

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 11, 2002
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
"APPROVED"**

Present: Chairman Peter S. Cunningham, Clerk Dann Chamberlin, Member Thomas P. McCuin, Jr., Administrative Officer Jean E. Kitchen and Administrative Secretary Doris T. Wheeler.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

POLICE CHIEF'S BUDGETS

Police Department

Police Chief Mulhern was present to go over his budgets. The proposed Police Department budget showed a 4 ½ % increase over last year's budget. This is due to the step raises and contractual increases in wages, tuition reimbursement and career incentive pay. The loss of grant funds added to the increase as well. The budget also included the lease/purchase of a cruiser.

Minor Capital: 2 mobile computers; a digital video camera; scanning option digital copier; and 9' stop stick pack kits
ATM Article: \$6000 for the Detail Payroll Account to pay officers who work extra duty assignments.

Police & Fire Communications

The proposed budget showed a 9.3% increase in the wage account for step raises and increases in longevity as required by the Union contract. This also included wages to add second dispatchers for 16 hours per week.

Minor Capital: upgrades to the radio system (at the tower) and the telephone system. The 5-year Capital Plan included upgrading the radio system at the dispatch center and painting the outside of the structure itself.

WATER DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Present for the discussion were Water Department Chairman Mark Patnode, Member Chris Kelley and Water Superintendent Tom Orcutt. Basically the FY03 budget request was level funded, except for \$40,000 for a GIS Inspector.

FIRE DEPARTMENT CONTRACT AWARD - Postponed

UPDATE ON 4 CORNERS

Dann Chamberlin, Ms. Kitchen and Representative Robert Hargraves attended a meeting at Mass Highway last week. They discussed the 25% design plan from HTSD for the 4 Corners Intersection, which included 1 traffic light with 2 poles. Mass Highway will present HTSD's 25% plan at a public hearing in Groton at the end of April or some time in May. Once Mass Highway gets input from the public hearing, the 75% phase will be drafted. The relocation of the Four Corners Restaurant will be funded by Mass Highway.

FINANCIAL DEPARTMENTS DISCUSSION

Mr. Cunningham stated that the Financial Officers Consolidation Review Committee (FOCRC) was reluctant to make any changes to the Financial officers until the Selectmen go to 5 members. Mr. Cunningham said that he did not think that the idea of consolidation should be scratched at this time. Even if the Treasurer and Tax Collector were combined, the committee thought it should remain an elected position. Mr. Chamberlin supported the consolidation of the Treasurer and Tax Collector positions. He said that maybe it was time to put the idea of a 5-member Board to a vote at Town Meeting, although he thought the Board worked well with 3.

Mr. McCuin was disappointed when he found out that the ROCRC came back as a hung jury. He felt they dropped back and punted instead of really tackling this issue of consolidating the financial officers. He said that the Treasurer/Collector position was a highly specialized one and needed a qualified person to fill that position once Mr. Hartnett retires. He said that Mr. Hartnett had done a wonderful job, but there was no guarantee the next person would be as qualified. The Selectmen being a 5-member Board had nothing to do with combing the financial officers. Mr. Cunningham agreed with Mr. McCuin and noted that appointing a person would give the opportunity to have a screening committee to make a recommendation.

Ms. Kitchen said that the eventual Financial Officer could be the Treasurer/Collector or the Town Accountant. She said that the people in both of these positions would be retiring soon.

Ed Kopec said that before Tom Hartnett came, the positions of Treasurer and Collector were one position. Now it is two elected positions with one person holding the positions. The Selectmen did not agree that it used to be one position, but said they would research that.

The Board decided to put an Article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant, with a ballot question to go with it, combining the Town Treasurer and Tax Collector.

The Town Government Study Comm. did research on changing the Selectmen to a 5-member Board. The report showed the pros and cons. The Committee was not asked to make a recommendation at that time. The Committee will now be asked for its recommendation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ice Cream Social

Mr. Chamberlin moved to authorize the Groton Woman's Club the use of Legion Common on June 8, with a rain date of June 9, from Noon to 5:00 PM for its Ice Cream Social. The motion was seconded and voted unanimously.

Squannacook Sportsmen's Club

Ms. Kitchen was looking for direction on this. She gave an overview. Mr. Chamberlin said the building could be torn down or used for storage, which would not need an operational septic system. Mr. Cunningham said that the Board had to have a discussion with those interested in using the building. If it will be used, a new septic system needs to be checked into. A design would be needed to meet the proposed use. The building is structurally sound. Mr. Chamberlin noted that there was 7 acres of land with this purchase. Those interested in its use will be invited to the next Selectmen's meeting.

COA Amend Expiration Date - Postponed

Coalition for the Environmental Bond

The Coalition for the Environmental Bond requested the Board's support of the Environmental Bond Section 2F of H.4213, An Act Providing for Capital Facility Improvements and Repairs for the Commonwealth. McCuin wanted more long-term data up front before writing a letter of support. The other Board members agreed.

Norris Property

The discussion was regarding the buildings on the Town-owned property on Thorne Hill. The Fire Chief is checking on whether his department can raise the house as part of its training. The Highway Surveyor will look to see if his department could take down the out buildings. Mr. Chamberlin suggested running it by the scouts to see if they would want to take care of bringing the building to a point of using the house for their purpose. The cost of demolition of the house will go on the ATM Warrant.

Extend Charter Communications License

Ed Kopec noted that the last time the cable company was in (which was when they changed owners) they said the rates would not be increased. There has been a 40% increase in two years since then. Mr. McCuin said the point is that they did not increase the services by 40%. Mr. Chamberlin said that, unfortunately, the Town has no control over the rates. The contract negotiations have gone on for much too long. The Cable TV Advisory Committee will be invited to the next Selectmen's Meeting.

Mr. Chamberlin moved approval of a short-term license extension to June 30, 2002 for Charter Communications cable franchise. The motion was seconded and voted unanimously.

Minutes

Mr. Chamberlin moved approval of the regular session minutes of January 28, 2002. The motion was seconded. Vote: Chamberlin – Aye, Cunningham – Aye, McCuin – Abstained (not present for that meeting)

Mr. McCuin moved approval of the regular session minutes of February 4, 2002, as amended. Vote: McCuin – Aye, Chamberlin – Aye, Cunningham – Abstained (not present for that meeting)

DEP Meeting in Worcester

Mr. Cunningham said that because of the ruling from last year on the open meeting law relative to towns meeting outside of their community, the meeting was not held.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REPORT

West Groton Pond Dredging

Ms. Kitchen said that she got a verbal statement that the State would allow the Town to dredge the pond in June (2002).

Pepperell Bounds

Ms. Kitchen said she attended a meeting with Mass Highway. The bounds between Pepperell and Groton were corrected 10 years ago, but were not done right. There was a transposition of numbers. Once the bounds are corrected, Pepperell and Groton will need to bring the changes to their Town Meetings and to the Legislature.

Board of Health Vacancy

A meeting for a joint appointment is scheduled for February 25.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – Contract Negotiations

At 9:10 Mr. Chamberlin moved to go into executive session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30, Section 23B to discuss strategy with respect to contract negotiations, not to reconvene in open session. The motion was seconded. Vote: McCuin - Aye, Chamberlin - Aye, Cunningham - Aye

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:25 PM Mr. Chamberlin moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and voted unanimously.

Approved: _____
Dann Chamberlin, Clerk

Respectfully Submitted,
Doris T. Wheeler
Administrative Secretary