

Town of Brookfield
Selectmen's Meeting – Department Head Meeting
Town Hall
Thursday, April 26, 2012

Chairman O'Connell called the meeting to order at 9:10 am in the Banquet Room of the Town Hall. Other members present: Rudy Heller. Stephen J. Comtois II was excused

Camera Operator: None

Press: None

Others: Lucinda Thompson (Board of Health Clerk & Highway Admin. Clerk) and Herbert Chaffee, Highway Supt.; Police Chief Michael Blanchard; Library Director; EMS Chief Donna Lafleur; Fire Chief Peter Martell, Tax Collector Brenda Caron McElroy; Town Accountant Louise (Betty) Benoit; Treasurer, Sheila Frangiamore; Water Dept. Supt. Bruce Clarke; Town Clerk Michael Seery; Assessors Chairman Philip Pierce; and Municipal Custodian, William Thompson.

***Note:** These minutes are in two sections. The first part reflects the discussions taken at meeting with the Department Heads; the second part reflects the votes of the Selectmen after the Department Heads left.*

Section One:

The meeting began with refreshments supplied by Peter O'Connell. Mr. O'Connell thanked the department heads for "all of their hard work in a complicated enterprise." He then reviewed the Selectmen's proposed budget and said that one purpose of this meeting was to "catch and correct" any mistakes as early as possible. He explained that the budget is based upon the House's budget numbers and includes a 2% COLA, except for those positions that are clearly stipends.

The plan by the Selectmen and the Advisory Committee is to have the budget back from the printer a full two weeks ahead of the Annual Town Meeting.

Mr. Peirce explained that the Assessor's consultant believes the Town will experience about 20 % drop in property values; this will cause the tax rate to have to increase. He further explained that Proposition 2 ½ had two limits i.e., the levy limit (which we all understand) and the levy ceiling, which is not as well known. He explained that the levy ceiling means that the property tax imposed cannot exceed 2 ½% of the total full, fair value of the taxed property. Mr. Peirce said he thought this number would be \$5 million for FY 13. A municipality may not exceed the levy ceiling only through a debt exclusion vote or similar actions. The Levy ceiling has been decreasing over the past two to three

years and “our next revaluation could put us into harms way”. Mr. Peirce said that Brookfield’s tax rate is about average across the Commonwealth.

Department heads were given the opportunity to discuss sections of the budget where what was printed may not agree with what they believed they had submitted or where they saw a problem.

Treasurer Clerk Wages: Ms. Frangiamore explained that the printed budget had been lowered by about \$4,000 and asked if her second clerk had been left off by accident. Mr. O’Connell said that the Board only voted a number of hours for clerk and not the number of clerks. Ms. Frangiamore explained that she does need the additional hours and that she felt that too big of a decrease was made in her department.

Insurance Advisory Committee/Health Insurance line item: Mr. Clarke explained the upcoming changes to the health plan and credited the Treasurer for her hard work to make this happen. Mr. Clarke said that he believed that the Town should consider hiring an insurance negotiator and go out to bid next year.

Health Fair: Ms. Frangiamore explained that she had scheduled a Health Fair for the municipal employees to be in the Banquet Room on May 15th from noon to 2:30 and the Fair will then move to the Elementary School for those employees.

Position Title: There were questions about the proper title of Cindy Thompson’s position for the Highway, i.e. “Administrative Assistant” or “Administrative Clerk” so this will have to be resolved by a check of the job descriptions. Five hours were added to this position and it was separated into its own line item.

Ms. Frangiamore said that she felt that many of the part-time positions needed to be full-time as the town continues to grow and there is more paperwork. She said that many of the town’s employees are doing town work on their own time. She felt that the Selectmen should evaluate this and possibly change or add hours. Mr. Clarke added that he felt that cross-training was a very good thing and that it was important to keep employees as the longer they work for the town the more knowledge they gain.

Mr. O’Connell explained the move toward a “cooperative position” that would possibly use the same person to work for the Recreation Committee, Cemetery, Board of Health/Transfer Station and Highway Department.

Treasurer Salary: Ms. Frangiamore asked that the printed budget reflect the amount that she had asked for and Mr. Clarke said that he felt that the Treasurer was underpaid. Other Department Heads agreed. The Selectmen agreed to change the “requested” column.

Other:

- About \$83,000 will be transferred to Stabilization as promised at the Town Meeting.
- The Board of Health/Transfer Station broke even for the first time last fiscal year and their budget for FY13 is based on that.
- The Elementary School budget is increased primarily because of special education costs but they are using School Choice money to help regulate the amount of increase.
- The center-line road painting article was deferred to the Fall Special Town Meeting. Mr. Chaffee was in agreement with that.
- The Selectmen gave “kudos” to the Highway for their work in clearing the roads from the damage caused by the October 2011 storm. Mr. O’Connell cautioned that we remember that if the \$75,000 that the Board authorized be spent, had not been received from FEMA before the tax rate is set, the Town will have to pay this.

Special Town Meeting Articles:

The DRAFT warrant was reviewed and Chief Blanchard reminded the Board that the Police Department had a \$150 late water bill that should be added to this warrant.

Annual Town Meeting Articles:

- **Saw Mill Pond Dam:** The amount expected for this Article is \$40,000 but the actual amount should be known by the time of the Town Meeting.
- **Highway Loader:** There was a lengthy discussion but all seemed to agree that the \$17,308 to purchase tires and rims for the old loader was not money well spent. The loader’s current value is only about \$12,000. Mr. Chaffee was willing to “limp” through a little longer with the old loader as long as it was on the Capital Planning list for five years from now. If a new loader is purchased in five years, there will be a 10 year span between the two loaders and this spreads out the cost of the loaders more evenly. Everyone seemed to agree that it was better that the \$17,308 be set aside at the Fall Special Town meeting into a Fleet Stabilization Account, earmarked for the new loader.
- **Lewis Field paving:** Ms. McElroy, a former member of the Recreation Committee, brought this article up for discussion. Mr. O’Connell explained that the Rec. Committee asked for quotes for paving and soon learned that their original request for \$15,000 for paving was not going to be enough money. Department Heads pointed out that there didn’t seem to be a cohesive plan for improvements to the Field. Further discussion revealed the need for the ditch to be covered and Mr. Chaffee suggested moving the parking lot to the North side of the current location of the ditch and to have a walkway to the other parts of the field. Chief Blanchard was enthusiastic about this idea. It was agreed that this article should be revised to reflect the new purpose.
- **Chapter 90:** Mr. Chaffee pointed out that this article is not needed as the Town has a 10-year contract with the state.

- **Banister Common/Mall Project funding:** Mr. O’Connell explained that this article was for \$5,000 that would be matching funds should they receive a grant that they intend to apply for. Many of those present felt that the Banister Committee should hold a public hearing before any more money is put into the future of the Common. The discussion turned to “sprucing up” the Common at this time rather than spending money for designs “for a project that will never fly”. The result of the discussion was that the Department Heads agreed money should be set aside in this budget year and the next for the care of the Common. The money in the current budget year would be used for fertilizer and more would be put down after the Apple Country Fair in October. The Highway agreed to help out with work that needed heavy equipment and to continue with raking. The Selectmen asked Mr. Chaffee to give them estimates of the money needed. The Selectmen were asked to postpone the matching funds article until the fall and instead request money for the upkeep of the current Common and Mall.

Chief Martell (for all those present) thanked Mr. O’Connell for his service as a member of the Board of Selectmen and as Chairman and Mr. O’Connell received a hearty round of applause.

Mr. O’Connell asked the Department Heads to complete the survey that was sent to them by the Town Administrator Study Committee and encouraged their ideas. He explained that the Town Administrator (if written into the job description) would among other things, “drive major projects” and work with committees and department heads and input job descriptions.

Mr. Heller announced that there should be some good news on the solar project at the Transfer Station very soon.

The Selectmen were asked about the status of the Lakeside Campground tax title taking. Mrs. Frangiamore explained that the Town now owns all except three small lots and those three owners have not been able to be located. Town Counsel is taking the necessary steps to have those properties transferred to the Town.

In the matter of the Quaboag River Bridge project, Mr. O’Connell stated that the transfer of ownership of the Kroll property (formerly known as the Ellen Mundell property), would be completed within the next week or so. The property was inherited by three brothers who did not know about it but they have agreed to support the Town taking the property by eminent domain. The proposed date for the 25% Public Hearing is May 15th and the Town expects to see newly revised plans with a lower impact that previously designed.

The Shore Road Bridge construction is expected to begin within the next two weeks and that road will be closed until sometime in November.

The Dunn Brook Bridge repair will occur in August but the road will not be closed.

At 11:25 am, the Department Heads left and the Selectmen continued their meeting in the Selectmen's office.

Section Two:

1. **Kroll Order of Taking:** Mr. Heller moved to approve signing the Order of Taking in the matter of the Kroll property located at 4 Fiskdale Road; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.
2. **Care of the Town Common:** Mr. Heller moved to defer the article for matching funds for the Banister Common & Mall Committee from the Annual Town Meeting Warrant to the fall Special Town Meeting Warrant; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Mr. Heller moved to rename the line item "Town Hall Expense" to "Municipal Property Maintenance and Expense Account" and to increase the line item by \$3,000 to cover costs relative to the Town Common and Mall and other such properties; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted. This money will be used for things like filling in low spots, over-seeding, etc. after the Apple Country Fair.

Mr. Heller moved, Mr. O'Connell seconded and it was voted that Ms. Neylon should identify a source of money that could be transferred (municipal relief transfer or Reserve Fund request) at the Board's May 1 Special Meeting to the Town Hall Expense Account. This money would be used to pay for fertilizer, lime or other treatments that could immediately be applied to the Common and the Mall to ready them for Memorial Day. Mr. Thompson agreed to take on this responsibility without any change in his normal working hours.

Ms. Neylon will also review the Selectmen's budgets to determine which will need municipal relief transfers and have those documents ready for the May 1st Special Meeting.

Mr. Heller will explain the Selectmen's votes to the Banister Common & Mall Committee.
3. **Chapter 90 (Article 18):** Mr. Heller moved to remove the Chapter 90 article from the warrant; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.
4. **Banister Common & Mall Matching Funds (Article 23):** Mr. Heller moved to defer this article to the Fall Special Town Meeting; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.
5. **Repairs to Highway Dresser Loader (Article 24):** Mr. Heller moved to defer this article to the Fall Special Town Meeting; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted. It was agreed that if there should be an emergency, the Highway and Selectmen would go to the Advisory Committee for funding from the Reserve Fund.
6. **Road Repairs at Lewis Field (Article 21):** Mr. Heller moved to change the wording of this article to remove the word "road"; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted. The explanation will now read "This money will be used for burying the ditch as the first phase of the capital improvement at Lewis Field and addresses a safety issue." Mr. Heller will explain this to the Chairman of the Recreation Committee.
7. **Treasurer Salary:** Mr. Heller moved to change the Treasurer Salary FY 13 Requested line from \$25,000 to \$28,538 and the Elementary School Expenses

FY13 Requested amount from \$2,919,926 to \$2,869,928; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

8. **Municipal Clerks:** Mr. Heller moved to zero out clerical hours for the Treasurer and Tax Collector and to increase the figure for Municipal Clerks in the Selectmen's budget to \$27,625 (38 hrs/wk x 13.98 x 52); Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted. This is an increase of \$3,645 but with the expectation that issues of back tax and tax title collection will be resolved as well as cash management and audit issues. This vote reflects a consolidation of the clerk hours and wages for the Treasurer, Tax Collector and Board of Selectmen into one budget line under the supervision of the Selectmen's Administrative Assistant. The hours will be allocated on a regular basis with the agreement of the Tax Collector and the Treasurer. All affected department heads agreed to this and that they will use existing staff first, including the Administrative Assistant at the Highway Department. The total number of hours allocated each week per department may vary. The total number of clerical hours remain the same as the current budget but the Tax Collector and Treasurer, who have the majority of these hours, will work to reduce their hours. The actual hours worked by these individuals and for which department will be tracked through the payroll system.
9. **Treasurer Salary:** During the first part of the meeting, it was pointed out that the Treasurer is underpaid. The Board reviewed the hourly rate of the areas Treasurers and of the hourly rate of Brookfield's Treasurer's Clerks and compared those rates against what the Treasurer now receives. Mr. Heller moved to change the Treasurer line on the Budget (in the BOS votes with 2% wage increases) from \$25,000 to \$28,538, with the understanding that the Treasurer will work a minimum of 30 hours per week; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted. It was stated that even this increased hourly rate, is still lower than other area Treasurers included in the Brimfield 8 Salary Survey.
10. **Board of Health Clerk:** The Board also was advised that the original budget, as submitted by a member of the Board of Health, was in error as far as the calculations for their Clerk/Wages line item. Mr. Heller moved to correct the error and change the amount in both the FY 13 Dept Request column and the BOS votes with 2% wage increase column to \$3,877; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

ADJOURNMENT: At 1:15 pm Mr. Heller moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Respectfully submitted

Donna L. Neylon, Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____