

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Michael Carrier, John Hartnet, James MacDonell, Tina McCosker, Lewis Major, Mike Darcy (selectmen's rep), Peter Zavorotny. Excused: Joe Conroy and Mo Klein

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm in the Town Hall.

While minutes for Meeting 620 need to be approved, the committee will hold off approving them until the next meeting, as the minutes were not distributed to committee members due to a mix-up between himself and the committee's secretary.

Mr. Zavorotny asked if members had any concerns about the information TA Collins sent to the committee showing where the town stands three-quarters of the way through the fiscal year with 28% of the budget remaining.

Mr. MacDonell replied that he was struck by just how many line items are 100%. He asked about the summer program.

Mr. Darcy responded that it was put on the wrong line, such as the pool, for instance. Mr. Major asked why money is needed in June for the pool. Mr. Darcy noted the budget for the pool is limited and the money is the salary.

Mr. Zavorotny noted that the police department is the biggest number. Health care has not been paid; he will ask TA Collins to verify this. Mr. Bellville asked about workman's compensation. What about health insurance—has that been paid yet? It looks as though 43% remains. Mr. Darcy will ask TA Collins.

Mr. Zavorotny said he did not come across anything related to school expenses that stuck him; as he said, the school "looks pretty good percentage-wise."

He said that on page 3 (town expenses) the re-evaluation number is very high. To which Mr. MacDonell observed that "that whole section is off by triple digits." Mr. Zavorotny said this could be associated with the dam issues. Mr. Bellville concurred that it is legal expenses and out of the contract the town has with the attorney. Mr. Zavorotny noted that the health agencies have not been paid.

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

Mr. Darcy replied that the selectmen are looking over requests for architect qualifications. The town took custody of 10 Main Street. While the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) will not allow spending until after July 1 (start of the new fiscal year) the town is using the time to get "everything prepped for July 1."

In terms of Monument Road, the request for qualification went out.

Mr. Zavorotny asked if the committee wanted to meet in July to discuss the year end numbers.

Mr. MacDonell replied that he was thinking of suggesting meeting in August (Aug. 21; 6:30 pm).

Mr. Bellville asked if the audit was completed for last year. Yes, replied Mr. Darcy.

Mr. Hartnet said that he's become aware that "questionable things have been going on in the town financially." Mr. Darcy replied that the town has seen "less than favorable ratings based on its numbers." The town has taken steps to "compartmentalize things" and the situation has gotten better, according to Mr. Darcy. "How much better?" inquired Mr. Hartnet. "Questionable areas have become better," Mr. Darcy replied.

Mr. Bellville asked if TA Collins can scan the auditors' report and send it out along with the cover letter. The town needs to take steps to catch mistakes earlier. The town has been getting deficiencies, according to Mr. Bellville, and the selectmen are finding errors too late. "There is not enough oversight."

Mr. Darcy replied the issues are being addressed. Having employees in place with help as will monthly reports; these will catch errors early to isolate them. Mr. Bellville noted that "we don't want to be \$200,000 in the hole due to an honest mistake."

Next, there was considerable discussion raised by Ms. McCosker's observation that the town clerk and the tax collector are now one in the same person.

Mr. Darcy said there is a physical separation between the two offices. The town clerk is staying put. The treasurer, financial officers, and audits provide the checks.

The town clerk and the tax collector requested that both positions be put on the same three year cycle.

Mr. Hartnet asked if the job descriptions have been written up. The state has written them, replied Mr. Darcy. To avoid future discrepancies in the tax collector's numbers, Ms. McCosker asked if more frequent reports to protect the town will be available? Mr. Darcy replied that the selectmen are working on this. Mr. Bellville said he "started working on this four years ago as selectmen"—it appears they are "stuck in the mud." Ms. McCosker asked if the tax collector is bonded. Any person handling money is bonded, according to Mr. Bellville. He pointed out that bonding is no security as the town once did have a tax collector who stole money. Ms. McCosker thinks voters didn't realize how conjoined the two positions are.

Mr. Hartnet said the situation seems "flim-flam" and he wouldn't run a business this way. Mr. Bellville said that since the town does the accrual method, it is difficult to understand the numbers without studying them.

Mr. Bellville noted that by state law the auditors' report needs to be available at town meeting.

Mr. Zavorotny said that if there's a discrepancy in the auditors' report, it is clear there's a mistake and "that should be a solution." He said that a city like Concord that has 40,000 people there are many checks and balances. Mr. Hartnet asked how much the auditors would charge to make recommendations. Mr. Bellville said that one of the auditors had already come in to offer a solution. He said that people do not seem to feel there is a problem and that is why the push "fizzled out."

Mr. Zavorotny asked the committee what they wanted to do. Mr. Hartnet spoke up, saying "put the people involved together and get them to sit down and talk." Mr. Zavorotny said he heard that the committee wants to see the auditors' report, their letter, and for checks and balances to be instituted since the town clerk and tax collector is one in the same person. Mr. Darcy said the tax money is physically collected in the town office (and not in the town clerk's area). Maria Shaw was manning the office, but she hasn't been in due to a fall.

Mr. Hartnet asked if Ms. Akeley gets sick, who will collect taxes? Mr. Darcy replied that there is no deputy town clerk and it would be the same situation as in the past with the previous tax collector getting sick. He noted the RSA says that the town clerk's office only has to be open one hour a week.

Angela Schill, a member of the audience, raised her hand. When Mr. Zavorotny recognized her, she approached the committee and said she was attending the meeting as a citizen. She said the school board is entering into discussion to lower the tax rate via tuitioning in students and presented the committee with a petition signed by 67 residents urging the school board to pursue tuitioning in Winchester students.

Ms. McCosker said the Hinsdale school board is waiting for Winchester to get in touch with them.

Mr. Hartnet raised the issue of fund balance retention. He wants to put another check into place. How much money is there in SPED and in the building fund; how much will come back to the town? Mr. Bellville observed that five percent of the town's budget is set aside; Mr. Darcy verified this.

Mr. Zavorotny noted that he is opposed to the idea, stating that the money can't be used if the school holds on to it; the town wouldn't have money to offset taxes. Mr. Hartnet said there is \$300,000 in the special ed fund.

The committee plans to meet in August (on the 21st). Mr. Zavorotny will ask TA Collins for

- the auditor's report and letter,

details on how duties of the Town Clerk and Tax Collector are being handled, given they are one in the same person,

- information on balances in the trust funds, and
- year end reports

as these topics the committee agreed they want to discuss at that meeting.

Mr. MacDonell made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Major. The vote was unanimous and the meeting ended at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Dorianne Almann  
Recording Secretary