

**Board of Selectmen
Special Meeting**

Monday, September 11, 2017

MINUTES

Present: First Selectman Daniel Jerram, Selectman Alesia Kennerson, Selectman Laura Garay; Bud Butler, Mary Beth Greenwood, Joe Toro, Bill Michaud, Jean Cronauer, Aulay Carlson; Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

First Selectman Jerram called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM.

He apologized for his tardiness to the start of the meeting due to attending to a personal matter.

Opportunity for Public Comment:

Mr. Denton Butler asked for clarification regarding agenda item number 6 (WPCA request for suspension of debt service payments). Jerram replied that the Selectmen were expecting that the WPCA would have discussed their expenses and ongoing concerns and would have come to a consensus as to how funds could be utilized if the Board temporarily suspended their debt service payments so that they could be used to fund necessary repairs.

Open Space Preservation Commission Chairman Jean Cronauer expressed her delight that the Board of Selectmen had agreed to put forward to a public vote at a Special town meeting a proposed tax abatement ordinance for Open Space parcels. She stated that this ordinance would be a “good tool” for getting property owners to consider donation of open space parcels.

Mr. Aulay Carlson stated that he noticed an agenda item dedicated to the 2017 -2018 budget. He asked if the Board would be discussing how to handle a potential \$1 million loss to the town budget. Mr. Jerram replied that the Board would be discussing the budget process timeline trying to figure out when and how can the town move forward to present a budget to the people for action. He stated that the tax office needs time to prepare the issuance of tax bills and it is getting close to the timeframe that will be needed when one factors in the entire process of noticing, voting, setting the mill rate, etc.

The Selectmen reviewed the order of the items on the agenda and decided they would alter the agenda so that items of interest to those in attendance would be addressed first.

MOTION: by Garay to change the order of the agenda items so that Item Number 6 “WPCA request for suspension of debt service payments” would become Item number 2’ Item # 4 “Town Meeting Update” would become item number 3 then Item # 8 “8-24 referral to Planning and Zoning for Hoag/Wickett Street property” would become Item number 4; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

WPCA request for suspension of debt service payments:

Water Pollution Control Authority Chairman Denton (Bud) Butler addressed the Board of Selectmen regarding several maintenance items and repairs that are needed for the proper and efficient operations of the water and wastewater systems for the Town.

Mr. Butler had a list of items where funds are needed to make necessary improvements. Of greatest importance, in his opinion, is the condition of the “wet well” at the corner of Routes 219 and 44. This is where a tank is located that receives sewage from the lines that come from across the river (Prospect Street and the surrounding roads with sewerlines). The tank holds the material and it is pumped up by a lift station into the sewer line that then carries it to the plant for processing. The supports that hold the tank/lift station are failing and the inside of the tank has not been inspected in a long time. An estimate to have the tank inspected /analyzed is \$10,000. If it were deemed that the tank needs to be replaced, it could be as much as \$300,000 - \$500,000. Butler noted that the concern is that if this tank is compromised in any way, there could be the potential for a leak into the Farmington River. He is trying to avoid this kind of an emergency, which would be extremely costly to remediate.

The Water Storage Tanks in the Industrial Park are overdue for their inspection. This is a cost of \$5,600. The Prospect Street pumping station electronics are in need of repair. The Odor Control system at the Wastewater Treatment Plant is not functioning as it should be.

Rehabilitation of the wells (Blackbridge and Pine Meadow) is also another maintenance item that needs to be done.

Mr. Butler reiterated that the WPCA ended its fiscal year with a deficit of \$42,000. There is a projected deficit for fiscal year 2017-2018 of \$50,000. The WPCA has taken many measures to try to keep costs low and increase revenues. They have placed liens where needed and they have billed sewer users who were connected to the system but were not being billed. Additionally, the WPCA received approval from the State of CT to prepare the Water Supply Plan in-house rather than having to pay a professional to prepare the document. This is a savings of approximately \$32,000 - \$34,000. The WPCA is fortunate to have volunteers from the Board devote the time and effort to put this document together.

Mr. Butler expressed his concern with the age of the system, stating that “unexpected failures are out there.”

First Selectman Jerram agreed that “there’s no daylight” with respect to the plight of the WPCA.

The Selectmen discussed the debt service payments; Selectman Garay asked if the Board was looking at suspending the payments temporarily or forgiving some payments in their entirety. Mr. Jerram replied that the \$130,000 loan that was approved at a Town Meeting has been booked as a receivable; therefore, he does not think that the Board can forgive that loan permanently.

Ms. Garay commented that the WPCA has many things that need to be addressed and there is always the chance that something could become an emergency repair and they need the funds to be able to attend to those things. Debt service relief is something that is needed so that they can move forward. Selectman Kennerson stated that offering some temporary relief is something that could be done now. Garay agreed that it is a start, but added that suspension of one or two payments temporarily isn’t enough.

Selectman Jerram commented that the debt service isn’t the real issue. It is only a small part of a

larger problem. The operational/administrative costs are the issue. Garay stated that there needs to be a joint meeting of the Water Pollution Control Authority, the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen so that all Boards can discuss the issue and identify some options to determine how best to handle the situation.

Town Meeting Update

Mr. Jerram reminded the Board of the upcoming Special Town Meeting, scheduled for September 14, 2017. He reviewed the proposed ordinances with the Board, clarifying some of the details of the ordinances. He noted that the proposed Open Space Tax Abatement can be applied to more than one property. He reviewed the Elderly Tax Abatement Ordinance and asked the Board if they wished to remove or leave in the language that indicated that the abatement would roll over to a surviving spouse. He commented that the ordinance clearly indicates that the Assessor has the authority to determine who qualifies for the abatement. The Selectmen agreed to leave the language as is so that the public would be aware of the possibility of the surviving spouse being eligible for the benefit.

Union Contracts – approval of police contract; highway department contract:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that all contracts are now finalized and ready to be executed; if agreed to by this Board. He stated that the Teachers Unions received salary increases that averaged 3% whereas the Town Unions (police, highway, and Town Hall employees) received an average of 2.75% over 3 years. All unions will pay 1% more in health care premiums in the 3rd year of the contract.

The Police Union has a provision for receiving a lump sum for Holiday Pay for 12 days. Some of the officers requested that they be offered the option of an additional 6 vacation days in lieu of 6 days lump sum holiday pay. This will apply to officers with less than 5 years of service. After 5 years of service, the contract allows for 3 weeks vacation, therefore the additional 6 days will not be offered. Jerram noted that if every officer were to have 4 weeks of vacation each year right at the start of employment, there would be a negative effect to the days of coverage provided to the town.

Jerram informed the Board that there was an increase to the highway breakfast meal allotment (during times when the crew is working extra hours during a weather event) ;increasing it by \$1.00.

MOTION: by Kennerson to approve the Police and Highway Department contracts as discussed; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Capital Funding Request:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the floors in the highway garage have been completed. The drains have been installed. Mr. Jerram continues to investigate options for lifts. The 12,000 lb lift was not adequate for the majority of the vehicles/equipment used by the highway department. Jerram stated that he sent a note to the Chairman of the Board of Finance alerting him to the possibility of a request for capital funding.

Registrar request for training hours:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Board that the Registrars had put in a request for additional hours on Friday, September 15 in order to allow them to attend training in Hartford.

MOTION: by Garay to approve the Registrars request for additional hours to attend training; seconded by Kennerson.

Jerram noted that both Registrars are doing a great job trying to get up to speed with all of their obligations. It is overwhelming to them at times, due to both being new to the position, but they handle it well and work well together.

Unanimous.

8-24 referral to Planning and Zoning for Hoag/Wickett Street property:

First Selectman Jerram informed the Selectmen that the Planning and Zoning Commission will need to review the potential acquisition of the Wickett Street “old canal” property that is on the Special Town Meeting agenda for acceptance. Jerram showed a map of where the property is located. It is a strip of land that goes behind the houses that are on located on Wickett Street whose backyards abut homes on Main Street. The property owners have offered to donate this land to the Town. This strip could be used as part of a trail at some point in the future.

MOTION: by Kennerson to refer to the Planning and Zoning Commission in accordance with CT General Statutes 8-24, the acquisition of a parcel of land located on Wickett Street commonly known as “the old canal off Main Street and Wickett Street” as shown on a Map prepared by Dufour Surveying LLC dated 11-10-2016; seconded by Garay.

Unanimous.

Budget 2017-2018:

First Selectman Jerram noted that he and Superintendent Murphy are communicating with each other with respect to expenditures for the Town and the School. The Board of Education has a liability of approximately \$300,000 per pay period. They have spent approximately \$1.1 million to date and Jerram has asked them to control spending. The Town has delayed paving projects but will need to go ahead soon so that it can be done during optimal weather conditions. Jerram noted that there must be a discussion soon with the Board of Finance to determine what figures they are going to use as a loss of revenue. The budget process must move forward in the near future in order to allow tax bills to be generated for December preparation/mailing.

Minutes:

MOTION: by Garay to amend the minutes dated August 22, 2017, to reflect that it was GARAY who questioned Mr. Jerram regarding the sharing of Resident Trooper Services with Barkhamsted, seconded by Kennerson.

Minutes as originally submitted read: “ Kennerson asked if there has been any further discussion with Barkhamsted regarding the sharing of a resident state trooper as a cost saving measure. ”

Minutes as amended will read: “**GARAY** asked if there has been any further discussion with Barkhamsted regarding the sharing of a resident state trooper as a cost saving measure.”

Unanimous.

Carpenter Road Bridge (possible Executive Session):

First Selectman Jerram announced that he had engaged the services of Attorney Bill Wilson of Halloran and Sage to act on behalf of the Town of New Hartford regarding matters concerning Carpenter Road Bridge. Mr. Jerram stated that Attorney Wilson specializes in construction law. Additionally, he has an engineering degree and is a former employee of the Department of Transportation. His experience in all of these areas should serve the town well. Jerram noted that LaRosa continues to be unresponsive with respect to a timeline for completion of the bridge. Brief discussion regarding the potential of calling the bond occurred, with Mr. Jerram stating that he leaves that action to be determined by the Attorney and also stated that if the Selectmen wanted legal details, it would be best to call an Executive Session for that level of discussion. The Board did not seek additional information at this time.

MOTION: by Garay to adjourn at 9:38 PM; seconded by Kennerson.

Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant