

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Michael Carrier, John Hartnett, Morris Klein, James MacDonell, Lewis Major, Tina McCosker, Peter Zavorotny. Absent: Selectmen's Rep Jay Ebbighausen. Excused: Joe Conroy,

The committee met at the SAU with the school board. The meeting was called to order at 6:15pm. The school board introduced Patti Basset, Interim Superintendent, approved minutes from their last meeting before introducing Peter Zavorotny. He noted the committee had asked to meet with the School Board and Selectmen as the committee wanted to know if anything major looked to be on the horizon.

Mr. Hartnett asked if he could speak, saying he hoped that the committee and the school board could develop a calendar and have a time table as to when information might be available. His concern is that everyone has enough time to study budgets and ask questions before voting occurs. He also wanted to know what the school is thinking, a "one percent increase, a two percent increase, or keep the budget flat." He wanted the discussions to be meaningful and for everyone to work towards a common goal.

Following up on Mr. Hartnett's comment, Mr. Zavorotny asked if the school board had had any discussions about the school budget. Holly Kennedy, school board chair, replied that the school board hasn't really discussed the matter in depth. Thomas O'Connor, business manager, noted that the school board had developed a preliminary budget. When asked by Mr. Zavorotny for details of the preliminary budget, Mr. O'Connor replied that it is "conceptual", has no percentage increase over last year, and contains a timeline and calendar. Mr. Hartnett spoke up, saying that working back from town meeting date gives dates by when budget pieces are needed.

Ms. Kennedy said the school's budget will be done in November and recommended by December. The budgets of the town and school will be ready by January 1 for the budget committee.

Mr. Zavorotny told the school board that TA Jill Collins put together an expenditure report for the town. Mr. O'Connor said he had given Ms. Collins similar information related to the school. In response to Mr. Zavorotny's question as to what the committee wanted to see, Mr. MacDonell replied he liked the summary Ms. Collins put out for the town. Mr. O'Connor said he would produce a report of actuals for 2011-12, 2012-13, 2014-15, and year-to-date information.

Mr. Zavorotny noted that the selectmen are coming along with the town's budget. On October 20 department summaries are due. He said that the tax rate has been fairly flat with a couple of spikes seen. He feels the town has "done a good job as long as we don't have anything big."

Mr. Hartnett asked about the \$600,000 that the school returned to the town. "What does this do to help people?" Mr. Zavorotny said "alot goes back to off-set taxes." He pointed

out that the amount returned was "an unusual situation." Mr. O'Connor said, "You're talking about an unassigned fund balance that's returned." For the "2013-14 school year we knew staffing. We knew the number of transfers and students. We knew we'd run a surplus."

Mr. Bellville spoke up, saying he thought "we had real savings" in terms of the budget and Mr. O'Connor agreed. He noted that the school "thought we'd have to address an issue in the building that we addressed another way." Roof work couldn't be done as there was an issue with the contractor. Mr. Bellville said he hoped the savings will carry over.

Mr. Zavorotny asked the budget committee if any member had anything else to discuss with the school board. Hearing that they did not, the budget committee moved across the hall at 6:35pm to continue their meeting.

Mr. Zavorotny said the committee needed to approve the minutes from Meeting 637. Mr., Hartnett made a motion to approve the minutes from Meeting 637, was seconded by Mr. Klein, and the motion passed unanimously.

In response to Mr. Zavorotny's question as to what was on the board's mind, Mr. Klein asked if TA Collins had come up with a capital expenditure list. What major projects is the town facing?

Mr. Bellville said Frank Podlenski, Highway Superintendent, has the loader the department needed. Mr. Klein said that the town should start to be saving now for equipment it needs. Mr. MacDonell said that Frank has a list of equipment the department needs for the next 15 years. If the town looks at leasing, lease arrangements require that money be used in year one.

Mr. Zavorotny said the large, flat part of the school roof needs to be done. Mr. MacDonell said that the contract to do the job couldn't get encumbered in time. Mr. Hartnett asked that as prices don't decline and the town has the money to get the job done, why is it proving so hard to get a roofer? He heard the town lost 10% last year.

Mr. MacDonell said the Mr. O'Connor spoke to the contractor who told him he was so busy he didn't think he could get the school's job into his schedule. Mr. Klein said the school has a Firestone membrane roof with insulation under the membrane. He asked if the insulation got wet when the roof leaked. Mr. Zavorotny said he believed the insulation in the high school didn't get wet; the insulation in the elementary school, however, did. Mr. Zavorotny said the schools' walkways need work.

Mr. Klein said it can take a long time to get a good contractor. Mr. Bellville said that the poor economy meant people didn't enter trades and now there's a shortage of qualified people. They need to be trained and finding good people is difficult.

Mr. Zavorotny said that Mr. Hartnett made a good point--the town has the money for the roofing job.

Mr. Hartnett said the townspeople voted in March to spend the money and the bid should go out immediately. Mr. Klein said that the contractor may way we'll do the job next year. Mr. Zavorotny remarked that the last time a bid was requested, the town received three responses.

Mr. Zavorotny asked for an update on the police station.

Mr. MacDonell replied that the pad will be in by November 1. Mr. Klein said it was known that the old foundation had to be dug up. Mr. Bellville said he told Selectman Mike Darcy not to do anything until the old foundation was dug up. According to TA Collins, the town is saving money by having our guys do the work, Mr. Zavorotny said. Mr. Major spoke up, saying the last time this was done it ended up costing the town money.

Mr. Zavorotny asked the committee what they wanted to do about next week's meeting, saying he wasn't sure if the committee would have any data from the town. Mr. MacDonell said revenue figures from the state come in next year. Mr. Hartnett said there should be a way to zero in on anticipated revenue. Mr. Zavorotny said we can get anticipated revenue--revenues from anything other than taxed. Car registrations bring in about \$200,000. Land use taxes are a small piece. Mr. Bellville said property taxes are about \$8,400,000 of a \$17 million budget. He said that if the dam abatement goes through the situation "will be scary."

Mr. MacDonell said the negotiations about the dam abatement are taking place.

Mr. Bellville said that now that the old race track property can no longer be used as a track, the taxes the owners of the property pay will increase.

Mr. Zavorotny said the town does a good job of managing expenses. "We don't know that the state will do" in terms of returning money to municipalities.

Mr. Hartnett said that if we look at a five or 10 year history we should be able to predict revenues. Mr. Bellville said that the town lost "lots of money from property transfers" which decreased significantly. To his comment that property values go up, Mr. Zavorotny pointed out that what "matters is what your tax bill says. There isn't a direct link between property values and taxes." A value change doesn't necessarily affect taxes. Every \$10,000 costs about \$0.05. On a \$100,000 house that's an additional \$50.

He went on to say that he looked at his tax bill for the past seven years. The increase was nine percent. "Over those years this was less that inflation."

Mr. Bellville said that incomes are stagnating. Mr. MacDonell said that liens are on a decline; they're about \$197,000, a "big change from four years ago when they were about \$435,000." Mr. Major observed that "a big part of that were liens on the racetrack."

Ms. Almann observed that incomes for middle class people have stagnated. "Data show they're risen for the poor and the wealthy, but have stagnated for the middle class."

Mr. Zavorotny said "we can't let infrastructure die. What's a necessity vs. a luxury?"

Mr. MacDonell said the town needs a new police station and a new fire station. The fire department is looking at needing a new truck soon. Mr. Bellville said the town can't be afraid of spending and then not have money for necessities.

The dam abatement will be big. Mr. MacDonell said Debra George (owner of George's Field) got an abatement. Mr. Bellville asked about Wal-Mart. Mr. MacDonell said they put conditions on the rest of the property.

Mr. Zavorotny suggested the committee meet October 15, 6:30pm in the Town Hall to work on a schedule. Mr. Bellville said this is a good idea as he doesn't want to be in a position of voting on articles 20 minutes beforehand.

With nothing more to be discussed, Mr. Zavorotny asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Klein made such a motion, was seconded by Mr. McDonell, and the meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann
Secretary