

**Board of Selectmen  
December 27, 2006**

**Present:** Paul S. Morrill, Chairperson; Mark P. Duffy; John J. Blackwood; Robin L. Frost, Town Administrator, and Toni Bodah, Secretary.

Also present were: Teresa Williams, Town Clerk; Nicholas Mourginis; Cindy Barstow; Peter & Judy Sjostrom; and John Ciardi. Joining the meeting in progress were Al & Marie Mayranen; Doug Stewart; Cheri Schlenker; Dick Wessell; Al Huntoon; Stan & Ella Lombara; David Lee; and Larissa Mulkern, *The Granite State News*.

Mr. Morrill called the posted meeting to order at 6:30p.m. and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance. He advised those present that the initial portion of the meeting is scheduled as a 'work session' in order to review several items in the proposed 2007 municipal budget.

Mr. Morrill referred to the proposed budget of the Town Clerk's office, including the proposal to implement a registration by mail program. Ms. Williams advised that the towns of Wolfeboro, Moultonborough, Sunapee, Atkinson and Plaistow have been utilizing this program for a varying number of years. She has been advised that at the beginning, residents did not whole-heartedly embrace the program; however, it appears as though over a number of years residents tended to participate more. Some towns do not attach a service charge; others charge from \$1 to \$5 per registration. Use of the program tends to reduce the foot traffic and the number of telephone calls in the Town Clerk's office. Ms. Williams considers the program to be customer service oriented.

Mr. Morrill noted that the Town has continued to add computers and software in order to make things more efficient. However, the more efficient computers and software have resulted in increased labor costs. Mr. Morrill questioned whether the Town should be taxing everyone who owns property for conveniences which they may not use. He is not sure if we should be increasing hours by 600 if the proposed program is more efficient. Ms. Williams believes that the Town's growth is a factor. She also believes that the new programs allow the Town Clerk to perform more services for the residents. Also, information gets to the State immediately.

Mr. Morrill questioned the expected increased number of hours if the proposed program is not implemented. Ms. Williams would recommend that the deputy be in at least an additional 2 days per month, especially January through August. She suggested implementing the new program without increasing the deputy hours in order to determine whether this is feasible, perhaps with a \$2 fee per registration. Mr. Morrill believes a fee should be associated with this service. Ms. Williams and Ms. Frost will explore options, including the number of hours for the deputy. Ms. Williams confirmed that it would still be the responsibility of the resident to ensure that the vehicle is registered in a timely manner.

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**1. Appointments**

**a) Judy Sjostrom re: ZBA Alternate Position** – The Board members introduced themselves to Ms. Sjostrom. Mr. Morrill referred to the serious responsibility of the Zoning Board of Adjustment to the Town and the difficult situations that sometimes occur. He questioned how Ms. Sjostrom anticipates balancing the needs of the individuals v. the rules adopted by the Town. Ms. Sjostrom believes that the ordinances of the Town of Wakefield are fair; however, she noted there are times when conciliations need to be made. She believes she will be able to weigh both sides of an issue and understands the need to be careful about setting a precedent.

Mr. Duffy questioned whether Ms. Sjoström plans to attend all meetings if appointed as an alternate. Ms. Sjoström advised that she would attempt to attend as many meetings as possible. Mr. Duffy stressed the importance of keeping abreast of each situation and agreed that the ZBA must be careful about setting a precedent. Mr. Blackwood agreed about the importance of attending as many meetings as possible. **Mr. Morrill moved to appoint Judy Sjoström as an alternate member of the Zoning Board of Adjustment with a term to be determined [through March 2007]. Mr. Blackwood seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.**

**2. Old Business** – None forthcoming.

**3. New Business**

**a) Encumbrances** – Mr. Morrill referred to the 2006 warrant article regarding the \$500,000 appropriation for purchase of conservation easements. Approximately \$141,000 has been expended to date, leaving a balance of \$359,000. In order to carry this balance forward for an additional year, the Board must make a formal motion. Otherwise, the unexpended funds will go to the General Fund (surplus) and may (or may not) be used to offset the 2007 tax rate. Mr. Morrill expressed his personal opinion that voters approved the \$500,000 expenditure. He believes that the Conservation Commission came forward with a solid proposal and worked to obtain a \$25,000 grant. The Town purchased building rights on the subject property. The Commission is involved in on-going efforts to secure other easements; therefore, he is in favor of rolling over the funds for an additional year.

Mr. Lombarda referred to the length of time required to prepare such a project, including finding a willing participant, preparing a survey, obtaining an appraisal, conducting public hearings, etc. He stated that the Commission is currently considering several properties, including the Albee gravel pit. This property is being considered in order to protect the Town's aquifer. Mr. Duffy believes it is important for the public to hear the plans of the Conservation Commission. He added that the 'pinch' has been felt regarding this appropriation.

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Mr. Duffy stated that he supported the original concept, and added that the money the Town has appropriated is, by comparison, minimal; however, it is a good start. He does not foresee another warrant article in the near future for this purpose and believes that the unexpended funds from 2006 should be rolled over for another year.

Mr. Blackwood is in favor of the purchase of building rights (not the actual purchase of land). He noted that towns to the south of Wakefield have spent very large sums of money for similar purchases. **Mr. Morrill moved to roll over the unexpended \$359,000 from the 2006 warrant article regarding the purchase of conservation easements to 2007. Mr. Blackwood seconded the motion.**

Mr. Lee understands that this is the Board's decision to make; however, he would like to know more about the Albee pit proposal. He noted that pit was shut down recently due to Planning Board issues and wonders whether this proposal would be a good use of the Town's money, as it is unlikely to be built upon. Mr. Lee wonders what else is out there that can be discussed. Mr. Morrill stressed that the Board wants to spend the funds wisely and believes that protecting the wellhead is a good cause. The gravel pit was shut down; however, the property could be developed into house lots, etc. A public hearing would be held to consider any proposal coming from the Conservation Commission. Mr. Morrill believes that the Commission is trying to use the funds to the best advantage of the residents. The Board cannot determine at this time how the funds will be used, but rather it will consider each proposal as developed by the Commission.

Ms. Barstow advised that the Land Conservation Group meets on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of each month at the Greater Wakefield Resource Center and invited the public to attend their meetings. Mr. Mayranen expressed his understanding of the residents' concerns regarding the increase in taxes; however, he stressed that the development of large tracts of land will definitely increase the tax rate via services, such as the schools, roads, etc.

Mr. Lombara indicated that there are several proposals being considered and are being discussed at the Land Conservation group meetings. Mr. Huntoon questioned whether there were another mechanism available in order to avoid having to roll over the funds from year to year. Mr. Duffy noted that this particular article can only roll over for one year. Mr. Huntoon noted that the Land Conservation group has worked hard, and he agrees the funds should be rolled over. Mr. Wessell stated that he supports conservation of land, adding that he voted in favor of the subject warrant article. However, he remembers that the discussion at deliberative session was the purchase of open space, likely to otherwise be developed. He agrees that the Conservation Commission has done a good, but thankless, job. However, Mr. Wessell does not believe that the Barbour property was likely to be developed in any event. He believes we should look at large tracts along Pine River Pond and Ballards Ridge Roads.

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Mr. Wessell referred to Virginia Lane Association's purchase of 108 acres, Windy Point Association's purchase of over 40 acres and the attempt of Pine River Pond Association to purchase 297 acres from TWT LLC. He then read from an article that had previously appeared in *The Granite State News*, which referred to the Ossipee Conservation Commission's proposal to purchase land on Route 16. That Commission sought their Board's support in seeking grants and plans for fund-raising. Mr. Wessell added his opinion that few people will be willing to sell development rights. He reiterated that he is not opposed to land conservation, but he is opposed to spending taxpayers' money on these projects. Mr. Wessell requested that everyone look at other routes to fund these projects, adding that we cannot put material things in front of people. He believes we must stabilize the tax rate and assessments.

Mr. Mourginis stated that he is encouraged by the process he is viewing this evening. He agrees that the funds should be rolled over for another year; however, the Conservation Commission should listen to the remarks of Mr. Wessell to take the needs of the community into account. Mr. Mourginis noted that the effects of compounded increases over time are difficult on many levels and added that it is important for the public to be educated.

Mrs. Lombara was thankful for the support of the Conservation Commission's projects and added that the tax rate is still one of the lowest in the State. She stated that the longer we put off this needed expenditure, the more difficult it will be to accept in the future. Mr. Mayranen referred to the Albee pit property, stating that if that property were ever to be developed, the Town's water supply would be in jeopardy. He added that if we do not take care of our water, then we will not need to worry about paying taxes.

Mr. Morrill noted that this is a relatively new issue for the Town of Wakefield; however, it has been occurring south of Wakefield to the point where some towns must bond for the purchase of small amounts of open space. He added that the initial projects will be a catalyst for future projects. Mr. Morrill is appreciative of Mr. Wessell's comment, but noted that a lot goes into a tax bill. He added that property is becoming more valuable, and assessments are based upon sales over the year, with different standards for different strata. Taxes rise and fall based upon the value of the property. Mr. Morrill noted that the current process is not new and asked the Town Administrator to review the recent history of the tax rate.

Ms. Frost provided the following information on the Town's portion of the tax rate: 2003 = \$2.68/thousand; 2004 = \$1.82; 2005 = \$1.90; and 2006 = \$2.94. Mr. Morrill noted that these figures

show relatively little change; however, what has changed is the value of the properties. He believes that people need to understand that assessed values and appropriations approved at Town Meeting drive the tax bills.

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Mr. Morrill then referred to the motion on the floor. **The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.** Mr. Morrill noted that the value of the Barbour property was not necessarily as a possible development site, but rather as an integral part of the Moose Mountain Greenways corridor.

Ms. Frost then provided the Board with a list of proposed encumbrances as follows: 1) Brown River Bindery contract in the amount of \$1261 for binding of vital statistics for the Town Clerk and 2) Brett Purvis and Associates contract for \$12,600 for assistance with 2006 measure and listing work. **Mr. Morrill moved to approve the encumbrance list totaling \$13,861. Mr. Blackwood seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.**

**4. Correspondence**

**a) Planning Board Notice** – As an abutter, the Town has been notified of a public hearing relating to the property formerly known as the Garvin Building. The Board members had no issues with this application.

**5. Unscheduled Matters/Public Comment**

--Mr. Wessell referred to the unfair valuation of buildings. He referred to a Grenier Road property that was assessed for \$400,000 being sold for \$900,000. According to Mr. Wessell the property is currently assessed at \$800,000, which he believes is a large discrepancy. Mr. Wessell also believes that steep lots are being valued the same as flat lots. Mr. Morrill referred Mr. Wessell to the Board of Assessors, the Assessing Technician and the abatement process. Mr. Morrill also noted that the Board has reviewed the 2007 proposed budget and has reduced it by ±\$100,000.

**6. Administrative Matters**

**a) Liaison Reports** – **Mr. Duffy:** Referred to the recent light rain, during which he viewed Perkins Hill Road at Lake Ivanhoe. Mr. Duffy advised that the water level in the culvert was quite high. Mr. Blackwood noted that the ground is currently saturated and, therefore, the water must run into the lake. Mr. Morrill referred to the 26 year old report from the State (provided by Mr. Mageary), noting that the situation has not changed since that time. This report includes two recommendations that involve some taking of property or easements; however, not everyone has embraced those recommendations. Mr. Duffy believes the existing water could cause erosion to the road and added that the placement of rip-rap would slow down the water flow. The Board will attempt to view the site together during a rainy day.

**b) Administrator's Update**

--Transportation Enhancement project (sidewalks in Forest Hills): If the town is ready to fund its portion of this project, it could be accomplished in 2007. Otherwise, it will be scheduled for 2010.

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The Town's share will be approximately \$24,000, for a road-level walk way. The project would take place within the Town's right-of-way. It was agreed that the project will be scheduled for 2010.

--Maintenance contracts: All Land Enterprises has submitted an equipment list, which appears to be sufficient for the Town's needs. A termination clause could be included in the contract in the event the

Town is not satisfied with the work performed. **Mr. Morrill moved to award the Parks & Athletic Fields Maintenance bid to All Land Enterprises, for a 3-year contract at a total cost of \$49,200. Mr. Blackwood seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.**

**Mr. Morrill moved to award the bid for cemetery maintenance to Green Monster Landscaping, for a 1-year contract at a total cost of \$20,500. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.**  
--IRS reimbursement rate for mileage is now at \$0.485. The Board agreed by consensus to adopt this rate.

--Tax Deeding: Ms. Frost will discuss the potential properties with Town Counsel, specifically regarding units formerly located in campgrounds.

--Sewer budget: Ms. Frost has reduced the sewer budget to \$86,630, without a final number from Woodard & Curran). She is meeting with Fences Unlimited at the treatment site to obtain a price on a sliding gate. Discussion followed regarding snow removal and other maintenance issues.

**c) Pole License Agreements** – The Board executed pole license agreements as presented by the Town Clerk.

**d) Building Permit Releases** – Mr. Morrill moved to approve building permit releases for Enos on Belleau Boulevard, Demers on North Shore, and Hawley on Hill Road. Mr. Blackwood seconded the motion, which passed 3-0.

**e) Minutes** – Mr. Morrill moved to approve the minutes of December 13, 2006, as presented. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Mr. Morrill moved to approve the minutes of December 19, 2006, as presented. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion, which passed 2-0-1 (Mr. Blackwood abstaining).**

**Mr. Morrill moved to enter Non Public Session at 8:20 p.m. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Mr. Blackwood – ‘aye’; Mr. Duffy – ‘aye’; Mr. Morrill – ‘aye’. Motion passed unanimously and the Board entered Non Public Session.**

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The Board returned to public session at 9 p.m., at which time the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Toni Bodah, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

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Paul S. Morrill, Chairperson

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Mark P. Duffy

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John J. Blackwood