

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
February 23, 2011**

Present: First Selectman Thomas Frenaye, Eileen Moncrief, Brian Fitzgerald, Timothy Reynolds and Joanne Sullivan. Mr. Frenaye called the special meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on February 23, 2011 in the lower level conference room.

Public Comment:

None.

Discussion regarding status of Capital Projects:

The Board of Finance is working on a draft agreement requesting the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education agree to work together with the Board of Finance for the next several years to keep taxes under control if the bonding is approved. The Selectmen reviewed the draft agreement in detail. Mr. Fitzgerald said the Selectmen's budget hasn't had any increases in the last few years, other than the increases which were for fuel and insurance cost increases and also because of the 53rd payroll week last year. Mrs. Moncrief felt the proposed document is way too detailed for a memorandum of understanding, and it gets into some areas that are too specific.

Selectmen Reynolds and Fitzgerald both want to move the capital projects along with a referendum in early April, and don't want to go back and forth with the Finance Board on this Agreement because it will only delay things for months. The Finance Board is requesting no more than a 1% increase this year and no more than 3% the following years. Selectman Sullivan said most of the people who are on the Boards now, may not be the same people next year and didn't feel this agreement makes any sense or would have any binding effect on those who sign it now.

Mr. Frenaye felt the agreement may restrict the Board of Finance too much. The Finance Board evaluates the budgets each year and makes the final decision on the budget before it is sent to the voters. The Finance Board has the last say on the budget, not the Selectmen or Board of Education, before it is sent to Town Meeting.

There was much discussion between the Selectmen on the draft Agreement. Mr. Frenaye said he needs to get the document back to the Board of Finance by next Monday night's meeting. The Selectmen agree in principal, that there can be minimal tax increases over the next few years and will accept whatever the Board of Finance chooses to put into the memorandum. Mr. Frenaye said the Selectmen and Board of Education are the two Boards that spend the money, but the Finance Board is the Board who sets the limits. Mr. Frenaye agreed that the Board of Selectmen will jointly commit to control annual operating budget increases over the next three years.

Selectman Fitzgerald suggested wording that the Board of Selectmen agrees to abide by any restraints on our operating budget for the next few years.

Selectman Moncrief said this is the Finance Board's projections and financial assumptions, but that is the Board of Finance's decision, not the Selectmen. She felt the attached Exhibits to the Agreement are not necessary.

Mr. Frenaye said he will continue to work with the Board of Finance members that are currently drafting the document to try to simplify it. The Finance Board indicated that they are favorable towards the proposed capital projects, but they want help to manage the expectations on budget changes over the next few years.

Selectman Fitzgerald made a motion that the Board of Selectmen agree to abide by any restraints on our operating budgets for the next three fiscal years, as suggested by the Board of Finance, so the four capital projects passed on February 9th, can move forward to a Town Meeting and then a referendum in early April. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Discussion on 2011-2012 Budget:

The result of the Governor's budget presented last week was not as bad as expected. The Finance Director went over the publications from the State and what is being proposed.

Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT), Casino Money, Town Aid Roads, Local Capital Improvement, Education Cost Sharing, Public Transportation, Adult Ed, were significantly down about \$200,000.00. This was mostly from a result of the PILOT money on State Owned Property. Suffield's revaluation was two years ago, and because some towns had revaluation last year, they are getting more of the pie.

Mr. Frenaye said he and the Finance Director, Debbie Cerrato, met with all the departments who provided input on what they wanted for next year's budget. There are no dollars in the department budgets for salaries or any changes in benefits as yet. One Union Contract has been settled so far, and meetings continue with the remaining four Union contracts.

Mr. Reynolds asked why the Probate Court amount was up when the court is no longer here. The expenses of the new Probate Court facility are shared between the towns. The new court is accounting for not only the office expenses, but also the overhead expenses of heating, air conditioning, etc., so the budget includes items that we didn't have in our line item in previous years.

The Election's Department budget request is up. The biggest difference is how we account for election workers and their benefits.

Mr. Frenaye said he had met with representatives of some Condominium Associations in Town and they want the Town's trash pickup to include the Condos because it would be cheaper for them. The Tax Office said there are administrative overhead costs to collect past due trash fees. Suffield is giving up about \$200,000 a year by not having the trash fee rolled into the real estate taxes, because it is the tax rate that the State uses to calculate our payment in lieu of taxes for State property. Mr. Frenaye said he will recommend to the Board of Finance as part of the budget submission that they include the trash fee as part of the mil rate and the rest of the Selectmen agreed. Mr. Reynolds said the down side of this will be that the businesses that pay for other trash removal by business dumpsters, etc., will have about a 3% tax increase in taxes to them.

Mr. Frenaye continued to review all the individual departments' budgets with the Selectmen and explained why some budgets were increased slightly and other budgets were down. The Selectmen's budget will be presented at the next Board of Finance meeting on February 28th.

Adjournment:

There being no further business Selectman Reynolds made a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Koren, Recording Secretary
Transcribed from tape-recording

Next Regular Meeting: March 2, 2011 @ 7 p.m., Town Hall