the students' education.

Mr. Major said that he wanted to point out that two of the bigger items that we are using are the health insurance reserve and not funding GASB to the full extent of our obligation. He said that was effective for this fiscal year only and it is not a long term solution. He said the actual costs associated with educating our children are still going up

to the same extent that they were and there have been no meaning full cuts to anything other than a shifting of dollars.

Mr. Bliss said he felt the video studio was a good idea, but that was a decision for the Board of Education to make and not the Selectmen.

Mr. Major asked what the Board of Education surplus was last year. Ms. Keating said between \$30,000 and \$40,000. He said that his concern is that last year he recommended a \$200,000 reduction in the increase and they had said that could not possibly be met and yet there is \$140,000 that we have just accounted for. He said if we had eliminated one of the two extra second grade teachers that would have made up the difference. It would have been more than a \$200,000 reduction. Mr. Belair said the key is affordability.

Mr. Major said he did not feel that it was far fetched to be able to do a zero increase budget without affecting the programs that are there. Ms. Weinstein said she disagreed.

Mr. Major asked about the Board of Education's Capital Budget. Dan Clarke said of all of the things on the list the only thing that they can do without is the stair rail going to the Middle School Pool.

Mr. Major made a motion to forward to the Board of Finance an operating budget for the Board of Education of \$44,260,000. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Major made a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance a Board of Education Capital Budget of \$389,832 reflecting the recommendations made by the Capital Advisory Committee less the Middle School stairwell railings and the 10% contingency associated with that. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Open items list.**

Code Red Contract- Still working on the contract, but we will be up and running by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Cemetery Committee –Off the list

Municipal Amnesty (SB1200) - Keep Pending

Recycling- Tom Landry said that they have given the local haulers three dates, week of February 23, 24 and 27 to meet.

Food Pantry Lease- Awaiting PBA reply

Emergency and Disaster Planning Ordinance- Wording for ordinance needs to be worked on.

FAA- No further update.

Reimbursement from FEMA for Cartbridge- All money that was approved, we got back. We settled out with the contractor two weeks ago for the additional charges. Mr. Landry has to take the budget numbers with the backup and ship it to FEMA. He said that FEMA said it should not be an issue and they will send us the 75% of that.

Deer Hunt- Report from Mark Harper- Report was received by the Selectmen from Mr. Harper

Reimbursement from State for school projects- Place hold until August.

**Executive Session- Contract Negotiations**

At 9:43pm Mr. Major made a motion to enter into executive session. Ms. Weinstein seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

ATTENDANCE and DISCUSSION: The meeting was convened at 9:46 PM in the First Selectman's office by Chairman Bliss, with Mr. Major and Ms. Weinstein present. Also present was Town Administrator Landry.

The purpose of the executive session was to receive a status report on the Town negotiations with its AFSCME collective bargaining unit. No votes were taken.

ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION: The Board voted unanimously (Ms. Weinstein, motion; Mr. Major second) to end executive session and reconvene in open session. The time was 10:09pm.

ADJOURN: At 10:10 pm, the Board voted unanimously (Ms. Weinstein motion, Mr. Major second) to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted  
Judy M. DeVito  
Administrative Assistant  
Approved 3/19/09