

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES JANUARY 7, 2008  
APPROVED**

**Present:** George Dillon, Jr., Chairman; Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chairman; Stuart Schulman, Clerk; Peter Cunningham; Mihran Keoseian

**Also Present:** Jeff Ritter, Interim Administrative Officer; April Iannacone, Office Assistant

*Mr. Dillon called the regular meeting of the Board to Order at 7:00 p.m. and reviewed the agenda for the public.*

**Conductorlab Oversight Committee Update**

Arthur Blackman informed the Board that he was there to update them on a long time problem. They believe they are on the way to a resolution. The issue is being addressed conscientiously and responsibly by the current owner of the site, Honeywell International. The Town is fortunate to have volunteers like Bob Hanninen, Michelle Collette, Kim Henry and David Hopper who have the knowledge needed, so the town no longer needs to hire experts.

Kim Henry stated that she has been serving on the committee for a few years, and has seen the most progress in 2007. In 1996 a Class C Response Action Outcome was achieved, which is only a temporary solution. The owners are controlling groundwater migration off of the property using a pump, so only the water within the property is affected. The only risk on the site would be to workers exposed to groundwater concentrations if the site were developed. Honeywell is now taking steps to advance the site to a permanent solution. They have gotten positive results from their pilot test, and are gearing up for a full scale operation of bioremediation in 2008. The Conductorlab Oversight Committee is encouraged by the progress, and has been conducting periodic meetings to keep informed.

Mr. Dillon asked if the bioremediation is a new technique. Kim replied that bioremediation has been around for a while, however it is not the most innovative technology. The process depends on the success of applying the nutrients and all bacteria into the land. They will then watch for a continued decline. If things go back up they may need to do a reinjection.

Mr. Schulman stated that this was exciting news. He asked if the process were to be started this year, how long it might be before the site is at a permanent solution. Kim replied that it would be at least 5 years, but less than 10. Under the Mass. contingency plan they report to the State every 5 years. This was done in 2006, so they have a few more years before having to report again.

Mr. Cunningham commended Honeywell for being responsible for the site. He then asked if the issue on 119 where the dam around the sewer would leak out and freeze up had been fixed. Kim replied that Honeywell had stated that they were working with Mass. Highway Dept. Michelle Collette stated that both Mass Highway and the Groton Sewer Commissioners have been involved. She has a fact sheet submitted by Honeywell, if any residents are looking for public information. She will let the Selectmen know the next time the team from Honeywell is up from New Jersey, if they are interested in attending the meeting.

Mr. Keoseian stated that it was encouraging that local talent was taking the lead on this. He then asked if any local agencies, or Nashoba Board of Health representation, were providing any oversight or monitoring. Arthur replied that the Selectmen appoint the Oversight Committee, which is the monitoring group until this issue is complete. The State Department of Environmental Protection would be the next point of contact.

Mr. Degen asked about what kind of bacteria was being used. Kim replied that they were adding naturally occurring bacteria to speed up the process of consuming the contamination, and breaking it down into chemicals that are less toxic than what they started out with. Mr. Degen then asked if this process was approved by the State. Kim replied that this has been a technology that has been approved by the State for other sites.

The Selectmen then gave thanks to the committee for coming in, and for the information they provided.

**Michelle Collette, Town Planner, RE: EPA 319 Grant Update**

Michelle and Tom were there regarding the application for funding to improve water quality on James Brook. The work will be done by the Highway Department, then reviewed and approved by the DEP. The contract given to the Selectmen is a standard State Contract, and they were requesting that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) execute the contract.

Tom stated that they were asking for endorsement for a number of projects that are necessities. The funding would be paying for different techniques for sidewalks and catch basins, and would not have to be paid for by the Town.

Mr. Dillon stated that this was a reimbursement type grant, and was one of three reimbursable grants taking place this year. Tom replied that it was chapter 90 funding, but he will plan to stop construction in the beginning of June so that hopefully the funding will come in faster to try to make the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Keoseian asked Tom if all labor costs were reimbursable. Tom replied that the labor was part of our matching funds. Mr. Keoseian then asked what projected labor costs were. Tom replied that the costs were estimated at \$89,560, but uses the State labor rates which are higher. Michelle stated that it also includes her work, her assistants work, the Conservation Commission and any volunteer activity.

*Mr. Degen moved that the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen execute and sign the contract with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Section 319, NPS Project 07-09/319, for the James Brook Urban Stormwater Improvements. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.*

### **Bob Watson, Weed Harvester Committee, RE: Request to Increase Hours for Weed Harvester Operations**

Bob informed the Board that he was looking for their support on an issue regarding the weeds on the lakes. The harvesting efforts need to be done environmentally, and for safety purposes. The Groton Lakes Association (GLA) has been operating the harvester for the past 15 years. Last year it was operated on a limited basis using volunteers, so wages were not necessary for the workers. They feel that there needs to be more time in operation, as the limited running has not been sufficient. They are requesting a paid operator for fiscal year 2009. The cost for a temporary, part time operator will be approximately \$3,300. He has also met with Elizabeth to review job descriptions and wages. Dr. Eger was also present, and informed the Board that he supports this request.

Mr. Degen asked if Bob had looked into seeing if the CPC Act could fund this under open space. Bob replied that they had addressed it with the CPC, and were told that those funds could not be used for capital expenditures. Mr. Degen replied that the current financial difficulties of the Town made this request difficult.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there was a job description in the past. Bob replied that there was not. An operator came from the Highway Department, then there was someone else for several years, but has been mostly voluntary.

Mr. Keoseian asked if anyone knew why it was dropped from the Highway Department. Dr. Eger replied that he did not know. Mr. Cunningham believed that the Highway Department lost staffing, so there was less time for the staff to take care of this task. Mr. Schulman asked if the machine was hard to run. Dr. Eger replied that it can be difficult.

Valerie Jenkins asked who owned the harvester, because Town employees cannot run private machines. Bob replied that the GLA owned the machine, but the Town had rented it. Mr. Dillon asked if anyone had looked into the liability of town employees doing this.

Mr. Keoseian asked Mr. Ritter to look into why the Highway Department had given up the responsibility. They needed to determine a right way to get this done. They also needed to know what the actual cost in man hours would be, and then see if it was the right time to bring it back to that particular department.

Mr. Dillon asked about the Diaquod that was used a few years back. Dr. Eger replied that over time the application of the Diaquod would have to be done again. Its use doesn't last forever and invasive weeds can be re-infested.

Mr. Dillon then asked what was happening with the efforts toward the draw down. Dr. Eger replied that they were still waiting for the approval that they filed for in 2002, due to the effect it may have on endangered plants. Until they receive the ok they do not have right to do an extensive drawdown.

Mr. Cunningham stated that they should find out from MIIA about what issues there may be. The Town has been dealing with this issue for a number of years, in a number of ways, and was scolded the last time used the Diaquod.

The Board reached a consensus that they would defer this issue, and then follow up when Jeff came up with more information. They then gave thanks to Dr. Eger and Mr. Watson.

### **Weed Harvester Committee Appointments**

Mr. Dillon noted that both of these gentlemen had been recommended by Bob Watson.

*Mr. Schulman moved to appoint Stephen Marrantzini and Gerrett Durling to the Weed Harvester Committee for 1 year terms to expire June 30, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

### **Cable Advisory Committee Update**

John Ellenberger informed the Board that he had received a request to come in and give an update. Ms. Dorothy Davis was also present.

Mr. Dillon stated that they were looking to find out any information on the dealings with Verizon, and when they might be bringing in the Cable T.V. service.

Mr. Ellenberger responded that they had gone through the process of asking Verizon to submit a proposal, which they expected to receive in December, but did not. They found out that our Verizon representative had retired and we now have new representation. She is stating that the capital equipment necessary was not budgeted for this year, and would be in the budget for 2009. The Committee will be starting negotiations on Thursday to begin the licensing process. They hope to have this complete by the end of the year, so they can plan to try to start work as of 2009.

Mr. Dillon asked if this was concurrent with our Fiscal Year or by calendar year. Mr. Ellenberger replied that he was told the process was roughly 1 year out which he believed was by calendar year, however Verizon has not been very timely with this process throughout the whole state.

Mr. Schulman asked what the status of the legislation was. Mr. Ellenberger replied that his conclusion is that the legislation is not going to be going through and they have been receiving negative feedback.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there were any other communities that had the television service yet. Mr. Ellenberger replied that the only one in this area was Dunstable. There has been no particular pattern to the installations, and in some towns this has been going on for many years. According to a consumer reports review, there are a significant amount of towns that are covered by Fios internet service that do not have television service.

The Selectmen then thanked Mr. Ellenberger and Dorothy Davis for their information and for coming in.

### **Public Hearing Liquor License Transfer Request from Currier & Chives to Groton Country Club**

*Mr. Schulman moved to open the Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

Mr. Dillon stated that the Public Hearing was for the transfer of the Liquor License for the Function Hall that was held by Currier and Chives to the Country Club. They were also looking to change the manager for the Function Hall and Snack Bar Lounge. He then read the legal notice that was posted.

Mr. Dillon then asked if there was anyone present in the audience that was in support of the transfer. There were 3 representatives from the Country Club, Michelle Sticklor, David Riposa and Carol Wright who were present in support of these actions.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there had been any activity or outreach to the community through the transition from Currier & Chives to in house. Carol replied that they were looking to utilize the function hall for fitness classes, dance classes, baby showers, birthday parties, etc. They will be marketing the facility for functions. They would outsource the catering, but they would be in charge of the bar.

Mr. Keoseian asked if a cost analysis had been done in relation to the liquor license, or revenue projections of whether this change will increase or break even. David replied that they did have some ideas, but he did not bring the numbers with him. They were bringing in rent which was similar to the \$2,000 to \$3000 month normal activity projection. Mr. Keoseian requested that the Country Club Authority give the Selectmen an interim status report after first half of the year to see how this change is working.

Mr. Dillon stated that the Country Club once held the license for the function hall, lounge and pavilion. They gave up the pavilion in 2005, and then transferred the function hall to Currier in 2005. He then asked if Michelle had completed the class offered. Michelle replied that she had completed the online course to learn to serve, and all staff will be required to take the course. She also stated that they would keep up on any courses that the ABCC offers.

Mr. Dillon asked Michelle if they had increased the liability insurance. She replied that they had and had increased the liquor liability also.

Mr. Dillon stated that the process takes 4-6 weeks, and asked if arrangements had been made with Currier & Chives for any events where a Liquor License may be required. Michelle responded that they do have arrangements made.

*Mr. Schulman moved to close the public hearing at 8:04.p.m. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Unanimous vote.*

*Mr. Schulman moved to change the Manager of the Groton Country Club Authority's On Premise Liquor License for the Snack Bar/Lounge from Bradford Durrin to Michelle Sticklor. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Voted 4 in favor (F.D., S.S., P.C., M.K.) and 1 abstained (J.D.).*

*Mr. Schulman moved to transfer the Liquor License of LPM Holding Company d/b/a Currier & Chives to the Groton Country Club Authority with Michelle Sticklor as Manager. Mr. Cunningham seconded. Voted 4 in favor (F.D., S.S., P.C., M.K.) and 1 abstained (J.D.).*

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Review Board Policy, RE: Health Insurance for Elected Officials**

Mr. Dillon stated that the proposal is to eliminate a section of the policy #04-02, which would eliminate all elected officials currently availing themselves of this benefit effective June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Valerie Jenkins informed the Board that all of the Town's Health Insurance Plans start and stop as of the June 1<sup>st</sup> deadline, so the last official day of the current policies is May 31<sup>st</sup>, and they would be ensured covered up until that time.

*Mr. Degen moved to amend the Board of Selectmen's policy entitled the "Elected Officials Health Insurance Policy," number 04-02 by deleting section D effective June 1, 2008. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.*

### **Review Board Policy, RE: Grant Submissions**

Mr. Dillon stated that policy number 07-02 deals with policy of processing of grants. Due to recent discussions that have taken place, he wanted to make sure that all employees were aware that this was in effect, and see if any changes needed to take place.

Mr. Keoseian stated that his only suggestion was under section e where the applications need to be submitted to the BOS for approval 1 week before submission. He felt that 1 week was too short a window and doesn't give them enough turnaround time. He suggested that it should be at least 2 meetings or 2 weeks. Mr. Ritter agreed that in order to support the grant, they have to have time to review it.

Mr. Cunningham stated that most department heads know about the grants ahead of time. Mr. Ritter replied that the challenge is that they know it is out there, but they do not communicate to people ahead of time.

Mr. Dillon suggested that they add 'in the present and the future' to the end of the last sentence under part b.

Mr. Dillon then asked Val if she notifies FINCOM about the grant. She replied that if she knows about them then she does. However most times the department heads believe that they can just come before the BOS just for the signature. They need to know the Board has to be informed. Just because a grant is out there doesn't mean that it is always a good thing.

The Board reached a consensus to add the suggested change to section b, and change 1 week to 2 weeks on part e. Mr. Ritter stated that he will update the policy and resubmit it to department heads tomorrow.

*Mr. Degen moved to reapprove the Grant Preparation Policy as amended this evening, January 7, 2008. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.*

### **Town Report from the Board**

The Town Report was a collaborative effort of the Chair of the Board and the Administrative Officer. Mr. Schulman and Mr. Keoseian noticed just a few minor typos that would be given to Mr. Ritter for changing. Mr. Keoseian and Mr. Cunningham stated that the report was well written. Mr. Degen thanked Mr. Dillon and Mr. Ritter for preparing the report.

### **Valerie Jenkins, Town Accountant, RE: Financial Update**

Val informed the Board that all of the budgets were in except the moderator and the sign committee, but these should be little and probably level funded. The District Schools have not given their budget yet. In conjunction with the 3 year plan she is reserving a percentage 64-65% for them. With the entire budget the current working deficit is \$490,000, and is likely to go up with the official request from the schools. The Chair of FINCOM and the BOS sent out pretty strict requirements, but two thirds of the budgets came in higher or level funded, and only a few came in reduced. There were only 2 budgets that came in with true labor, and one person gave up the stipend entirely. Of the \$496,000 deficit she firmly believes that they could find \$30 to \$40,000 in mathematical corrections, and things people can be talked out of. This includes out of state travel, training and conferences. There is \$100,000 in requests for new positions. However, even after all of that they are still over \$300,000 in deficit, which all comes down to labor. She doesn't think that people truly realized that what they are looking at is head count. They are looking for something that could be given up such as summer help or extra hours, but not a lot of that has happened.

Mr. Dillon asked if the snow and ice was part of this balance. Val replied that it was, but there was a reserve of \$175,000 that was not in the deficit as of this minute

Mr. Cunningham asked if the Sign Committee budget would go away if they create an article to roll the Committee responsibility into the Building Inspector. Val replied that the public notices were only a piece of the budget, and they will still need those funds.

Mr. Dillon stated that the reserve for abatements was being held and Val did not cut anything. He requested a list of anything that they see that is not current labor, either summer people or people that were not yet hired. The first step would be to not bring anyone new in rather than pushing people out.

Mr. Degen stated that it was very important to have this information available. He felt that one thing that was an important job to do as liaison to the departments, was to go through the line items and budgets so that any paring back can be done before getting to FINCOM and the BOS.

Mr. Cunningham asked if they were working with the revenue projections. Val replied that she was working on them again. Of the departments that gave revenue projections, some were worse than what she had projected, and so far they are \$75,000 less than she had expected. She is reluctant to lower local receipts again. Bentley believes there will only be \$100,000 in building permits coming in, and new growth is off by 17% from last year.

Mr. Dillon asked about the excise taxes. Val replied that they were left as level funded for the moment. In two and a half weeks they will have big commitment, but they won't go up or down much.

Mr. Keoseian asked about the 12-14% increase in healthcare costs. Val stated that she based on an increase of 13.5%, but she was hoping it would go down under 13% which would help by about \$25,000.

Mr. Dillon asked about the short term borrowing for short term bond that was to turn into a long term bond, in terms of the overall bond structure for the school. Val replied that the debt service numbers had lowered a little. The Casella bond is in the projections. In order to exclude that debt it has to be on the ballot. It looks to be a one time benefit this year, and then a continuing smaller benefit of the high school. The State reimbursement is a little better.

Mr. Dillon stated that the deficit does not include the effect of the 2 union contracts. Val replied that there were 2 contracts to end for FY08 and renew. The salaries have gone up very little and the 2 unions have no colas. There was a reduction in a labor line item due to an ongoing calculation error. She will be returning \$70 to \$100,000, and she now knows what the error is. There was a \$50,000 calculation error and assumption. However, the \$50,000 absorbed the effect of the mandated increases in FY09.

Val stated that she would be meeting with FINCOM tomorrow. She has gotten 2 or 3 amended budgets, and she expects to have 2 more that will make a difference. FINCOM will see about \$15,000 less than what the BOS is seeing tonight. She is hoping that maybe more will fall out and change by the end of January.

#### **REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER**

Mr. Ritter informed the Board that the Insurance bids were due next Thursday the 17<sup>th</sup>. He will be having a meeting with the Town's current provider tomorrow to clear up some of the increases from this year. He will have more information for the Board next week. There is a Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce meeting in Devens tomorrow morning at 7:30 a.m. He will be meeting with the new Manager of the Groton Inn on Wednesday morning at 9:00 a.m. He reminded the Board to start thinking about Annual Town Meeting articles that they would be looking to submit. He would be attending the MMA Annual Meeting on Friday and Saturday along with a couple of the Selectmen. Lastly, there was an article on the front page of the paper about how Homeland Security funded the Reverse 911 System in Worcester County and the abutting towns. The cost to the town would be a recurring cost of \$800 per year which was really cost effective.

#### **SELECTMAN LIAISON REPORTS**

There were no Selectmen Liaison Reports for this evening.

#### **ADJOURN**

*Mr. Degen moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.*

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_ respectfully submitted,  
April Iannacone  
Office Assistant

Date Approved: *March 3, 2008*