

## **Board of Selectmen's Meeting**

**June 16, 2011**

Present: First Selectman Gayle Weinstein; Selectman David Muller; Selectman Dan Gilbert; Town Administrator Tom Landry; Administrative Assistant Judy DeVito;

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

**Ms. Weinstein called the meeting to order at 7:30pm**

**Pledge of Allegiance-** Woody Bliss led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Presentation- Heart Safe Community Declaration- Gary St. Armand, Health Program Associate-** Gary St. Armand presented a heart safe designation to the Town of Weston. This program is designed so that ordinary citizens can recognize a sudden cardiac event and know enough to call 911 and start CPR until the trained public safety first responders can arrive followed by EMT's and paramedics. Ms. Weinstein thanked Nissan Eventoff who organized Weston's Heart Safe Community efforts.

**Discussion/decision regarding a request from Homes with Hope, Inc. f/k/a Interfaith Housing Association from the Community Grants Budget for \$14,853 from FY 11-12-Hal Shupack-** Jeffrey Wieser thanked Weston for the support they have given them in the past. Their request this year is the same as the pass three years \$14,853.

In the emergency shelter they housed three Westonites in 2005, six in 2006, five in 2007, three in 2008, four in 2009 and ten in 2010. They range in age from 25 to 52 with an average age of 42. All have finished high school and 80% have had some college education. Approximately half either have a substance abuse issue or an addiction issue. The other half do not.

Mr. Muller made a motion to approve a request for \$14,853 for Homes with Hope f/k/a Interfaith Housing from the Community Grant Budget FY 2011-2012. Mr. Gilbert seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding an ordinance to approve a change from SWRPA's current regional structure to a Council of Government- Jerry Ellis, SWRPA Chair**  
Jerry Ellis made a presentation (attached to the minutes.)

SWRPA/MPO put together a COG task force on organization, governance and management with the idea of "tell us how this thing would work if you went to a COG" and "what would be the potential pitfalls and potential upside". They want everyone to be aware of what is going on and sometime in September or October the MPO will vote as to whether they will officially switch to a COG.

Mr. Woody Bliss, former First Selectman and former MPO Chair, said that he has been looking at COG's since 2001. He has looked at it more and more and it is clearly the trend. We have no county government and we do not want county government but there are places where Towns need to cooperate more closely. The COG offered some advantages. He asked some of his fellow First Selectmen and Mayors from other Towns that were COG's what they thought of a COG and they thought that it functioned very well. Some had been COG's for a while and some were newly created. Mr. Bliss said he would endorse the concept and hopes that Weston would vote yes for a COG for the eight Towns in the group.

Bill Brennan, First Selectman in Wilton said he did not think the current organization works very well. The COG appeals to him because it is one group in one room and has the CEO basically leading the process and trying to determine the priorities. The State is leaning more towards regionalization and this fits right in with that. The key thing is to focus on the CEO's priorities and this to him is the major advantage of the new structure.

Ms. Weinstein said that there are several new grants in the adopted state budget which emphasize that this is the way the State is looking for us to go. There is a new regional performance incentive grant which will be available on a competitive base for regional projects and there is also a 10 million dollar inter-town capital equipment purchase incentive program intended to help municipalities jointly buy or lease vehicles or capital equipment. A neutral system in place to organize all of this would be extremely helpful. She is very much in favor of this.

Mr. Muller said one of the issues he had when he was on Planning and Zoning was a concern about the loss of authority. Mr. Muller also wanted to understand the State's view on the efficiency of working with COG's versus the efficiency of RPA. Mr. Brennan said the State is talking regionalization and they wanted to move before the State told them that they had to do something. Ms. Weinstein said that she wanted to make it clear that a COG is not a taxing district.

Mr. Ellis said that from what he understood, Planning and Zoning had not diminished at all and it could almost even be enhanced because there is more of a venue to be more cooperative. Ms. Weinstein said that there is a member of Planning & Zoning that needs to serve on the committee of a COG. Mr. Brennan said this has little to do with taking away autonomy from local government. With a COG the Planning & Zoning representative will be in the meeting and he feels it strengthens the Planning & Zoning aspect of it.

Mr. Gilbert said that he thought Planning & Zoning's voice would be weakened. Right now Planning & Zoning have a clear voice. When you go to a COG, Planning & Zoning has to work through the First Selectman so it would seem to him they would lose a significant amount of independence going to a COG. Mr. Brennan said he disagreed with Mr. Gilbert. Mr. Gilbert asked who votes in a COG. Mr. Brennan replied that the Chief Elected Officials vote.

Former SWRPA Chair Mr. Settlemyer said there are two formal groups within the COG structure. One group is the CEO's and the other is the Planning Commission with one representative from Planning and Zoning from each of the eight Towns so they are adequately represented.

Mr. Gilbert asked who can join a COG. Mr. Settlemyer said the conversion to a COG would happen if five of the eight Towns voted for the conversion. The eight Towns currently in SWRPA would be within a COG structure, but if there were serious concerns they can opt out. CCM is in favor of consolidation down to a level of five to seven RPO's throughout the State. The aspect of opting out is an opportunity, although he thinks it would be devastating to have communities opt out.

Mr. Gilbert read from a December 2009 CCM publication ... "make it easier for Regional Planning Organizations to become COGs and provides them with revenue raising and land use authority. Encourages the existing 15 RPO's to voluntarily consolidate into five to seven regional organizations." He said when he reads that, and the 2005 State Plan of Conservation and Development, he gets anxious. It sounds to him that the State wants larger representation by metropolitan area and wants to provide the cities with an opportunity to increase their tax base. It sounds to him that the organization that represents us as a town wants the larger regional organizations that have revenue raising authority and land use authority.

Mr. Bliss said that CCM has been pursuing trying to have more common boundaries between all the different regions. He did not recollect the discussion that Mr. Gilbert was reading. Mr. Settlemyer said that these are some of the issues that they are trying to work through in the task force.

Mr. Muller said that we need to begin an education process to address a lot of these issues, hear how the task force is working, what the issues that are being identified are, and then move to a public discussion of it. Mr. Brennan said that the statements that Mr. Gilbert made are going on whether we are a COG or an RPA.

Mr. Boucher, Treasurer of SWRPA, said that we were on the right path. The State is going to do whatever they want and we need to be in a position to defend ourselves. The best way is with the stronger the planning authority, under a COG, and we'll be better off to fight the battles you're going to have to fight against the State.

Joe Limone of Planning and Zoning said that he was representing the entire commission. They unanimously decided at their last meeting that they would be opposed to going to a COG. The current representatives have advanced degrees in land use, they have consistently respected Planning and Zonings independence from the Board of Selectmen, and have consistently advocated Planning & Zonings positions rather than oppose them at the regional level and that is very important to them. The single representative vote would be the First Selectman, and they will not have a vote when they go to a COG and that is a concerning to them.

They felt that inclusion of a Planning & Zoning appointee is critical to insuring that the commission has some oversight about their representation at the regional level. As far as streamlining the organizational dynamic, it was very clear to him that all this is going to do is remove potential duplication. He can't believe that you cannot work out some of the efficiencies without electing to go to a COG. He respectfully disagrees with Mr. Ellis's position that the other Town's Planning & Zoning commissions do not oppose this. The other Planning & Zoning commissions are concerned enough that they are going to get together as a unified group to discuss the COG and the fact that Towns like Weston are meeting for approval.

Mr. Ellis said it would be useful to know what their points are so that they can crank them into the analysis. He said if they want to present some bullet points or if they want to make a presentation to the committee, he will make sure that happens. Mr. Limone said they would absolutely take him up on that.

**Discussion/decision regarding setting a date for a public hearing regarding an ordinance to approve a change from SWRPA's current regional structure to a Council of Government.** Tabled to the next meeting.

**Accept the resignation of Jon Howell from the Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee effective immediately.** Mr. Gilbert made a motion to accept the resignation of Jon Howell from the Weston Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee effective immediately. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding amending the reappointment date for Donald Saltzman on the Area 9 Cable Council from June 30, 2014 to June 30, 2013.** The Selectmen had initially approved a 3 year term, but the council asked us to approve a 2 year term. Mr. Gilbert made a motion to amend the expiration date for the term of Donald Saltzman on the Area 9 Cable Council from June 30, 2014 to June 30, 2013. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding a supplemental appropriation for \$95,000 from FY 10-11 to cover FY2010-11 Town operating budget deficit.** Mr. Muller made a motion to approve a supplemental appropriation for \$95,000 for FY2010-2011 to cover FY2010-2011 Town operating budget deficit. Mr. Gilbert seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding amending the resolution regarding the Select Committee for Charter Revision to include a date to submit its draft resolution.** Ms. Weinstein said that according to the State Statute, by resolution, we have to give a date to the Select Committee for Charter Revision to submit their draft to the Selectmen. She asked that the Board amend the resolution.

Mr. Gilbert made a motion to amend the resolution regarding the Select Committee for Charter Revision to add a submission date for its draft report to the Board of Selectmen on or before August 1, 2012. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/ decision to amend the expiration term for the members on the Select Committee for Charter Revision.** Ms. Weinstein said according to State Statute, their term should end when they hand the final report in. Mr. Gilbert made a motion to amend the expiration term for the members of the Select Committee for Charter Revision so that the commission shall terminate upon the acceptance or rejection of its final report by the appointing authority. Mr. Muller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding a request from the Food Pantry for \$2,000 from the Community Grants Budget for FY 2010-2011- Betsy Peyreigne-** Ms. Weinstein said that she and Betsy had a conversation about how the number of people using the food pantry has dramatically increased. She checked the records and saw that we had not given a donation to the Food Pantry this year. She is asking the Board to give them \$2,000.

Mr. Muller said in looking at the remaining balance of the Community Grants line, he is willing to give a little more than they are asking. Mr. Muller made a motion to approve an allocation of \$2,500 from the Community Grants Budget for FY 2010-11. Mr. Gilbert seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion/decision regarding a request from the Weston Historical Society for \$1,000 from the FY 2010-2011 Community Grants Budget to fund the production of the “Remembrance Gallery”-**Reg Bowden wants the Board to support an element of the civil war exhibit that deals with the “Remembrance Gallery”. There is an exhibit that launches on September 10<sup>th</sup> that consist of people, the weaponry, the battles, the uniforms of the Union members and the Southern members of the civil war. There are 21 civil war soldiers that are buried in our cemeteries, and they will be featured in the exhibit. He is asking the Town to support the gallery with a contribution of \$1,000.

Ms. Weinstein asked what the associated cost was with the project. Mr. Bowden said this project would cost about \$1,200. Mr. Muller asked where the funding would have come from, if the Board of Selectmen did not approve this request. Mr. Bowden said it would come from the Historical Society’s budget.

Ms. Weinstein said even though she thought it was totally appropriate for the Town to support activities at the Weston Historical Society because they are preserving our history, our focus has really been helping people in need. She feels it is very different from giving money to the Food Pantry, Social Services or Homes with Hope. She would be willing to give \$600 half of the cost of the project. We have to be cognizant of the fact that we made a decision to cut the budget next year from \$30,000 to \$25,000 and her priority next year is to help people in need. Food stamps are up 700% which she never thought would happen in Weston.

Mr. Muller made a motion to approve a grant to the Weston Historical Society from The Community Grants Budget in the amount of \$600 for FY 2010-11 to fund the production of the “Remembrance Gallery”. Mr. Gilbert seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Open Items**

**Ongoing updates**

**Grants- Gayle Weinstein-** The General Assembly adopted a budget and there are some new municipal revenue streams that will directly impact us. The real estate conveyance tax of .25% was made permanent. There was also an increase of the State portion of .25% that will be pooled into a new municipal revenue sharing account, but the bulk of the 93 million that they are anticipating generating next year will go towards restoring funding to pilot MM&E grants. If they get the anticipated revenue we are looking to gain another \$66,000 from the state.

The State cut the Dial-a-Ride grant by 25% which is approximately \$4,000. We will have to make that up in our budget.

**Ticker File, Discuss as updated**

**Reimbursement from State for school projects- Tom Landry-** No new news

**Any business to come properly before the meeting- None**

Respectfully submitted

Judy M. DeVito  
Administrative Assistant  
Approved 7/7/11