

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2015**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Board of Selectmen Members Present:** Roland Barrett, Joseph Rapoza and Jennifer Dean Wing

**Board of Selectmen Members Absent:** Robert Baker and John Laura

**Others Present:** Helen Coffin, Executive Secretary

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Chairman Barrett called the special meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. at the Longfellow Municipal Center.

Treasurer/Collector Lisa Larue distributes handouts showing the unpaid real estate taxes for the 2013 levy year, a list of the tax title and land of low value properties, and a list of Town-owned properties along with maps.

Lisa reviews the list of properties with unpaid real estate taxes for levy year 2013. She explains that she starts sending letters to the owners in October and tries to minimize the list for tax title. There are specific procedures prescribed by the state and properties are advertised in the newspaper.

Lisa reviews the tax title and land of low value listing. Some property owners are participating in payment plans. Some properties have background problems and the Town should not proceed taking them. The land of low value can be auctioned off once approval is received from the DOR but this is a time-consuming process. She can also auction any properties that the Selectmen would like sold. The properties marked as “unknown” need to be removed from the Assessors Office. She suggests the Board review the information and let her know if there are properties they would like to prepare for auction.

Mr. Rapoza is looking at any Town-owned parcels over 6 acres for use by the Green Community Committee for solar energy. Mrs. Wing is looking for a potential site for a new Town Hall.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously that Lisa Larue proceed with the land of low value application process working towards the goal of auctioning those properties off.***

Chairman Barrett thanks Lisa for her attendance. He also reminds the Board members that when requesting information from the staff to be respectful of the time needed to produce certain information. Also, requests should be approved by the full Board. Mrs. Wing suggests the creation of a “Request Form” to be used by Town employees/officials when requesting information. The Form should indicate the priority level or sense of urgency in obtaining the information requested.

Lisa Larue leaves the meeting.

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Before the Board starts its budget review, Town Moderator Les Davis asks if the day after the town meeting, Tuesday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, would be an appropriate date if the Town Meeting needs to be continued to a second evening. The Board members are fine with the date but the Executive Secretary needs to first check on availability with the school and get back to Mr. Davis.

The Board members begin their initial review of the FY16 budget in order to provide guidance to the Finance Committee on certain budgets line items of departments under the jurisdiction of Selectmen. The Board will review the budget line by line with special attention to items noted in yellow. Information is also distributed regarding the Executive Secretary’s recent proposal to restructure the administration of the office along with the current pay rates of the staff and increases requested.

The Board members first review the restructure proposal options. Mrs. Wing indicates that she has been a proponent of restructure for some time so was glad to see this proposal. She feels the Town should proceed with the option that involves hiring a new Executive Secretary and moving the current Executive Secretary to the secretarial position; however, she does not agree with the pay rate.

Mr. Rapoza agrees that the Board needs to have discussion regarding the restructuring of the offices/administration and he would like to see some progress made. However, he isn’t sure enough discussion has been given to the option to hire a new Executive Secretary. He feels there is a great deal of work that would be required of a person only working 2 days per week. He believes the Board needs to set a timeline and set goals in order to determine how to best proceed with this matter.

Mr. Barrett doesn’t feel the Town is ready financially for the most expensive proposal but agrees that additional staffing is needed in order to preserve the integrity of the Building Department. He feels the option involving hiring a new part-time clerical person would be the best option for the Town at this time and would show some progression. He agrees with the suggestion that the Town needs a “Business Manager” or an individual with a strong finance background to assist with the Town’s progression.

Mr. Davis questions if now may be the time to consider a type of regionalization. He adds that the Board must be extremely cautious as to who it hires.

Mr. Davis leaves the meeting.

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Chief Landry is present to review his budget; however, he is feeling ill and asks if the Board could suspend current discussion and take his budgets out of order. The Board agrees and starts reviewing the Police, Fire and Communications budgets.

Police. There are no questions or concerns regarding the Police budget. The salaries are based on the terms of the collective bargaining agreement.

Fire. Mrs. Wing doesn't agree with the 2% increase to the fire salaries since the collective bargaining agreement has yet to be negotiated.

Mrs. Wing questions the status of the fire fleet. Chief Landry advises that he submitted a request with Capital Planning for a new ambulance. He plans to decommission the ladder truck by the end of next year due to its age and cost of maintenance, and once this truck is no longer in use there will no longer be a need to lease Station 2. Brief discussion follows concerning the status of the other trucks. Mrs. Wing wants to be certain that we address any language in the collective bargaining contract that may prohibit the Town from future changes to the department, such as eliminating pieces of equipment or changing the general structure of the department.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to remove the 2% increases for firefighter salaries and leave them as is.***

Communications. Funding for IT services was added to this budget as it will no longer be funded through the Town Hall line item. Chief Landry explains that this is necessary due to the extent of technology required for the regional dispatch service. This should have been previously funded with the savings recognized by the regional arrangement. The Executive Secretary questions if the Chief will need funding for computer upgrades. The Chief believes he is all set for now but will put together a replacement schedule for future years. However, often times grants are used to replace computers.

Chief Landry leaves the meeting.

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The Board resumes discussion on the restructuring proposals submitted by Executive Secretary.

Mrs. Wing reiterates that she feels the option to hire a new Executive Secretary is moving the Town in the right direction. She doesn't feel it needs to be for July 1<sup>st</sup> and the Board could

choose a later date, but the option should at least be funded accordingly. Messrs. Rapoza and Barrett feel that more discussion is needed on this matter and the Town doesn't have the funding.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Barrett, the Board votes by majority to proceed with Option 3, to hire only a part-time secretary for the Building Department to be shared with other departments as noted in the proposal. {Wing, nay}***

Stabilization. The Finance Committee proposes funding stabilization with \$50,000 prior to funding the operating budget. In previous years, the budget was funded first and then any remaining balance of revenue or free cash was placed into stabilization. Does the Board support funding the stabilization before the operating budget?

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to support the Finance Committee's commitment to fund stabilization prior to funding the operating budget, and to address the Warrant articles accordingly.***

Staff Pay Increases. The Board reviews the list of current pay rates along with the requests made of the departments. Mrs. Wing feels that all the regular on-site staff in the departments that the Selectmen oversee as well as those who have been overlooked, should receive a 2% increase. Brief discussion follows regarding merit increases vs. COLA increases and previous pay adjustments made to certain departmental hourly rates.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to provide 2% increases for: Krissy, Lisa, Marcia F, Diane, Natalia, Jill, Trish, and Kristen, exclusive of Board of Health staff.***

Town Counsel. Executive Secretary advises that RFP has gone out and is due April 16<sup>th</sup>. She has reviewed past years' usage along with the going hourly rates. She feels reducing the budget by \$5,000 would be acceptable. The Board members review the information provided and believe further reduction is possible.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to reduce the Town Counsel budget by \$10,000 from FY15 to \$30,000 for FY16.***

Systems Administration. Executive Secretary advises she has received three proposals for IT. Two proposals are very close in price; however, one offers unlimited hours per month with no overage charges, whereas the other has a max of 5 hours per month. The Executive Secretary is on the fence as to whether to stay with the current vendor another year to see how it goes being separated from Public Safety, or to change to a new vendor. Mr. Barrett comments that the current IT vendor never returned his phone call regarding setting up email on his cell phone. Brief discussion follows regarding issues experienced over the past year with the current vendor.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to change the IT company effective July 1st to CMGeeks out of Oakham.***

The Executive Secretary advises that the Town will require a new server in FY16...she included this in the operating budget; however it is slightly over \$10,000 and does qualify as a capital expense. How would the Board like to proceed? The general consensus is to submit the new server as a capital expense. This will reduce the operating budget by \$10,000. Additionally, the Executive Secretary completed an IT replacement schedule and feels \$5,000 will be sufficient for hardware upgrades for FY16, further reducing that line item by \$5,000.

Assistant Town Clerk. Executive Secretary explains that Finance Committee questioned a request made to increase the hours of the Assistant Town Clerk to 25 hours per week. Brief discussion follows regarding the responsibilities of the individual and her dedication to the position. Mrs. Wing doesn't feel increasing any position to be eligible for benefits is in the Town's best interests at this time. Executive Secretary advises that the work needs to be completed efficiently and effectively and losing the individual would be a great loss to the Town. Additionally, the individual will not likely require health benefits. Lastly, the current employee is looking to further herself within the department in the future.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Barrett, the Board votes by majority to support an increase to the hours of the Assistant Town Clerk to 25 hours per week. {Wing, nay}***

Assistant Town Clerk Training. Executive Secretary explains Finance Committee questioned the additional \$1,000 in the FY16 budget for the training of the Assistant Town Clerk, which will go towards her certification as a Town Clerk.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to support the additional \$1,000 increase for the Assistant Town Clerk certification training.***

Election Workers. Executive Secretary explains that Finance Committee questioned the \$4,000 for election workers. Town Clerk had indicated there is only one election in FY16 so there is some confusion as to the amount needed for this line item. Mrs. Wing reviewed the prior years budgeted amounts and expenses, and feels a reduction is warranted. If additional funding is necessary for an emergency election, a Reserve Fund Transfer can be requested.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to support reducing the election workers line item to \$2,000.***

Election Worker Meals. Executive Secretary explains that Finance Committee questioned the amount in election worker meals. Brief discussion regarding what meals are served and the previous expenses incurred.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to support reducing the election day worker meals to \$100.***

Census Salary. There is some question as to how this line item should be used. The work done to input the data doesn't necessarily all come from this line item. Executive Secretary suggests seeking confirmation from Town Counsel that there is no requirement to keep this line item and/or pay it to the Town Clerk.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to zero out the Census Salaries line item, provided this is acceptable with Town Counsel guidance.***

Town Planner. Executive Secretary advises that certain town departments and town officials have expressed concerns about maintaining the Town Planner's line item without any reduction. The Board members agree that the individual in the position does have economic vision but they would be open to reducing, not eliminating, the line item. The Board suggests that the Finance Committee have further discussion with the Town Planner to determine if the line item could be reduced, and if the Town could possibly utilize CMRPC more.

***On a motion by Wing and second by Rapoza, the Board votes unanimously to support whatever the Finance Committee decides with respect to the Town Planner position.***

Building Inspector Department. The Executive Secretary explains that the Interim Building Inspector believed a \$3,000 was acceptable if he wasn't doing the administrative work and there was also question regarding possibly reducing the Assistant's line item. Lastly, the new clerical position working primarily for the building department will be included in the Town Hall budget.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to accept the decreased Building Inspector salary, to reduce the Assistant to \$1,000, and to place the new clerical position within the Town Hall budget.***

Animal Control. The Animal Control Officer submitted for \$100 increases for both positions. The Executive Secretary increased the training line item per the mandated training in Massachusetts.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to increase the Animal Control salaries by \$100 each and increase the training budget to \$500.***

Library. The Library submitted the budget seeking \$3,000 for books and periodicals; however, Colleen Curis had advised additional funding is necessary to maintain certification; at this time the additional is contributed via fundraising or grant funds. She advised the Executive Secretary that the actual amount needed is \$6,300 and it would be ideal if this could be included in the operating budget. The Board doesn't feel the entire amount can be reached in one year; however, they would like to see the Library move forward.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to increase the books and periodicals to \$4,000 in an effort to support the continued certification of the Library but also encourage continued fundraising efforts.***

The Board reviews the first drafts of the Special and Annual Town Meeting Warrants, copies of which are distributed to all parties.

Special Town Meeting Warrant.

Article 1. Snow and Ice deficit is currently \$152K but this will be updated accordingly.

Article 2. Necessary for the third student attending Tri-County...line item was under budgeted.

Article 3. There are no prior year unpaid bills.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

Article 1. Standard article.

Article 2. Standard article.

Article 3. Standard article. Amount to be funded has not been recommended.

Article 4. Standard article. Fund added for Parks and Recreation. Building Inspector removed.

Article 5. Standard article.

Article 6. Mrs. Wing feels it's too early to include this article when no collective bargaining has taken place as yet.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to strike Article 6.***

Article 7. Standard article. To be determined by Capital Program Committee.

Article 8. Standard article. Finance Committee recommends \$50,000.

Article 9. Standard article.

Article 10. Standard article.

Articles 12, 13 and 14. Mrs. Wing states that these articles have been on the warrants for the past few years. She feels that more information, whether good or bad, must be relayed to the public during the Board of Selectmen Meetings so they understand the reasoning behind these articles. Mr. Barrett expresses concerns about accountability. It is suggested that effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, a report be prepared regarding departmental information.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to strike Articles 12, 13 and 14.***

Article 15. Executive Secretary advises this article is not necessary per Town Counsel so she has since deleted it and informed the submitting department.

Article 16. Executive Secretary advises that she is fairly certain this article won't be necessary; however, she is waiting to hear back from Town Counsel. If he agrees, this article will be deleted.

Article 17. Submitted by the Police Chief in connection with his concerns about hunting near the new bikeway.

Article 18. Submitted by Executive Secretary due to lack of preparation and submission by the Highway Surveyor or Board of Health. This bylaw is a mandate of Stormwater Management. This bylaw was recommended by the Town's environmental consultant and is what many other towns currently have adopted.

Personnel Bylaw. Executive Secretary recommends updating the Classification and Compensation Plan in the Personnel bylaw to assign the new Town Hall Secretary to a grade of Secretary 1.

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to update the Classification and Compensation Plan to create the position of Town Hall Secretary and assign it as a grade of Secretary 1.***

Proposition 2-1/2 Override. Given the FY16 deficit of over \$500,000, the Executive Secretary questions the Board's desire to include a proposition 2-1/2 override warrant article. Mrs. Wing believes it is premature and much more discussion would need to take place. No motion is made.

## **ADJOURN**

***On a motion by Rapoza and second by Wing, the Board votes unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,

Helen M. Coffin, Executive Secretary

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Roland Barrett

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Joseph Rapoza

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Jennifer Dean Wing