

MINUTES ADVISORY COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 13, 2008

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Chairman Barbara Wilson with the following members in attendance: Nick Thomo, Greg Burnham, David Holdcraft, and Beverly Lund. Guests included Selectmen, Rudy Heller; Selectmen, James Allen; Cemetery Commissioners, Peter Masuzzo and Mike Seery; Water Superintendent, Bruce Clarke and Recreation Commission Member, Brenda McElroy.

APPROVAL MEETING NOTES JANUARY 16, 23, 30 AND FEBRUARY 6

Mr. Thomo moved; Mr. Burnham seconded to accept the above minutes; so voted.

RESIGNATION WILLIAM NEAULT

Letter read; Ms. Lund moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to accept his resignation with regret and to send a letter thanking him for his service; so voted.

PETITION – JOHN DAVID HOLDCRAFT

The petition signed by approximately 35 residents asking that the committee reconsider the appointment of Mr. Holdcraft was read. After a brief discussion Mr. Burnham moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to send a letter to the Selectmen advising them that the committee has considered the petition as well as Mr. Holdcraft's qualifications and feel that they have not shown to be detrimental to the committee's process; so voted.

BUDGET REVIEW

Cemetery Department

Cemetery Expense – This budget is level funded at \$6,500. There are plans to buy a new trimmer and it is necessary for the individual holding the position of caretaker to get a hoisting license in order to operate the loader.

Cemetery Improvement – This is also level funded at \$1,650.

Wages – This budget has also been level funded at \$12,250 as requested by the Advisory Committee until a recommendation can be made.

Superintendent Salary – This also is level funded at \$4,300 until a recommendation can be made.

Articles – To transfer the interest earned from the money raised and deposited into the Cemetery Preservation Fund from the General Fund to the Cemetery Preservation Fund Account. This same article was approved by voters at last year's annual town meeting. There was no dollar amount available at this time.

A second article for \$50,000 to establish an encumbered fund for the future purchase of land for expansion of the cemetery was also submitted. It was noted that there is approximately 20 years left on the current site depending on ledge that might be

on the site. There is a section to the left of the gate that could be expended and they have expanded a little this summer to accommodate four grave lots only.

The Commissioner were advised that the Selectmen will be reviewing articles next week and this article might be included in the general article that was set up last year for a Town Building Property/Purchase/Expansion Improvement Stabilization Account which covers all buildings and departments.

Water Department

Water Department Expenses – This account has increased \$10,727 from \$31,586 to \$42,205. However, Mr. Clarke advised that due to a new sampling schedule the contracted services can be reduced by \$1,300 thus reducing the total increase to \$40,905. Increases included \$546 for fuel; \$1,300 for water treatment due to a substantial price increase; \$3 for pagers; \$5,850 for electric (the largest increase from \$9,150 to \$15,000 due to the current electric contract that has been in place for some years terminating at which times all rates will double) and \$280 for propane. This is an increase of approximately 33.6%.

Commissioners Salary – Contains a 3% increase from \$1,755.62 to \$1,843.40.

Administrative Clerk wages – This budget contains a 3% increase along with an additional \$1.00 an hour increase for a merit raise bringing the total from \$8,620 to \$9,466.63, an increase of \$876.79.

Secondary Operator wages – This account includes an increase of \$105.63 (3%) bringing the total from \$3,521 to \$3,626.63. This position advances one step in the wage schedule and consists of approximately 140 hours yearly. Mr. Clarke stated that this could change on the town floor because he bases his requested increase for this position on what the Highway Department operator position pays. One of these positions is held by the current Highway Department operator and Mr. Clarke feels that if the rates of pay are the same, it makes for easier bookkeeping. The second position is held by a licensed operator from another Town and this individual makes more in the other Town and Brookfield to employ this individual.

Water Superintendent Salary – This accountant has been increased from \$55,058 to \$56,709.28, an increase of \$1,651.72. This is a 3% increase and the position advances on step in the wage schedule.

Temporary Help – Casual – This account is level funded at \$1,000.

The Selectmen and the Advisory Committee stated that there are no merit raises under the by laws and this process only causes dissention if some employees receive them and others do not as has happened in the past. Mr. Clarke stated that due to the fact that someone said to level fund salaries he was submitting his budget to reflect what he is requesting for his department. He advised the members that he was going to get up on Town floor and request the 3% increase no matter what the committee recommends. Mr. Clarke was advised that the committee will be making a recommendation as to a percentage of increase for salaries/wages in the very near future once all the revenue and budgets figures are calculated and it is known where the Town stands with Proposition 2 ½. This increase would be across the board for all employees.

Articles – Mr. Clarke advised there would be no Water Department articles this year.

Recreation Commission

South Pond Beach Wages – Mrs. McElroy advised that the plan to refurbish the beach area is moving forward and it may be necessary to appropriate funds if the Selectmen elect to utilize the beach and maintain the area. This budget contains a request for \$3,360 with approximately \$2,016 for a life guard and approximately \$1,344 for a “buddy” depending on the starting hourly rate of pay for each position

Their plans include opening the beach 12 weekends; Saturdays and Sundays from 9:00am to 4:00pm each day. They are looking at minimum wage for the buddy and between \$9.00 to \$12.00 for the lifeguard with one on-call person.

South Pond Expenses - In addition to paying wages, new equipment will be needed such as buoys, a life guard chair, signs, tools, rescue equipment, etc. There is currently a balance of \$3,000 in this account which was appropriated last year and can be spent to fund some of these expenses. However, there may be need for additional funding for Fiscal Year 2009. Mrs. McElroy feels the additional \$3,000 may be sufficient but this will be the first year and will be a learning experience.

Recreation Commission Expenses – This is level funded at \$6,500. It was noted that contracted services include the payment of wages for the referees and umpires. There were questions as to whether are not wages can be paid from an expense account and it was the consensus of the committee to ask the Town Accountant.

Lewis Field Maintenance Expenses – This is level funded at \$2,200 with \$1,200 for the port-a-potty and \$1,000 for the annual clean up day.

ARTICLES

The following articles were received:

Master Plan Committee - \$10,000 to help pay for expenses associated with the development of a Master Plan. Mr. Heller and Mr. Burnham advised that the total cost is approximately \$53,000. \$10,000 was previously appropriated, \$6,000 has been donated and \$10,000 will be donated by the state, Central Mass. Regional Planning, who will be doing the work and they will be \$27,000 short. They are planning to put articles of approximately \$10,000 each on the warrants for the next two annual town meetings.

Planning Board – There are two zoning articles: One dealing with those proposed in May of 2005 which were narrowly defeated and the other dealing with amending the Open Space Residential Development section of the zoning by laws.

Emergency Squad – To transfer funds from the billing receipts account to the new ambulance account. There was no dollar amount and they are unsure if the initial transfer will be sufficient to purchase the new ambulance. Mrs. Wilson stated that it is her understanding that they could be looking at \$150,000 for the new ambulance.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL BUDGET

Mrs. Wilson has learned that the school will be looking at an approximate increase of 1.7%.

ANNUAL REPORT

None of the members had additional input for the Annual Report and Mrs. Wilson and Ms. Lund will continue to work on it. The Selectmen were advised that the committee would not be able to meet the deadline.

BOARD OF HEALTH

Transfer Station Expenses - It was noted that there was a discrepancy in the amount listed as being appropriated last year and this should be changed to \$110,025 in the warrant book.

Waste Management Fee Schedule – This was provided to the members from the Board of Health as requested.

TRANSFER STATION COSTS – Figures for trash pick up and disposal based on waste tonnage as well as monthly rent/services was provided to the members as requested.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT EQUIPMENT PLAN – FIRE DEPARTMENT

This plan was provided to the members.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT – INVOICE DRESSER LOADER REPAIRS

This was provided to all the members.

TOWN MEETING PROCESS EAST BROOKFIELD

Mr. Heller advised the committee that he had attended the East Brookfield Town Meeting and learned that their Advisory Committee makes all the motions which presents a very uniform process. In his opinion, when a department head gets up at the Brookfield town meeting to make the motions it gives the appearance of dissent before the process even starts even if there is none. The members present felt that this was something the Selectmen should look at as a Board.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Lund moved; Mr. Thomo seconded to adjourn the meeting; so voted. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly A. Lund, Secretary

Date Approved by Advisory Committee: February 19, 2008

Date Submitted to Board of Selectmen: February 20, 2008