

TOWN OF THORNTON

February 13, 2008

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

6:00 PM The meeting was called to order.

Board members present: Arthur Gross and Roy Sabourn, Jim Parziale

Also present: Administrator Andrew (TA), Town Clerk/Tax Collector Barbara Sellingham, Melinda Johnston, Lee Freeman, Marianne Peabody, Steve and Maryanne Medaglia, Giff & Sally Kriebel, Ralph Perron, John Gaites, Lisa Lima, Russell Gilman, Jim Demeritt, Susan Lyons, John Carpenter, Police Chief Walter Joyce, Fire Chief David Tobine, Barry VanDeMoere

Selectman Gross inquired how the budget should be addressed.

4130 The primary change is the 3% cost of living adjustment. Lee Freeman asked questions about the percent of change. Selectman Sabourn responded that there will be personnel changes with the retirement of the town clerk tax collector.

4140 Increase is primarily due to having 4 elections this year. Auditing fees are increasing about 20%. Also there will be a closing audit due to the change in town clerk/tax collector. Mr. Freeman asked if there would be an opinion letter from the auditors prior to town meeting. The TA responded hopefully.

4150 This reflects the costs of the assessing agreement

4152 Legal expense will be less due the successful defense of Owl's Nest property values.

4155 Health insurance and retirement. There was discussion about how the Plymouth school system has three health insurance options to choose from. If a higher co-pay were selected it would mean lower rates. Selectman Gross stated that the town is now paying employees who do not take part in the insurance. Chief Joyce asked what budget line item it would come out of. Selectman Gross responded that it would be coming out of the department budget and also that if the school goes with a new program, Thornton may follow suit.

4191-4192 Planning/Zoning. Planning budget is dropping and a Zoning budget will be separated for the first time. The two combined equal more than this past year. There has been considerable activity in the zoning board this year. It was noted that the Capital Improvement Committee has requested \$1500 for maintenance of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The selectmen recommended the budget be kept at \$1200. There are items that still need to be revised in the CIP and the board intends to work more closely with the committee to come up with a better product. Selectman Gross stated the CIP it is an asset to the board.

- 4194 Municipal Buildings. There is a slight drop from last year. Mr. Freeman inquired about the building repairs line. Selectman Sabourn stated that the paving of the parking lot and the painting of the interior of the building including the police department are a large portion of the amount.
- 4195 Cemeteries. No change in the request.
- 4196 Insurances. This includes the workers, unemployment and liability insurances including an allowance for deductibles.
- 4197 Advertising includes North Country Council and the Chamber of Commerce
- 4199 Contingency can be used for anything needed and not budgeted.
- 4210 Police. The largest increases are in the dispatching and prosecutor costs. They are both based on usage.
- 4215 Ambulance. There is no appropriation because the new ambulance approved last year is included in the fire department operations. Jim Demeritt, Fire Commissioner, gave a copy of the revenue estimate proposed at last year's town meeting. Mr. Freeman stated that when revenues are discussed he is going to ask that \$40,000 be added to the receipts for potential ambulance revenues.
- 4220 Fire department. There are two new full time employees on the ambulance, a payment on engine 1 and support staff was increased to 30 hours/week, plus insurance increases. Maintenance on the vehicles went up considerably. Two trucks have substantial rust and an additional line was added to address this issue, plus fuel, and \$5,000 for a defibrillator. There is a new line for \$15,000 for that purpose. The department has just been awarded grants of \$56,925 from Homeland Security that will be used primarily for a rescue tool and some hose replacement. They also received a grant for \$2,500 for forestry equipment. \$2,820 will come from the equipment line for matching funds.
- 4240 Building inspections have been reduced to \$8,000
- 4290 Emergency Management. No change in the request.
- 4295 Emergency Storm Damage line. Mr. Freeman quoted RSA 31:95b and stated that the DRA would not approve the line. Barbara Sellingham stated that the FEMA monies could not be included in revenues at the tax rate setting. Selectman Sabourn stated that DRA Auditor, Bob Anderson authorized the way the expense had been separated. Mr. Freeman asked that the auditors be made aware of it.
- 4300 Street signs-no change. Marianne Peabody stated that the planning board takes in monies for new subdivisions that helps offset the sign expense.
- 4312 Highway department. Mr. Freeman questioned if there is an additional 32/hr wk position included in the budget. There is. He asked what happens if they work consecutive weeks over the regular weekly hours stating that there may a discrimination issue. Selectman Sabourn stated the board had actually considered going to a full-time benefited position, but believes that position can be keep within what is requested. Mr. Freeman inquired the reason for the increase in the salt and sand line. Selectman Gross

responded that board is trying to purchase sand this year to save the sand on town property for when we need it. Selectman Sabourn stated that with time and equipment it would cost about the same and the town would not have to deal with the reclamation of the area, tree clearing, etc. It may not be the right call, but the board agreed that it should be tried. Benton's have given us a proposal that is about equal without making the mess of town property. The sand isn't going anywhere and if this doesn't work out, we will go back to putting up our own sand. Mr. Freeman asked if the board is going to reduce the labor and equipment rental lines. Selectman Sabourn stated the rental equipment line had gone down.

Ralph Perron inquired about the bridge line. Selectman Sabourn responded that the amount budgeted is for the covered bridge in Mill Brook. It should not have been accepted by the town. There is scour going on. The board, road agent, engineers and Jim Demeritt have all looked at the road. We are trying to get a plan together for what is the best solution to the problem. We have a proposal that has not been accepted from an engineering firm at this point. We all believe that fixing that structure in that location is a bad decision for the town. Mr. Freeman inquired if it is the board's intent to spend money and do the capital reserve. Giff Kriebel stated it would be prudent to leave both items. It is being financially prudent to set monies aside, because the bridge will cost a lot more to fix. Steve Medaglia stated that if the engineering study shows that the bridge is unsafe, it will open the door for state funds. It was discussed in the Hazard Mitigation Plan and when the plan is updated, it will help grant monies become available. Selectman Sabourn stated that is exactly what is being planned. Mr. Medaglia would suggest that the bridge be elevated to a high priority project.

Mr. Perron stated he doesn't foresee costs going down in the near future. The county prison complex passed yesterday, and prolonging the bridge issue just makes it worse in the future. Mr. Demeritt stated the bridge could go on for a period of time depending on the weather. Selectman Gross stated as it is right now the budget is down with the \$35,000 included. Mr. Perron stated he did not think that capital reserve monies should be spent on the covered bridge now. Barry Van DeMoere questioned the mathematics. It was decided that \$35,000 will be kept in the budget with no offsetting withdrawal from capital reserve.

Mr. Van deMoere asked for clarification about account 4312-24. It was explained that the town is trying to do a normal year sweeping and mowing and catch up on what was not able to be done this last year including the purchasing a new set of brooms.

- 4323-4324 Transfer Station. Mr. Van deMoere, asked about historical data to justify keeping the bulky debris budget \$19,000 higher than what was spent. Selectman Sabourn stated that the manager has been very frugal and we trust his judgment and marketing. There have been several changes in the past year. Mr. Demeritt stated he believes that the new system will actually show a decrease in costs for the next year. Walter Joyce stated if he is doing that good of a job we should be compensating him better to recognize it. The board agreed that changing the pay classification may be in order and will discuss it further.
- 4325 Monitoring requirements have been reduced.
- 4442 Direct Assistance. Ms. Peabody, Welfare Officer, stated she has expensed \$5,000 to date. Mr. Freeman suggested increasing the line to \$30,000 due to all the cost increases.
- 4444 Health Agencies. There will be separate articles for new requests. It is not that they are not worthwhile agencies, but the board felt that the voters should have the opportunity to discuss new requests. Ms. Peabody stated that Lakes Region Community Services used to require the town to contribute in order to render service to the residents. There are currently handicapped individuals in town requiring their service.
- 4520 Library. There is a minimal increase for new books in addition to a wage adjustment.

Steve Medaglia stated that his feedback has been overwhelmingly positive for the books that have been sent to our military personnel overseas.

Revenue review.

Why is interest revenue budgeted so low? Conservative estimate.

Fire department reimbursement. Mr. Freeman asked that receipts be estimated at \$20,000 based on 2005 run numbers. The figures quoted at last year's town meeting were based on a 70% return of the 2005 runs. The run numbers are higher. Thornton will see 38% of each dollar based on the town breakdown. Mr. Demeritt stated the ambulance is licensed at the advanced life support (ALS) level and fees may be higher depending on the care given. We have had about 40% ALS calls this year to date. No billing has gone out yet for the January runs. Mr. Kriebel recommended ambulance receipts be estimated at \$35,000. It was decided that a conservative \$20,000 in ambulance receipts would be estimated.

Mr. Freeman asked if there are monies budgeted for employee training to make sure that employees can keep up with the changing laws.

Melinda Johnston asked if an additional year's budget could be placed on the budget worksheets to see if there is a trend on the expenditure side. Mr. Van deMoere agreed especially for the capital reserves.

Maryanne Medaglia asked what the Pemi-Baker Regional School District increase was going to be. Melinda Johnston answered the question.

There is a petitioned warrant article mandating a change in the time of selectmen's meeting. Selectman Gross referenced a review of the warrant by town counsel questioning whether the article is enforceable. Selectman Gross stated he does not believe that it is a reasonable mandate. Meetings have been changed for the convenience of selectmen in the past and currently one of the selectmen works at night. Mr. Freeman stated it might be helpful to have some meetings in the morning. Mr. Perron stated that he did not want to change to day meetings when he was selectman due to his work schedule.

Selectman Sabourn stated that the board has had two individuals that have asked for evening meetings. None have been denied access to the Board of Selectmen. The board would work to accommodate someone with a specific issue who could not make a day meeting. He continued that Jim Parziale works nights at the school. The board members are sharper in the morning than in the evening. There haven't been any requests other than two individuals. Mr. Freeman stated that there were 25 names on the petition. Selectman Sabourn responded that 23 of them had not talked to him. He is not opposed to having some night meetings but agreed with Selectman Gross and Parziale that he does not feel that it is appropriate that meeting times be mandated.

Mr. Medaglia inquired if the board has received any more information about the New Hampshire Retirement System. Selectman Sabourn responded that the Local Government Center has asked for our support, and we have agreed, in filing suit against the state for their lack of planning and to defend the towns and cities against having to take the burden of the state's shortfall. The issue is how the money to cover the shortfall will be raised.

Selectman Gross asked Planning Board Chairman, Barry Van deMoere if he would like to address the proposed zoning ordinance amendments. Mr. Van deMoere responded that they are housekeeping issues. Mr. Demeritt stated that some of it is due to Zoning Board of Adjustment issues that have recently arisen. Mr. Van deMoere stated that there have been multiple hearings about the amendments that were not well attended. Selectman Gross noted that those hearings had been in the evenings.

8:30 Darlene Jennings from King Realty stated Southern NH Housing is looking at the Neighborfest land on NH Rte 175 for senior housing similar to what was recently built in Ashland. They have built 17 facilities for low income/elderly individuals throughout NH with Federal HUD funds. In order to get the funding they have to meet certain criteria such as walking distance to churches and stores. They want to build a facility in Campton/Thornton. The Woods in Campton has a waiting list of 25 people. If Southern NH Housing built a facility in the town typically 90% of the initial occupants come from

the host town, because they are the first people who know about it. They cannot limit it to a town because of utilizing HUD funds.

The parcel is 9.5 acres and Southern NH Housing would like to construct 18-24 units as determined by HUD. Ms. Jennings stated she is here to see if the selectmen would read letters from other communities and state Thornton Selectmen are in support of such a use of the property. Southern NH Housing is a non-profit but they would agree to a payment in lieu of taxes less the school portion of tax. It would give the town a place for their elderly.

Selectman Sabourn stated that this would ultimately need a rezone or a variance from the zoning board of adjustment and confirmed that Ms Jennings is requesting a letter of support from the town. YES. Mr. Freeman inquired if the housing would be for the elderly permanently. Ms. Jennings stated that the use of HUD funds would require a minimum 40-year restriction for elderly housing. The biggest town service need would probably be for utilizing fire and police.

The board inquired if it would be Neighborfest doing the project? No, it would be Southern NH Housing. Ms. Jennings stated there is not yet an offer on the table. She does not feel that there is a conflict of interest between King Realty and her involvement with Neighborfest because she is being out front with information.

Selectman Sabourn stated he would be happy to look over the information and get back to Ms. Jennings. The board agreed to review the information at the next meeting and get back to her.

8:40 Selectman Gross inquired if there were any other questions? None were given.

Road Agent (RA) Tom Dubey informed the board that the '06 International truck had to be towed because it wouldn't start. EW Sleeper had put a hydraulic line in a place where it rubbed through a wire. It is not covered under warranty. The RA is contacting Sleeper to see if they will pay for the repairs.

Sand is running low. Leigh Johnston has 500 yards that he is willing to sell to the town. The board discussed the costs of purchasing/transporting the sand. It was moved to purchase sand from Leigh Johnston. PASSED (x3) The RA stated the additional 500 yards should make it through the rest of the season. More salt has also been ordered. It was noted that the local state sheds have run out of salt and needed to reorder it also.

The board asked how the crew was holding up with all the overtime. The RA responded that some folks in Mill Brook and on Upper Mad are getting upset because snow is going into their driveway when the crews are plowing. The RA stated he has talked with Chief Joyce about an individual near Night Road who keeps trying to throw her brother in front of the plows.

The RA stated that the guys are doing a great job and they aren't complaining. He can't say enough good about them. They are always there when he needs them. The RA stated he will try to punch some holes in the snow banks so that the water will drain off the roads. Selectman Sabourn asked the RA to thank the crew for all they do.

Russ Gilman asked if a driveway down to Archie White's old house is being plowed by the town. The RA responded that it is not. Selectman Gross stated the town threw up that road/driveway many years ago.

Ralph Perron stated that there is no communication and the Neighborfest board doesn't hold meetings although he has asked repeatedly. As a Neighborfest board member he was unaware that Darlene was coming to the selectmen about the property this evening.

9:15 It was moved to adjourn. PASSED (x3)

**The next scheduled Selectmen's Meeting
Will be
February 20, 2008
9:00 AM at the Municipal Building**