

**Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
January 11, 2011**

Present: Board of Finance members: Ben Witte, Alesia Kennerson, Laura Sundquist, Reggie Smith, Jr., Dan Charest, Alternates: Bill Rieger, Roy Litchfield, First Selectman Dan Jerram, Bookkeeper Annie Witte, Treasurer Gordon Ross, WWTP Building Oversight Committee member Denton Butler, WPCA member Bill Michaud, Board of Education member Bryan Keilty, Tax Collector Linda Sheffield, Member of the Public Maria Moore, Recording Secretary Penny Miller.

Absent: Jim Fitzgerald

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Ben Witte at 7:05 p.m.

Roy Litchfield, Alternate, was seated for Jim Fitzgerald.

Adoption/Revision of Agenda:

The agenda was revised to move the Capital Sub-committee report and the First Selectman's motions to the top of the agenda.

Capital Sub-Committee Report:

Board of Finance member Alesia Kennerson is the chairperson of this committee. Others on the committee are: First Selectman Dan Jerram for the Board of Selectman, Town Treasurer Gordon Ross, Steve Tuxbury and Denton Butler is the member-at-large.

Alesia reported on the projects given to this committee and passed out a list showing them. There were prioritized from 1 – 4 with Priority Code #1 designated as an infrastructure project that satisfies regulatory requirements to Priority Code #4 as a project that cannot be justified and is denied moving forward. The codes may change as time goes by. There are three categories – Recreation, Board of Education and the Town of New Hartford.

The Board of Education has proposed two roofs. Dr. O'Reilly has asked that a committee be formed to see which one should be done first. The Board of Education meets next week to discuss the projects.

Steve Tuxbury of the Grounds Committee has investigated a possible redesign to the playscape at the Antolini School and to make sure that the access ramp adheres to the guidelines. Alesia placed five thousand dollars in place to hold it. More discussion will follow. There are doors and window projects and they would like to use some of this year's money on them. The \$250,000 in there may be reduced.

Board member Reggie Smith asked if last year the Antolini Library carpet/shelves were combined. Alesia replied that the numbers are broken out as the carpet is more of a priority than the shelves.

Reggie also said in the notations/explanations Antolini School has been there for 43 not 50 years.

BOE member Bryan Keilty asked who set the priority codes. BOF member Kennerson answered that the codes were put in after discussion with the subcommittee and input from First Selectman Jerram, Supt. of Schools Dr. O'Reilly and the Recreation Department.

First Selectman Jerram asked are there issues with the roof, BOF member Kennerson answered there have been leaks previously that were fixed. BOE member Keilty said the roof is outdated and approaching the 20 years and is the most expensive item.

On the Town Section: They would like to finish Brown's Corner, the police car that was in the last year's budget should be replaced, and a revaluation is due again shortly. On January 1, 2011 when the probate judge moved to Torrington, the area he formerly used is no longer needed. This area could be reconfigured to be an 18 x 23 conference room. This was given a Priority Code 3. There seems to be more of a need for a conference room than a private office. The cost given includes the dismantling of the vault.

The road grader and 3 bridges need to be addressed along with 2 dump trucks, tractor, and a heavy duty tractor for moving.

The next large project is the Brodie Field House. The Recreation Department put in a small request for field house bathrooms. There would be professional fees for sight evaluation of septic, etc. The roof needs to be dealt with next year – maybe raise the trusses. This town building is in the worse condition. The roof is currently covered with tarp.

The other town owned properties have been reviewed (Brodie house & Surdam)

The Recreation Department had one item that is a Priority Code #1. They need two septic systems to cover the cabins. Recreation Manager, Dennis Minor, has talked to the Highway Department and has a figure from them. BOF member Smith asked if this is for a septic system or for leach fields. BOF member Kennerson said she doesn't know. If it is pursued then they will need to go out for a RFP.

The Recreation Department also has a number of projects that will enhance the properties. One of them is a Dog Park. Recreation Manager Minor said there are about 900 registered dogs but there haven't been many requests for a park. The \$16,500 would be for fencing, benches and a port-a-potty.

As the security of the park becomes more of an issue, the installation of security cameras would be helpful.

Another request was for a playscape at Callahan Park and lights.

If there was heat in the nurses & art cabins, they could be used for additional programs offered by the Recreation Department year-round. Currently Berkshire Hall is the only heated building.

BOF member Kennerson said that as time progresses more projects will be added and some may be dropped. The sub-committee meets in late spring/early summer and reaches out to the groups to see if their needs have changed. She wouldn't propose to increase the capital expenditure.

BOF Chairman Witte commented that if we have those items labeled as Priority Code #1 – then we should go ahead and get accurate project costs/quotes for them. There are only a handful of them.

BOE member Keilty said that the RFP is out for the doors/windows and they should have numbers in by the time of their next meeting.

BOF member Kennerson said that it is not known if the field house is conducive to having a septic system. Currently there is no water at the field house. It would need to be determined if the property can hold a well/septic system. If it can't, then it will become a cold storage building. It currently houses the street sweeper, lawn mowers, police boat. Whether the field house is renovated or kept as a cold storage building, the roof still needs to be done.

FIRST SELECTMAN:

The Town Meeting is coming up. The date will be set at the Board of Selectman meeting. There are a couple of land issues, ordinance to increase fees, STEAP Grant for Main St, CRRA settlement funds. First Selectman Jerram has resigned from the Northwestern Regional Board of Education and his replacement will be selected at the town meeting.

MOTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED:

STEAP Funds:

MOTION: by Smith and seconded by Kennerson to approve the appropriation of \$150,000 from fund balance for use in a reimbursable \$150,000 STEAP grant project for the repair of an existing sewer line on Main Street. Such appropriation shall be subject to Board of Selectman & Town Meeting approval.

Aye: All members present. Motion carries.

The fund balance will be replaced with the STEAP grant.

CRRA funds:

MOTION: by Litchfield and seconded by Kennerson to approve the appropriation of not more than \$50,000 of the CRRA SETTLEMENT FUNDS for the purchase of a road grader.

Aye: Members present with one Smith opposing. No abstentions.

Discussion followed that a used road grader would be bought to maintain the 10 miles of unimproved town roads. Any money not used will go back to the fund balance.

MOTION: made by Smith and seconded by Sundquist to approve the appropriation of not more than \$20,000 of the CRRA SETTLEMENT FUNDS to be used for the purpose of engaging the services of an economic development consultant.

Vote: 2 in favor, 3 opposed and no abstentions.

BOF member Charest said his experience with consultants is they produce a nice book and nothing happens. We need to develop the town – protect what we have and expand.

We should look at Greenwoods, Industrial Park, Route 44 corridor, the vacant space in the Waring Building, Marindino's, etc. We need to study on how we can improve our opportunities for growth.

WPCA update:

WPCA member Michaud reported they are getting the consultants services approved. The big focus is switching operators. They are moving ahead on 3 fronts. One is to get benefits assessments in place. The 2nd focus is the sewer extension plant and the 3rd is operational facility efficiencies (item 6 on the handout). They have asked the operators to give them a list of where they can save money.

BOF member Kennerson asked about going from two operators down to one and WPCA Michaud said this is a long-term goal. If this is done, the DEP needs to approve it.

BOF member Kennerson asked if the grant money left over would go to the next loan installment. First Selectman Jerram said that the USDA has not clarified what could be done with the extra money. Also, that the opportunity to reduce an operator is not an easy thing to do. Probably won't happen in the near term.

Suspense List Approval:

Tax Collector Linda Sheffield presented the list of uncollectible accounts totaling \$14,015.33 to be transferred to suspense. The chances of these coming in are low. The total is a little more

than we are used to approving but this is for two years. It is mostly motor vehicles and a couple of personal properties. Motor vehicles are designated as 03/04, 02 is personal property and 01 is real estate.

MOTION: by Litchfield and seconded by Charest to move this money from anticipated income for the town.

Aye: All members present. Motion carries.

Approval of Minutes:

MOTION: by Charest, second Smith to approve the minutes dated December 14, 2010.

Aye: All members, no opposed, one abstention Roy Litchfield.

Superintendent's Report:

He was not scheduled to present.

Bookkeeper's Report:

Bookkeeper Annie Witte had no report this month as she is busy with 1099's, the quarterly report, audit, w-2's. The audit is almost done and there should be a report in February. BOF member Litchfield asked if we can send our questions early before they are here. BOF Chairman Witte said we can get all the questions together and he will forward them on. BOF Chairman Witte would like to send it out electronically. The management MDNA needs to get in here. They hope to look at it before the next meeting.

Treasurer's Report:

Treasurer Gordon Ross reported that \$57,000 came out of the capital reserve for the salt shed. In the Short Term Investment Account an additional \$850,000 went into it from the Tax Collector. This is being built up again.

The Bank of America is moving out of New Hartford and Treasurer Ross has started looking at other banking relationships. He has gathered all the information from Northwest Community Bank and People's Bank to compare services. Within the next meeting or two they will come back to discuss what they want to do. Bank of America operations will cease here in April. Selectman Jerram is hopeful that another bank will move into that location once they move out. Once it is decided where the bank account will be moved to it will be a gradual process.

First Selectman's Report:

For town meeting considerations -- Land issues: Route 44, abandoned road the former extension of Harrison road, etc. We have the lowest fees in the valley and a new fee structure is being pursued.

The salt shed coming along. A settlement has been reached with the contractor to apply 3-5" concrete veneer. There is \$15,000 in late fees and the price for veneer is \$35,000. The contractor has paid this with no cost to the town. No problems with structural integrity.

A hand-out was provided showing the current budget estimate for the Sand Salt Shed Project. We are roughly \$9,000 under budget. In the spring "Shot-Crete" will be applied to remediate the uneven block walls. If they don't live to the time line more late fees may be applied. They hope to have a walk through on January 14th and a CO will need to be issued.

Selectman Jerram has contacted the labor lawyer regarding union negotiations. Confidential negotiations should start by the end of the month.

Budget season is moving into high gear. All departments have received letters for any and all ideas for potential savings.

With the recent snowstorms there has been a lot of overtime. The cost of salt has been reduced to \$52/ton. So far everything is going good.

There has been some interest by another bank to replace Bank of America.

The Neighbor to Neighbor fund has been established. The group has a committee that considers the applications. Distribution will follow federal poverty guidelines. If the applicant does not meet these requirements, then there will need to be a super majority of the committee. No taxpayer funds will go into this fund.

BOF member Litchfield said it is a misnomer that no taxpayer funds be used. There is a cost involved with the fees for a checking account.

Bookkeeper Witte replied that the fees are rolled up. First Selectman Jerram said there are some indirect costs. BOF member Smith said that he will pay the checking account fees for the first year on the Neighbor to Neighbor account. First Selectman Jerram will look into the cost.

Other items to come before the board:

BOF member Witte on the upcoming budget he heard from Beth Paul that she believes the revenue we get from the cell towers will be lower this coming year. We get around \$44,000 in revenue. This has been going through the state and the state assessed them. They will now be taxed at our mill rate. It will show up in the grand list and be possibly \$10,000 – 12,000 less.

Budgets are being put together now and it is unclear what we will get from the state for revenue next year.

BOF Member Litchfield said while we realize the present budget – he hopes the school board takes that into consideration. Region 7 and the town government helped out. He hopes the school board does better.

BOE member Keilty said the school budget will go up because of contractual obligations even if everything stays the same.

BOF member Smith would like the Board of Selectman to look into the cost of doing an electronic purchasing system. He feels it is important considering what has happened in the past with purchase orders. First Selectman Jerram will research it.

BOF Chairman Witte had an informal meeting with Dr. O'Reilly in late December. It was suggested that a budget update be done every other month. And that if something is presented to the Board of Education and to the Board of Finance, and the numbers are different between the two meeting that he should start out with the original numbers to the Board of Finance and then show the new ones.

MOTION: by Smith, second by Sundquist to adjourn at 9:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Penny Miller
Recording Secretary