

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 7, 2005
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES
“APPROVED”**

Present: George F. Dillon, Jr., Chair; Peter S. Cunningham, Vice Chair; John L. Saball, Clerk; Virginia C. Wood, Member** (left meeting at 8:10 p.m.); Robert W. Nordblom, Member; Administrative Officer Jean E. Kitchen and Kathleen Newell, Office Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 P.M.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy

Ms. Maria Casey, Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen was present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Dillon stated this policy had been discussed at a previous meeting. Ms. Kitchen stated that the policy had received changes regarding service personnel and had been reviewed by Town Counsel.

Mr. Saball asked if the employees needed to sign for receipt of this policy. Ms. Casey stated there was a need for the departments to sign for policies again. Ms. Casey explained that the Sexual Harassment policy is currently the only policy which requires yearly signature of receipt. Ms. Casey stated that the EEO/AA policy is a very important policy as most department heads are conducting the hiring interviews and there are areas/questions which should not be touched upon.

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve adopt the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy (01-05). Seconded by Mr. Saball. Unanimous vote.

Assessor's RE: Livestock/Horses Personal Property Tax

Assessors Eddie Kopec and Sylvia Sangiolo and Assistant Assessor Rena Swezey were present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Kopec stated that when he became an Assessor twenty years ago everyone was aware of the livestock tax and it is not a new tax. Mr. Kopec stated that on January 1 of every year the Board of Assessors would go around the town and count the animals. Mr. Kopec stated that every year the Department of Revenue adjusts the value of the animals.

Mr. Saball stated that for a period of time this tax was not sent to taxpayers, and asked what the DOR's position was on that. Ms. Swezey stated that the DOR had a category for horses which was valued at \$1000 and a few years ago there had been a vote at Town Meeting that there would be no tax on valuations under \$10,000, therefore no bills had been sent. Ms. Swezey stated the Farmland Advisory Commission would be looking at the issue for FY06 as they had left out the pleasure category; however the DOR had given the current directive to the Assessors as to what the towns are to assess and Groton will be collecting those fees.

Mr. Saball stated that prior to this year the annual counting had not been conducted and asked when the last actual accounting had taken place. Mr. Kopec stated the last count had been four or five years ago.

Ms. Wood expressed concern that Groton is supposed to be a farming friendly community and stated she would like the Board to send a letter to the Farmland Bureau expressing that concern.

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Police Department Budget

Chief of Police Robert Mulhern and Town Accountant Valerie Jenkins were present for this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Jenkins gave an overview of the Town's financial position, stating that most of the departmental budgets had been received with outstanding information and an assessment from the district schools and no budget had been received from Nashoba Valley Technical High School. Ms. Jenkins stated there is a \$650,000 deficit on the bottom line. Mr. Cunningham asked if any numbers had been received from the Assessor's office. Ms. Jenkins replied none had been received as yet.

Chief Mulhern proceeded to review the Communications budget stating there was a slight increase due to salaries/wages and that there was also an increase in the expense of fuels.

Chief Mulhern then reviewed the Police budget stating the budget is primarily driven by personnel and the contract with the union expires in June of 2005. Chief Mulhern stated that he currently has three vehicles with over 100,000 miles and are no

longer cost effective and need to be replaced.

Chief Mulhern thanked Ms. Jenkins for spending several hours working with him on the budgets.

Ms. Wood asked Chief Mulhern why there was an increase in the Communications budget for minor capital. Chief Mulhern responded that the State is requiring automation. Ms. Wood stated there was a request for \$20,000 in computer systems and asked why if the Town had previously bought the Nextgen system. Chief Mulhern stated they were running parallel systems as the system is not stable and the request was to hire a specialist to extract information from the old system and enter it into the new system.

**Ms. Wood left the meeting.

Fire/EMS Department Budget

Fire Chief Joseph Bosselait was present for this portion of the meeting.

Chief Bosselait reviewed the Fire/EMS budget stating there was an increase in calls which necessitated more money to cover the calls and there is a slight increase in pay from the merger.

Mr. Saball asked how the rehab vehicle would be used. Chief Bosselait stated that initially he had thought about a van or upgrading his vehicle to make a class 5 vehicle or for use to do inspections during the day.

Council on Aging Budget

COA Director Martha Campbell was present for this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Campbell stated the increase in her budget was due to the telephone as the Senior Center now has its own fax line.

Mr. Dillon stated he had met with the COA board, the Finance Committee and Ms. Jenkins regarding the Lowell Regional Transit Authority and the use of the Roadrunner. Mr. Cunningham asked if the LRTA was expecting the Town to pay for the Roadrunner. Ms. Campbell stated the Town would be taking over the Roadrunner but the LRTA would contribute \$30,000. Mr. Dillon stated he had suggested keeping the budget the same and transferring the scheduling to the local area as the cost of a driver plus benefits would be \$38,000.

Library Budget

Library Trustees Mr. Brian Mullens, Mr. Mike Manugian, Ms. Kristen von Campe and Library Director Owen Shuman were present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Mullens submitted an updated budget sheet showing \$12,000 more in fine revenue.

Mr. Dillon asked if there was someone who had currently assumed the position of the Young Adult Librarian. Ms. Shuman stated there is some programming but no one is in the position. Mr. Mullens stated that if the position was not funded there will be cuts in the young adult programs.

Highway Department Budget

Highway Surveyor Tom Delaney was present for this portion of the meeting.

Mr. Delaney presented his budget stating that there was a \$17,000 increase for gas, fuel oil, heating and electricity. Mr. Delaney stated that there was a \$15,000 increase for an employee to share with the Parks Department. Mr. Dillon asked why the summer hire program could not continue. Mr. Delaney stated his department had taken a hit on unemployment this year and he loses a full time employee to supervise summer help, which is why he wants to shift to the Parks Department and wants the Parks to contribute.

Mr. Delaney reviewed the Snow & Ice budget which hasn't been increased since 1997; and reviewed the actuals spent from 1993-2004. Mr. Delaney stated he was estimating \$150,000 this year with some reimbursement from FEMA.

Water Department Budget

Water Commissioner Chris Kelley was present for this portion of the meeting.

Commissioner Kelley reviewed the department's budget stating the bottom line is \$990,000 and submitted a budget for 1.22 million. Commissioner Kelley stated the salaries will increase slightly and debt services will reduce on some projects. Mr. Dillon stated there had been a change or elimination of the minimum charge and processing fees to a quarterly fee of \$25.00 per bill. Mr. Dillon asked how many rate payers are in the district. Ms. Jenkins stated there were approximately 1400. Mr. Dillon noted the overtime had increased. Commissioner Kelley stated that was in part due to the continuing meter replacement. Mr. Dillon noted an increase in electricity. Commissioner Kelley stated he did not know about that figure and would need to contact the Superintendent.

Other Business:

Order of Taking – Sawtell Drive, Hayden Road, Integrity Way, Pacer Way, Madeline Drive and Wildflower Lane

Mr. Cunningham move an Order of Taking for Sawtell Drive , as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved an Order of Taking for Hayden Road, as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved an Order of Taking for Integrity Way, as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved an Order of Taking for Pacer Way, as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved an Order of Taking for Madeline Drive, as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved an Order of Taking for Wildflower Lane, as further described in the Order of Taking drafted by Town Counsel, dated February 7, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Scholarship Committee Appointment – Lyn Blouin and Jeanne Erickson

Ms. Maria Casey was present for this portion of the meeting.

Ms. Casey stated that the Scholarship Committee had a new chairperson, Rob Moore who would be coming before the Board to give an overview of what is available. Mr. Cunningham noted that Ms. Blouin was not a resident. Ms. Casey stated the Superintendent may have a designee. Ms. Wood read from the committee charge that the committee must consist of no fewer than six town members, which implies that the committee does not exist unless there is the compliment of residents.

Mr. Cunningham moved to appoint Lyn Blouin to the Scholarship Committee as Nashoba Valley Technical High School designee for the unexpired three-year term to expire June 30, 2005. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved to appoint Jeanne Erickson to the Scholarship Committee as Groton-Dunstable Regional School District designee for the unexpired three-year term to expire June 30, 2006. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Administrative Officer Report

Ms. Kitchen stated she had attended a meeting regarding budgets with the LRTA with Mr. Dillon and Mr. Nordblom.

Ms. Kitchen stated there would be a meeting regarding the Fairgrounds on Wednesday and requested the members to do an onsite visit. Ms. Kitchen further stated there would be an opportunity to formalize the arrangement with the two groups which use the facilities.

Selectmen Liaison Update

Mr. Dillon stated there would be a Chapter 40B panel discussion on February 17, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. and requested that anyone who had questions submit them prior to the meeting to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Dillon stated he would be meeting with G'Day and also attending the Nashoba Valley Technical High School's dedication on Wednesday and the Planning Board Meeting on Thursday.

Minutes

Mr. Cunningham moved to approve the Regular Session Minutes of January 10 2005, as amended. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Mr. Cunningham moved to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Saball. 4 in favor, 1 absent (Wood).

Approved: _____
John L. Saball, Clerk

respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Newell
Office Assistant

Date Approved: February 28, 2005