

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES MARCH 17, 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.

21 Moose Trail Conservation Restriction

Mr. Degen moved to sign, approve and hold the Conservation Restriction for Assessors' Parcel 130-55 on Moose Trail pursuant to an affirmative vote of the Conservation Commission on Tuesday, March 11, 2008, provided the vehicle in the Conservation Restriction area is removed and other conditions set forth by the Conservation Commission are met. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

Martha Campbell, Council on Aging Director & Elizabeth Currier, Personnel Manager, RE: Request to fill Administrative Assistant Position

Mr. Degen moved to approve the posting and hiring of the part-time, not to exceed 19 hours per week, Administrative Assistant to the Council on Aging. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

Bonnie Biocchi, Regional Director Massachusetts Office of Business Development, RE: Economic Target Area (ETA)

Bonnie briefly explained the economic target area, why Pepperell was looking to be a part of this designation and what the process was for them to achieve this. She stated that a town needs to be a part of the ETA in order to take advantage of certain State Grants.

Mr. Cunningham asked what the geographic target area for this ETA was. Bonnie responded that this area included Ayer, Shirley and Groton.

Mr. Degen moved to amend the existing Economic Target Area (ETA) Agreement which includes Groton, Shirley and Ayer to include the Town of Pepperell, providing that the Shirley and Ayer Board of Selectmen take similar action. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

David Hopper, Country Club Authority, RE: FY09 Budget

Mr. Hopper stated that Mr. Riposa would not be able to attend the meeting this evening. He stated that the Country Club had done their budgets to the best of their abilities due to the changes in their procedures.

Mr. Dillon stated that the Country Club budget runs by calendar year, January 1st through December 31st. He then asked Mr. Hopper to quickly go over the significant differences between last year and this year.

Mr. Hopper stated that it had been 3 years since the rates have changed at the Country Club. The golf revenue will be a big difference because they have increased the fee by 10%. They have also increased the membership fee by 10%. They have decided not to limit the senior discount, so if the seniors pay early they will receive their 10% discount on top of the standard 10% discount for paying early, allowing them a 20% discount now rather than only 15%. The fee for the swim program has increased by 30%.

Michelle Sticklor stated that they have also increased the capacity of the swim program to 150 from 130.

Mr. Hopper stated that there would also be a big difference on the function hall. There was a \$26,400 lease fee that was paid by Currier & Chives which they will no longer receiving, but they will be picking up function hall revenue which never existed. They have also doubled the summer camp program was doubled from 2 groups to 4 groups. There are some fees that have been increased. There accounting fees have been estimated higher and they have had to plan for advertising fees to generate revenue for the function hall. There are legal fees, employment contract changes, routing bank charges and some building repair and maintenance needs to be done. They may not spend all of the money for advertising. They will go forward with this plan for the function hall through the end of May or June and if things are not working then they will re-evaluate the plan.

Mr. Degen asked why it was that the Country Club had been carrying bad debt. Mr. Hopper replied that he could not explain what it was that caused this. Michelle stated that part of the bad debt was an issue with old management and that they should not have that issue from here on out.

Mr. Degen then asked about what the bank fees were for. Michelle replied that they were merchant fees for processing credit cards.

Mr. Schulman asked if they had any sense of the revenue outlook given the first 2-3 months of this year so far. Michelle replied that things are definitely up from this time last year.

Mr. Hopper stated that the insurance fees have increased, they have left the lease payment the same and the utilities have bumped up a little. They have found ways to cut utility expenses back a little and have gotten a lower rate. The pool expenses are up a little, general maintenance, supplies and grounds keeping are about the same, and summer camp expenses are up due to planning for more kids attending. There are expenses for running the function hall. They are projecting that they could make about \$90,000 in income and have approximately \$25,000 in expenses. They have based this on what Currier & Chives was doing and the activity they have had so far. They have not ruled out the leasing out of the function hall again if necessary.

Michelle stated that they were hoping to net a few thousand more than what they were receiving from Currier & Chives.

Mr. Dillon stated that the projection was that income and expenses for the lounge were both going down and asked why it was that the income was going down. Michelle replied that they had budgeted a big change and decrease in the expenses. The past kitchen manager was inexperienced and spent too much on labor and over purchased supplies so they ended up throwing away a lot. They raised the prices on food, so they had to anticipate that not as many people would want to spend more money on the food and projected just slightly less income because of this.

Mr. Cunningham asked if there was any room in the budget for a possible increase in the lease payments to \$3500. Michelle replied that there were a lot of repairs, maintenance and other issues that they were trying to work with and that they would probably not have the money for a lease increase at this time.

Mr. Keoseian requested that the next time they work through the budget they align the income and expenses so that there is a better match on things and it is easier to follow. He also stated that the other thing that would be helpful would be a list of the things they feel need to be done and a plan that they have for the next few years to get these things accomplished.

Michelle stated that they will try to work on these requests. The past management did not properly keep up on things.

Mr. Hopper stated that they were doing everything that they could to work on repairs, increase revenue and decrease expenses.

Mr. Schulman stated that this was a much better business like presentation than what was done in the past. He appreciated all of the hard work and efforts that they have been putting in. He hoped that things continued to go well and work out as they have been planning.

Mr. Dillon also wished them the best of luck.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Hopper and Michelle for their time and information

OTHER BUSINESS

Special Town Meeting Warrant

Mr. Dillon stated that the Special Town Meeting (STM) would be the meeting within the Annual Town Meeting (ATM). He asked Mr. Ritter if it was typically set for a particular time. Mr. Ritter replied that he had researched and has determined that it is typically started at 8:00 that night.

Mr. Dillon then stated that there were currently 3 articles on the STM warrant. There were some line item transfers regarding the current FY08 budget. There was a possibility that there might be another article for the STM or ATM warrant, and if that were to be the case then they would open and close the warrant next Monday evening to insert the article. He stated that this agenda item was mostly for informational purposes.

One-Day Liquor License for Mike Adams, Currier & Chives

Mr. Degen stepped down from the Board for this discussion.

Mr. Dillon stated that the request was for an all day event on June 7th at the Williams Barn from 1:00 to 6:00 pm. They have insurance and the Town of Groton has been added on as additionally insured. Patrice has received all necessary information.

Mr. Schulman moved to approve a one day All-Alcohol license for Currier & Chives, Mike Adams, Vice President/Director of Catering (L.P.M. Holding Company, Inc.) in conjunction with Seasonal Specialties for an event/celebration to be held on June 7, 2008 located at the Williams Barn, 160 Chicopee Row, Groton; 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The result of the vote was 4 in favor (F.D., S.S., P.C., M.K.) and 1 abstained (J.D.)

REPORT OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Mr. Ritter stated that FINCOM would be meeting tomorrow evening to continue to review the budget issues. This afternoon the Town Counsel screening group met with Petrini Associates from Framingham. They will be interviewing 2 more firms over the next 2 weeks and he will continue to keep the Board informed. He then reviewed the next few weeks coming agendas which included the public hearing for the ATM warrant and the fee increases. Lastly, he received an email today from the Commonwealth of Mass. stating that the Town of Groton was selected to receive the 2008 E-Government award for the Town's website. This is the second year that Groton has received this award, and we are one of 85 communities to receive the award. He gave thanks to the Information Technology Committee for their hard work.

Mr. Dillon requested that the sponsors of the articles for the warrant be present for the public hearing on the 24th with the Selectmen and FINCOM

SELECTMAN LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Cunningham stated that he had attended the North Central Chamber of Commerce breakfast last Tuesday. They heard from the former Providence Mayor, Buddy Cianci who spoke about what they had done to pull the city together. He had some interesting ideas on how to get things done. One of the things he did was to get the colleges and tax exempt organizations involved in helping out. He worked hard at getting everyone to recognize that there was a problem and to work together to resolve the problem.

Mr. Dillon stated that his administration had some very creative programs and ideas.

Mr. Degen agreed with the idea of working with the tax exempt organizations and schools. Groton has a couple of educational institutions in town that we should reach out to more and ask them to help participate in things and share their resources.

Mr. Dillon stated that he believed that it was indicated that about 50% of the assessed land in town was tax exempt. He believed that they should work out an arrangement with the State because there is a lot of money generated by those institutions.

Mr. Cunningham agreed that they should try to get some support from the state. There are sales tax revenues generated by the schools that should come back to the town in some way.

Mr. Schulman stated that he had taken part in the Town Counsel screening group that Mr. Ritter had spoken about.

Mr. Dillon stated that he had also attended the screening group and it was a good informational discussion. The group has learned a lot and it was a good exercise.

MINUTES

Mr. Degen moved to approve the regular session meeting minutes of January 22, 2008. Mr. Cunningham seconded. The result of the vote was 3 in favor (F.D., J.D., P.C.) and 2 abstained (S.S., M.K.).

ADJOURN

Mr. Degen moved to adjourn at 8:20 p.m. Mr. Schulman seconded. Unanimous vote.

Approved: _____
Stuart Schulman, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
April Iannacone
Office Assistant

Date Approved: May 19, 2008