

**MINUTES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 13, 2007**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Wilson at 7:00 pm. Nick Thomo, Liisa Holm, Robert Barnes, Bryan Whitam and Beverly Lund were in attendance. Ross Ackerman and Bill Neault were absent. Guests included Brenda Metterville, Sally Brown, Barbara Clancy and Mat Bansfield for the Library.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE REVIEW

Library

The Library has requested an article on the town meeting warrant to transfer a sum of money from the Dog Fund to the Merrick Public Library Trustee Account.

They explained that they would use it for items here and there and had no specific need for the funds. They have received this for many years including when the County Government was in charge of the funds. At that time the funds collected by the Town were turned over to the County Government and the funds were distributed to public libraries.

Those present were informed that the school is also looking for a portion of these funds to which Mrs. Clancy stated that they do not want to share it, they have had it for a hundred years and they will stack the meeting to see that they get it.

It was noted that at the time of the abolishment of County Government, MGL, Chapter 34B: Section 22 transferred the balance of the funds to the treasurer of each town and said funds were to be maintained in a separate dog fund consistent with the by-laws adopted by the town.

The Town adopted a by-law that states that the funds collected by the Dog Officer shall be accounted for and paid to the Town Treasurer at such time and in such manner as may be designated by the Treasurer. This by-law does not authorize that the funds collected by the Town Clerk from licensee fees to be distributed by the Treasurer or by town meeting vote. However, in 2004 \$4,700.00 was transferred by town meeting vote to the Library Building and Maintenance Account.

Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend that Article 6 be passed over and that the funds remain in the Dog Fund Account until such time that the by-law can be amended by town meeting vote to transfer the funds directly to the Library, the Schools or both as required by law; so voted.

AVAILABLE FUNDS AS PROVIDED BY THE TOWN ACCOUNTANT

The Town Accountant had provided the committee with the following information concerning available funds prior to the meeting:

Excess Levy Limit – The Assessors have advised that the amount left to rise and appropriate as allowed under Proposition 2 ½ for Fiscal Year 2009 is \$2,800.00. The Town Accountant is recommending that these funds not be touched in case there are unexpected expenses at the end of Fiscal Year 2008. A comfortable amount of excess levy limit funds would be between \$10,000.00 and \$15,000.00.

Prior to receiving the Excess Levy Limit figure, the Town Accountant had suggested that if an item on the warrant was to become part of the operating budget then the funds should come from the Excess Levy Limit. Following the receipt of this figures she suggested that it not be touched.

The Town Accountant suggested that if an item on the warrant was a one time expense and would not become part of the normal operating budget then the Free Cash or Stabilization Account should be used.

Free Cash – The Town Accountant has advised that Free Cash could come in under \$80,000. Some of the reasons for this are: Local Receipts are down \$68,000; there will be a large audit adjustment to the receivables by the Town Auditor; Cherry Sheet figures were \$8,000 less; and the Town has \$54,000 in refunds on the books.

Stabilization Accounts:

Regular Stabilization - There is \$597,727.00 in this account of which \$274,350.00 is invested and are non expendable leaving \$323,377.00 as expendable funds.

Fire Stabilization - \$5,257.00;

Highway Stabilization - \$279.00;

Fleet Stabilization - \$75,000.00

Purchase of Property/Improvement Stabilization - \$23,000.00.

School Assessment Account - \$40,000.00 - Funds returned to the Town by the School Committee following a reduction in the assessment.

School Transportation Account - \$5,469.00 – Excess funds due to the reduction in the transportation assessment.

Capital Project School Construction Account - \$5,088.15.

Veterans' Services - \$2,000 – There is currently one individual on the rolls and \$2,000 could be used if necessary.

It was the consensus of the committee not to touch Free Cash or any of the Stabilization Accounts due to the fact that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed and the funds may be needed for these purposes. These projects include handicapped

accessibility for the Town Hall, the continued upgrade to the electrical service of the Town Hall, the replacement/repair of the Town Hall windows, drainage issues at the Town Hall, the need to find permanent accommodations for the Police Department, the expansion of the Public Library and Cemetery, the ongoing expense of the Mill Street site, other departmental needs that are too many to mention and the continued replacement of outdated departmental vehicles to name a few.

Due to the fact that the School Assessment funds had been previously appropriated and calculated in the levy limit, the committee feels that these funds should be used to fund the articles at this meeting.

LOCAL RECEIPTS

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to contact the Town Accountant for an explanation as to why there was such a drop in Local Receipts as compared to previous years; so voted.

CONTINUATION SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE REVIEW

Article 12 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer, or borrow a sum of money to finish construction of a Highway Department Salt Shed.

The Highway Superintendent is looking for approximately \$26,435.00 to build a salt shed in addition to the \$20,000.00 that was awarded to the Town in a grant from the State. The \$20,000.00 was used to purchase the cement blocks necessary for the three walls of the shed. The old shed will be demolished with the blocks/bricks going to Bond Construction and the trusses being used for the new salt shed at the new Highway Barn Site. The additional funds from this article will provide the necessary materials to complete the three walls and the roof as well. Volunteers will provide the labor.

The Highway Superintendent originally requested the approval from the Board of Selectmen to use Chapter 90 funds for this project but they voted to put it on the warrant instead. Even though the Advisory Committee has no part in the decision regarding the use of Chapter 90 funds, it is the committee's opinion that Chapter 90 funds not be used at this time. There is currently \$159,596.00 in Chapter 90 funds available and a number of roads that need addressing. The Town has applied for a STRAP grant in the amount of \$500,000.00 and until such time that these funds are guaranteed, the committee feels Chapter 90 funds should not be used for this purpose.

Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Wilson seconded not to recommend this article due to the fact that there is currently a usable salt shed available and a lack of available funds. It was the consensus of the committee that this would be nice to have but is not a necessity at the present time and could be addressed at a future town meeting.

Article 1 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the General Insurance account.

There is a shortage in the General Insurance Account in the amount of \$2,773.00 for the current fiscal year as well as a late invoice in the amount of \$2,323.00 for the audit which was conducted in July of 2007 for the previous year. It will also be necessary to add the Police Department boat to the vehicle insurance coverage.

Mr. Whitam moved; Ms. Lund seconded to recommend that the sum of \$5,596.00 be transferred from the School Assessment Account to the General Insurance Account to cover this shortage; so voted.

Articles 2 - To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of \$1,250.00 from the Landfill Closure Account to the Board of Health Account to pay a contract shortage for the current fiscal year.

The Board of Health has received notification that there has been an increase to the contract for the gas and water landfill monitoring at the old landfill. These tests are required by the State. This is a transfer within the Board of Health's budgets.

This is a routine transfer within the Health Department and Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to recommend that the sum of \$1,250.00 be transferred from the Landfill Closure Account to the Board of Health Landfill Well Testing Account.

Article 3, 4 & 5 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer, or borrow the sum of \$135.00 to the Municipal Telephone Account to pay a telephone invoice from fiscal year 2007; to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer, or borrow the sum of \$49.98 to the Animal Control Officer Expense Account to pay a bill from fiscal year 2007 and to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer, or borrow the sum of \$15.49 to the Town Clerk Expense Account to pay a late bill from fiscal year 2007.

These three articles are for unpaid bills of a prior year. The supplies or services were part of the Fiscal 2007 budget but the bills were received after the close of the Fiscal Year. The Town Accountant has suggested that the bills be taken out of each department's current budget.

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to transfer the various sums of money from the Fiscal Year 2008 Accounts as follows: the municipal Telephone Account, the Animal Control Officer Expense Account and the Town Clerk Expense Account; so voted.

Article 7 - To see if the Town will vote to appropriate or transfer the sum of money received by the Town as reimbursement for insurance damages resulting from the August break in to the Town Hall and to authorize the Selectmen and Town Accountant to reimburse departments affected by the break-in for the losses incurred and to transfer any funds that may remain after such reimbursement to the Town Hall Improvement Account.

If the amount of damage is under \$10,000.00 the funds are deposited by law into the General Fund and town meeting action is necessary. If the amount exceeds \$10,000.00 the funds are deposited by law into an insurance reimbursable account and town meeting action is not necessary. The claim filed with the Town's insurance agent is for approximately \$3,380.00 and if the repair/replacement costs for the Town Clerk's vault are covered, the amount would exceed the \$10,000.00 guideline

Based on the uncertainty of how this plays out and because the check has not come in Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to pass over Article 7.

Article 8 – This article is a change in the zoning by law that deals with solid foundations.

Ms. Lund moved; Mr. Whitam seconded to recommend favorable action on Article 8; so voted.

Article 9 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds the sum of \$15,000.00 to hire an architectural firm to do a feasibility study of three options for a police station.

The Police Station Building Committee is seeking these funds to look into three options which include the addition and renovation to the existing site, the addition and renovation to the existing fire facility and the construction of a new freestanding Police Facility. This study would provide schematic design plans, a report of positive and negative features and conditions and preparation of budget project cost estimates of each option.

Mr. Whitam moved; Ms. Lund seconded to recommend that the sum of \$15,000 be transferred from the School Assessment Account due to the fact that the Town needs to plan ahead, this is a major priority and necessity and the lease will expire in the next two to three years. It will also provide an independent study which can be presented to the voters for action.

Article 10 - To see if the Town will vote raise and appropriate, transfer, or borrow a sum of money to match a formal purchase offer on a property or properties for cemetery expansion.

Mr. Thomo moved; Ms. Lund seconded recommend passing over Article 10.

Article 11 – This article was put on hold until more information could be obtained with respect to the quotes for the work.

Article 13 – This article provides for the abandonment of the old section of Lake Road that runs along the South Pond Beach.

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to recommend favorable action on Article 13.

Article 14 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow, or transfer from available funds a sum not to exceed \$1,000.00 for demolition of the old EMS Garage.

Mr. Barnes moved; Mr. Whitam seconded not to recommend Article 14. It is the consensus of the Committee that this building should be left in tack for the purpose of storage until such time as a decision is made regarding the future of the Police Station. It is also currently being used by the Police Department for storage of equipment such as tires, safety cones and a generator but it could also be used by other departments if the need arises.

Article 15 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds the sum of \$8,545.00 the Highway Department's Expense Account to cover emergency repairs motor replacement to the 1995 Dresser Loader.

The bill to replace the motor in the 1995 Dresser loader that burned out after 4,200 hours of service has been paid from the Highway Expense Account. Due to the fact that the sum of \$59,650.00 was appropriated for 2008 Highway Expenses of which \$30,250.00 was earmarked for equipment supplies, repairs and maintenance and as of October 29th there was a balance of \$30,626.02 remaining in the Expense Account Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Holm seconded not to recommend this article.

Article 16 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds the sum of \$3,000.00 to the Tree Warden Account for hazardous tree removal.

The Tree Warden Expense Account was increased from \$2,400.00 in Fiscal Year 2007 to \$4,400.00 in Fiscal Year 2008. The current balance in this account is \$1,386.36. It was noted that in the past the Shade Tree Account was also used for hazardous tree removal. \$2,400.00 was appropriated to this account for Fiscal Year 2008 and will now be used to purchase new trees for planting. No expenditures were deducted from this account as of October 29, 2007.

It was noted that in the past with the number of transfer requests from the Reserve Fund, the total yearly expenditure does in fact total in excess of \$5,000.00 and quotations should be solicited as required by law. The Advisory Committee recommends that this practice be followed. The committee plans to recommend a more realistic figure for the Fiscal Year 2009 budget in an attempt to eliminate the need for additional transfers to this account.

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Whitam seconded to recommend that the sum of \$3,000.00 be transferred from the School Assessment Account for this purpose; so voted.

Article 17 - To see if the Town will vote to create the position of Elementary School Resource Officer, said position to be under the direction of the Police Chief.

This article suggests the creation of a new position under the direction of the Police Department. Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend passing over Article 17 until such time that the Personnel Board can create a job description for this seasonal, part time position and set an hourly rate as required under the Personnel By-Laws.

Article 18 - To see if the Town will vote to create the position of Elementary School Resource Officer, said position to be under the direction of the Police Chief.

This article suggests the creation of a new position under the direction of the Police Department. Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommends passing over Article 18 until such time that the Personnel Board can create a job description for this seasonal, part time position and set an hourly rate as required under the Personnel By-Laws; so voted.

Article 19 - To see if the Town will vote to transfer a sum of money from the Police Department Part Time Wages Account to the Police Department Full Time Wages Account and further that a sum of money be raised and appropriated, borrowed or transferred to supplement the Police Department Full Time Wages Account to cover the additional funds needed to create a new full time position in lieu of part time positions.

The issue of consolidating a number of part time positions to form a new full time position was discussed at the last Annual Town Meeting. This consolidation is believed to be more cost effective and at the suggestion of the Selectmen, this is being proposed. This practice would also reduce administrative time in scheduling a large number of part time officers to fill shifts and to eliminate officers working a few hours here and there.

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Whitam seconded to recommend that the sum of \$10,044.00 be transferred from the Part Time Wages Account to the Full Time Wages Account and that the additional amount of \$3,080.00 be transferred from the School Assessment Account for this purpose; so voted. This position will be filled in January, 2008 until June 30, 2008 at the hourly rate of \$17.00. It will then become a part of the annual Police Department budget.

Article 20 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer a sum of money to supplement the Police Department Full-Time Wages Account due to a change in the Grade and Step for an officer after the Fiscal Year 2008 budget had been appropriated at the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Whitam moved; Mrs. Wilson seconded to recommend that the sum of \$1,276.00 be transferred from the School Assessment Account for this purpose; so voted with one abstention.

Article 21 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer a sum of money from available funds to the Police Department Part Time Wages Account

to reimburse the account for officer wages for Halloween coverage and further to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer a sum of money from available funds to the Police Department Overtime Wages Account to reimburse the account for officer wages for the Apple Country Fair coverage.

Due to the fact that the Police Department is in receipt of the Community Policing funds Ms. Lund moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend passing over Article 21; so voted.

Article 22 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer a sum of money for the installation and maintenance of additional street lights along Fiskdale Road (Route 148) between Mill Street and Long Hill Road.

This article authorizes the installation of one or two additional street lights along Fiskdale Road (Route 148) in the area between the intersection of Fiskdale Road and Mill Street and the intersection of Fiskdale Road and Long Hill Road. The cost of additional lights could be from \$160.00 to \$320.00.

Due to the fact that there are sufficient funds in the Fiscal Year 2008 budget a dollar figure is not necessary. Ms. Lund moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend the installation of the street lights; so voted.

Article 23 - To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds a sum of money for the Stabilization Account.

Mr. Thomo moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend that the amount of Free Cash certified by the Department of Revenue be transferred to the Stabilization Account.

EXTENSION OF MEETING

Ms. Lund moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to extend the meeting beyond 9:00 pm; so voted.

APPOINTMENT SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE

Rather than making an appointment it was the consensus that Mrs. Wilson and Ms. Lund will attempt to see to it that one of them is in attendance at the budget meetings of the school.

SELECTMEN'S MEETING

The committee joined the Selectmen at their meeting to go over the articles for the special town meeting. The articles were reviewed and the committee informed the Selectmen of its votes. The Selectmen took their votes as the meeting progressed.

CONTINUATION SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE REVIEW

Article 1 – Due to the fact that the Selectmen had authorized the purchase of a boat by the Police Department it is necessary that an additional sum of \$500.00 be put into the General Insurance budget for insurance.

Mrs. Holm moved; Ms. Lund seconded to reconsider the article and to increase the dollar amount to \$5,596.00; so voted.

Article 11 – To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow, or borrow from available funds a sum of money to repair or replace the Town Clerk’s vault doors and for additional masonry expenses relating to the repair and replacement in the Town Hall.

After discussing this article with the Selectmen; Ms. Lund moved; Mrs. Holm seconded to recommend this article and to transfer a sum of money not to exceed the balance in the School Assessment Account; so voted.

ADJOURNMENT

Mrs. Holm moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to adjourn the meeting; so voted. Meeting adjourned at 10:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly A. Lund, Secretary

Date Approved by Advisory Committee _____

Date Submitted to Selectmen _____