

TOWN OF THORNTON

January 23, 2007

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

5:30 The meeting was called to order.

Board members present: Arthur Gross, Ralph Perron and Lee Freeman

Also present: Administrator Andrew (TA), Marty Wilson, Burd Engineering; Jim Demeritt, Campton Selectmen Charlie Wheeler, JD McGarr and Bill Cheney; Fire Department members David Tobine, Chief; Mike Piazza, Deputy; Ian Halm, Captain; Becky Farnsworth, Bookkeeper; and Fire Commissioners Nancy Byerly and Dan Morel; Ellsworth Selectman Steve Taves

5:30 Marty Wilson, Burd Engineering, stated that the Mill Brook Survey work is complete. He presented the Board with 3 sets of plans, and stated he has not met with the Road Agent at this point. The files will be copied and presented to the town in pdf format that can be printed by anyone. The Board confirmed that pdf format is acceptable. Mr. Wilson stated he is scheduled to meet with the Road Agent Thursday morning to discuss centerline notations. Elevations need to be turned on at the hubs and some cleanup done on the plan.

5:47 The Board entered non-public session relative to a personnel issue. Present were the Board of Selectmen
6:02 The Board returned to public session. It was moved to seal the minutes. APPROVED (x3)

6:02 The Board entered non-public session relative to land negotiations. Present were the Board of Selectmen and TA.
6:05 The Board returned to public session. It was moved to seal the minutes. APPROVED (x3)

Selectman Freeman made a motion to accept with regrets the resignation of Dot Drake and a letter of thanks should be sent. All agreed.

Selectman Freeman made a motion to post the opening for a Supervisor of Checklists until 2/2/07. PASSED (x3)

It was moved that the Town Budget hearing be scheduled for 2/13/07 at 6:30 PM. PASSED (x3) The TA will so post.

Selectman Freeman requested that the TA elaborate on the "squeaking" about the 3% cost of living increase approved by the Board. The TA explained that some of the employees have commented that the employees were given less than the Social Security cost of living increase in 2006 and they feel that they are being short shifted again this year as the Social Security rate is being calculated at 3.3% vs. the 3.0% increase that was approved by the

Board. Selectman Freeman stated that next year the Board should be a little more proactive when setting the cost of living increase.

6:30 Fire Department budget. Selectman Perron stated that after approving the ambulance funding, he went home and tried to justify how the Board would present an ambulance and fire truck to the voters. He continued that he believes we do need the truck and the ambulance, but he is afraid that by asking the voters for both, we may end up with nothing. Charlie Wheeler agreed that someone would have to present the requests and educate the voters about how it could actually be a saving after the first year. Selectman Freeman stated he looks at it as being a possibility to lose both items. There is a lot of concern about purchasing an ambulance. It will take a lot of energy to get that to pass at Town Meeting. Placing the ambulance on the warrant is the best choice with the information we have. Selectmen Freeman suggested that we wait a year before placing the Fire Truck on the warrant.

Chief Tobine stated he understands the concerns and has thought about these issues. Fire Truck payments would not start until 2008 if an article were passed at the 2007 Town Meeting. The SCBA will be paid off in March 2007. If the proposal as discussed passed, the towns would actually be paying less in 2008 than currently because of debt that will have been retired. The Chief continued that he planned it so that the other leases will be paid off noting that a fire truck would not come on line until 2008 if ordered in 2007. Selectman Freeman asked what is the risk if we table it for a year? Chief Tobine stated the truck would be at least \$30,000 more expensive. He asked what surety there is that a truck would pass next year given proposed spending issues. The Chief noted that the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has had a truck replacement listed for the last two years, and the truck that is scheduled is 32 years old. Selectman Perron inquired if an ambulance had been in the CIP for this year. The Chief responded it was not. Selectman Freeman responded that the CIP is only a guide for the Selectmen to utilize when formulating budgets.

Chief Tobine expressed concern that the first responders would start leaving the department if they don't feel they are supported. The Thornton Selectmen stated they support the Fire Department and its personnel.

Campton Selectman McGarr stated a 07-fire truck would cost more. A 2006 chassis and motor ordered in 2007 could save on emissions requirements. He agreed that selling two pieces of equipment to the voters is a big issue. Chief Tobine questioned whether the fire truck would be a big issue with the \$0 expense in 2007?

Ellsworth Selectman Taves stated his board had a 2-hour meeting last week discussing how both pieces of equipment can be sold to the voters. There was discussion about how much revenue would actually come back to the towns vs. the start up costs. Chief Tobine explained that the numbers he utilized are from the same company that does the Plymouth ambulance billing. He continued that Comstar does most of the ambulance billing in this

area. Currently the \$66,000 in ambulance revenue is going into Plymouth's general budget.

Chief Tobine stated that Plymouth's Fire Chief Thibeault would like to see Campton-Thornton Fire Department get an ambulance because it would take a load off of Plymouth and his personnel.

Chief Tobine stated his belief that both items could pass and expressed his willingness to speak at the towns' meeting. He stated he is not looking for a full-time department.

Selectman Freeman stated he is good with the ambulance as voted. Selectman Perron agreed.

Selectman Wheeler stated there is no money required funding a fire truck in 2007 - which is a home run selling point. Selectman Freeman stated he can't honestly sell both projects in one year. Selectman McGarr stated he couldn't understand why it should be such an issue. There are no budget dollars this year. Selectman Perron stated that in Thornton emotions could ruin a very good thing. Charlie Wheeler thinks the Chief can support his recommendations.

Chief Tobine agreed stating the Thornton Board is not giving the people the ability to pass the issue or turn it down. He continued we already have a good ambulance service in Plymouth. They are busy, but good. The truck is not good. Selectman Freeman stated we are looking at making the truck last one additional year-we need to put some certainty on having an ambulance approved. Selectmen Wheeler and Cheney stated an ambulance is going to cost \$26,000 through the lease/ purchase and the fire truck will not cost anything this year. Campton also has a lot of expenditures coming up. The ambulance will eventually be self-supporting. They both agreed the communities should try to have both on the warrant this year. Selectman Cheney stated he didn't see emotions being an issue. The Chief has justified the need.

Chief Tobine stated the request is based on a 7- year lease/purchase with payments not starting until 2008. The payment would be \$21,000 for Thornton. The interest rate is calculated at 4.12%. Selectman Freeman stated he can not vote to have both on the warrant. Selectman Gross stated he would like to see both on the warrant. Selectman Freeman stated if the majority of the Thornton Board goes along with the proposal for 2007, he will support it, but he would absolutely support the truck in 2008. Selectman Wheeler stated he thinks the Thornton Board is assuming a lot not to let the voters decide. Selectman McGarr and Commissioner Byerly agreed. Selectman Gross stated if we don't put it on the warrant this year, it won't be passed next year.

Becky Farnsworth stated that when the boards discussed the issue two weeks ago, you asked for the Chief's opinion, but you are not considering his recommendation. Selectman Perron stated he had been considering it for two weeks. Jim Demeritt agreed with the Fire Department, stating he would probably go with the fire truck first because there is no

money required this year. Selectman Freeman stated the timing of acquiring an ambulance right now is more important because of the urgency of the moment. He continued he wholeheartedly supports a truck purchase next year, but he doesn't see both passing if placed on the warrant this year.

Selectman Wheeler stated if Thornton does not agree to put a fire truck on the warrant, there is no reason to put it on the Campton warrant. Chief Tobine stated it is pretty likely that Engine 1 will be taken off of the ISO rating as a pumper. They may let us use it on a reserve status because of its age. They have been gracious enough to hold the rating thus far. ISO rating is done every ten years or so and it was just done two years ago. Annual reports are required. The towns would receive a better rating with the 2500-gallon truck proposed. Selectman McGarr stated the bottom line is \$3000 less due to Engine 4's final payment and the payoff the SCBA equipment. Chief Tobine stated it takes a year to build a truck. Selectman Gross stated holding off the truck warrant will delay delivery to at least 2009.

Selectman Gross stated the Thornton Board is 2 to 1. He continued that \$21,000 is a small amount to pay for saving a life and there is no financial impact in 2007. Selectman Wheeler stated it is all about educating the people.

Becky Farnsworth inquired if the ambulance payroll should be reported separately or as part of the Fire Department budget? The Boards responded that it should be part of the budget.

Dan Morel spoke to the Thornton Board about the Fire Commissioners. There are 5 commissioners and 3 are needed to have a quorum. Mr. Hiltz, a Thornton commissioner, has only attended 2-3 meetings in the last year. Selectman Freeman agreed that we need to have more active membership and asked the TA to contact Mr. Hiltz to inquire his intentions.

APPROVALS:

Building Permit

15 4 11-07

Kastmast Const

house w/o garage

The Board requested a non-public session be posted for 8AM Thursday, January 25, 2007 for a personnel issue. The Road Agent will be requested to attend.

The Board reviewed the overall budget proposals and cut monies from several line items.

8:03 It was moved to adjourn. PASSED (x3)

**The next scheduled Selectmen's Meeting
Will be
Tuesday January 30, 2007
5:30 PM at the Municipal Building**