

**Board of Finance**  
**August 12, 2014**

**Present:** Chairman Ben Witte, Reggie Smith, Dan Charest, Steven Tuxbury, Bill Coates ( alternate), Maria Moore (in at 7:02 PM).

**Absent:** Jim Fitzgerald

Others Present: First Selectman Dan Jerram, Treasurer Gordon Ross, Bookkeeper Annie Witte, School Building Committee Members Bud Butler, Roy Litchfield (in at 7:05), Members of the Public: Joe Toro, Joshua Adams, Adam Lafaci, Dan Eddy, Bob Moore (New Hartford Independent reporter), Noel Gauthier (in at 8:00 PM), Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Chairman Ben Witte called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Seating of Alternates:**

Mr. Witte announced that Member Fitzgerald had sent notification that he would be absent from the meeting and requested that Alternate Bill Coates be seated for him. Mr. Witte seated Bill Coates.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**MOTION:** by Smith, second Tuxbury to approve the minutes dated June 10, 2014 as presented.

Unanimous (Smith, Charest, Tuxbury, Coates, Witte – Member Moore arrived after the vote was called; but indicated that she would have abstained as she was not present at that meeting)

Motion passes, minutes approved.

**Opportunity for Public Comment:**

No comments.

**Discussion of Antolini School Building Project:**

Chairman Witte announced that Denton (Bud) Butler would present information regarding the proposed Antolini School Building project.

Mr. Butler stated that Mr. Litchfield would also be contributing to the discussion. Butler began the presentation by giving a status report regarding the School Security project, currently in progress. He noted that there had been some abatement issues (asbestos) and that it would be a challenge to finish “on time and on budget.” The focus right now is to try and ‘button up’ 2 of the three schools prior to the start of school. Butler also noted that there is a ‘cause and effect’ between the leaking roof and several of the doors that are currently being replaced as part of the School Security project. Removal of the doors has provided a glimpse of water damage in interior spaces.

Butler gave a brief recap of the School Building Project; noting that a facility assessment had been completed last year for Antolini School; resulting in a list of renovations/repairs that totaled over \$6 million. Following initial presentations of the scope of the full project, The Board of Selectmen, concerned with the overall cost, felt that the scope of the renovations should be reduced to a doors and windows project. Recently, at a Board of Selectmen meeting, the Selectmen also agreed to fund ADA (American with disabilities) improvements up to an additional cost of \$250,000.

Butler stated that since that Selectman's meeting, during a re-examination of the facility assessment and the costs associated with various items, the architect discovered an error in the cost of the windows. Originally estimated at \$275,000; the cost is actually \$425,000.

Mr. Butler distributed a handout illustrating the items and associated costs included in the roof, windows, ADA project. (See attachment 1). Butler stated that the items that have been attended to as part of the School Security Project have been removed from the scope of a future project so as to avoid any duplications.

Chairman Witte questioned the ADA portion of the project, asking if it was acceptable to just pick and choose which ADA items should be addressed. Butler replied that the architect was given a budget figure of \$250,000 and instruction to choose items that would minimize the risk of a possible complaint. Member Moore asked how this correlates to the original scope with Butler replying that the majority of the larger items have been included. Discussion ensued as to whether or not there should be additional investigations (such as core samples) to determine the extent of damage in some of the door/window areas due to damage from water leaks. The current plan is to tend to the areas without extensive testing. Member Charest asked if the roof has been tested for asbestos; to which Butler replied that it has not. Butler stated that the Board of Selectmen had expressed belief that it might be wise to have some preliminary investigations performed of the roof so that there is an accurate scope of work with no surprises. Member Smith stated that the roof needs to get done and that there isn't time to wait around and questioned if there was funding available now to use for testing that may be needed without holding things up while waiting for funding approvals.

Chairman Witte asked if Financial Advisor Dennis Dix has been contacted to discuss bonding costs. First Selectman Jerram replied that he had some initial conversations with Mr. Dix but he was waiting for a total cost of several projects before moving forward and asking for full calculations. Mr. Witte replied that he would be interested in knowing the stand alone costs for this project; including the issuance costs, legal costs, BANs , and any other associated costs.

Member Smith stated that he would support taking \$5,000 from surplus to fund studies so that an accurate cost evaluation of the project could take place. Chairman Witte countered that he would prefer that the Board of Selectmen look to see if \$5,000 could be taken from within the current budget. Jerram replied that he felt it was possible to fund \$5,000 from the operating budget. Mr. Butler noted that \$5,000 may not be enough to cover the cost of the lintels. Member Tuxbury commented that attention should be focused on fixing the roof and stated that "you can't keep digging or you'll never get to the roof."

Chairman Witte commented that the project keeps getting 'recycled,' adding that it needs to move forward to the approval process. He noted that costs continue to increase by dragging it out and voter patience gets tried when projects keep coming back for consideration. Mr. Litchfield interjected that a contractor will need to be on Board in December so that the project can be completed next summer.

First Selectman stated that the Board of Selectmen want Town residents to have an understanding of all of the pending projects so that they can make informed choices regarding how their money is to be spent. Chairman Witte countered that he would be surprised if some of the other pending projects can support the timeline that is needed for the School project. He noted that the school project seems to be the 'easiest' to support because it is so tactile and stated that the Board of Finance may be in a position to support this. Member Smith agreed, stating that it was his belief that since the School Building Committee had been appointed by the townspeople

at Town Meeting, this project can go to Town Meeting without needing approval by the Board of Selectmen. Jerram disagreed with this statement. Chairman Witte stated that the Board of Finance wants to know what the Board of Selectmen's position is regarding this project –do they support it and to what extent? Witte reiterated that he was requesting financial information from Financial Advisor Dennis Dix. He further asked that the information be e-mailed to Board of Finance members in advance of the next meeting so that there would be an opportunity to review the figures prior to the meeting.

**Bookkeeper's Report:**

Town Bookkeeper Annie Witte gave a brief update noting that she is currently finishing wrapping up the 2013-2014 Fiscal Year. Line item transfers will be available for approval at the September 2014 meeting. Revenue and Expenditures up to date were e-mailed to Board members; with no questions on the content brought forth. The Tax Collector has already collected \$8.3 million for this year. Mrs. Witte informed the Finance Board that the auditors will be in house in New Hartford beginning September 22 working on the 2013-2014 audit.

**Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Gordon Ross stated that there was nothing remarkable to report; taxes are still coming in and things are going well.

**First Selectman's Report:**

First Selectman Jerram updated the Board of Finance on various projects in Town. He stated that road paving is wrapping up. Niles Road and West Hill Road (portion) aprons will be addressed once the paving is complete. Steele Road (lower portion) will be paved following the completion of drainage work.

The Maple Hollow Bridge bid came in higher than anticipated. A meeting was held to see if the scope of the work could be adjusted/decreased in order to proceed without having to go out to bid again. The metal beam guide rail was removed from the scope which netted some savings.

A sewerline repair in the downtown area ( Bridge Street and Route 44) cost the WPCA approximately \$50,000.

A new police car has been ordered with delivery anticipated in about 4 weeks.

The owner of the Hurley Manufacturing Building has applied to zoning for consideration of a zone change; he is exploring the possibility of a fairly large scale development on his parcel of land. This could be good news for the Town.

Jerram discussed several projects that could be potential for bonding. He noted that discussion of the School building project had already occurred earlier in the evening and that was one of the projects. A second project is the Carpenter Road Bridge replacement. The Bridge has qualified for State grant assistance and the Town has received a letter of commitment to fund the project. The grant is a little less than 50% of the cost of the project. Jerram noted that at a projected cost of \$700,000, the bridge repair/replacement is a challenge to get residents to approve; but perhaps with grant funding, the decision will be easier. A box culvert is the design that will be presented to DEEP and it will need approval by DEEP prior to moving forward. In order for the timeline to proceed for fiscal 2014-2015 construction, approvals need to be in hand by October, 2014.

Jerram spoke of another initiative – downtown redevelopment. The First Selectmen stressed the importance of

making investments to improve the downtown/commercial area. Pedestrian friendly , business friendly and parking friendly are three areas of focus. Jerram stated that he has had conversations with members of the Library Board and feels that their potential expansion along with improvements to the corner parcel at Route 219 and 44 would work well together. Jerram informed the Board of Finance that the town has executed a contingent contract with the owner of the vacant parcel at the intersection of Routes 44 and 219. The negotiated price is \$260,000 with provisions for opting out of the contract. Jerram stated that the property is 4 years in arrears with taxes and is considered by many to be an 'eyesore.' Jerram said that the town has engaged the services of an environmental firm to perform a Phase I and Phase II evaluation of the property. A limited Phase I was performed several years ago, but it has been recommended that testing be re-done on the parcel. After receiving the results of the environmental studies, the intended purchase will need to go through town approvals. Discussion ensued and questions were asked regarding the possible acquisition of this corner parcel. Member Smith asked why the property owner isn't paying for the environmental testing. Jerram replied that 'considering that he owes 4 years of back taxes, it's fairly clear that he doesn't have the funds to pay for environmental testing.' Jerram added that the property owner maintains it is "clean property" – however, the town has been advised that due diligence is the course of action to take. Jerram mentioned that should the Town decide to sell the parcel at some future date, it would be best to have documentation attesting to the state of the property. Chairman Witte asked if the town can sell a property that was paid for using bonding as the financing source. Jerram replied that he would check into this and respond to Mr. Witte's question at the next meeting.

Member Moore asked if the Selectmen were considering remediating the downtown sewerlines as one of their priority projects. Jerram replied that he, on behalf of the Board of Selectmen, had sent correspondence to the Water Pollution Control Authority seeking their input regarding what they intend to do with the priority list funding that is available to them. The First Selectman stated that the Selectmen would be willing to entertain funding for the WPCA but would need additional information prior to making a commitment and taking it to the public for approval. Jerram added that there may be other sources of funding available to the WPCA for sewer line repairs/replacements. Bud Butler, member of the WPCA, interjected that "there are low interest loans available through DEEP for the rehabilitation of trunk lines; but noted that relining of sewer lines is not eligible for funding as that is considered to be maintenance. Butler stated that the WPCA is contemplating having some of the lines videotaped in order to investigate the condition of the lines. Ms. Moore asked if the WPCA has the funds available to do this investigation. Butler replied that he was unable to answer that question as the cost of the investigation had not yet been determined.

Chairman Witte commented that it appears that there are 2 projects that are "shovel ready" and 2 projects that need work. The School Project appears to be the most ready with the bridge right behind it. He asked the Board of Finance members to think about where they wanted to go with these projects. Additional discussions and decisions will be made at the next Board of Finance meeting.

#### **Other Items for Discussions:**

Steve Tuxbury gave a brief report on an Economic Development Meeting that he and member Reggie Smith recently attended. The Economic Development Commission had sent an invite to various Boards and

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Commissions to come together and discuss priorities for New Hartford. Tuxbury stated that the EDC is currently working to support existing businesses, encourage new business and is also working to improve the quality of life for New Hartford residents by working to making improvements to the website, using social media, and beautifying the town by funding floral plantings in some areas of town. Tuxbury mentioned that Water Pollution Control Authority Chairman Bill Michaud was also present at the EDC meeting. Tuxbury stated that Mr. Michaud had indicated that the WPCA needs new development to support line extensions and the WPCA is also working on requiring hook-ups.

Chairman Witte informed the Board that he had received an e-mail from Assessor Beth Paul that documented some of the anticipated changes to the Grand List. Due to the loss of some commercial businesses, she anticipates a loss of personal property taxes that will lower the Grand List numbers.

Having no other business to conduct, Chairman Witte asked for a motion to adjourn.

**MOTION:** by Charest, second Smith to adjourn at 8:50 PM.

*Unanimous.*

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant  
(substitute for Penny Miller, Recording Secretary)*