

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING JANUARY 7, 2004

Handout(s) given out tonight:

1. *Board of Selectmen FY2005 Budget Hearings (Saturdays 1/24, 1/31, 2/7)*

Members absent: L. Oates, J. Heigham

Also present: Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Selectman Paul Solomon, Town Administrator Mel Kleckner, Assistant Town Administrator Joyce Munro, Town Accountant Barbara Hagg, School Director of Finance & Administration Dr. Gerry Missal, and Treasurer Susan Kendall Freiner

Chairman Widmer called the meeting to order at 7:39 PM.

Acceptance of Minutes

The Committee discussed and the minutes of the December 3, 2003 meeting.

- *Member Hofmann made a motion, Member Stratford seconded said motion, and the Committee unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of December 3, 2003.*

Schedule of Saturday morning meetings (Handout 1)

Chairman Widmer reviewed the schedule with the Committee, and requested members to attend all of the meetings, even if the departments are not in the member's specific responsibility. The expectation is that members will have met with their department at least once prior to the Saturday morning meetings to have a handle on the department's key issues. He confirmed with Town Administrator Kleckner his budget will be submitted to the Board of Selectmen on January 12th and then given to the Warrant Committee on January 14th.

Member Stratford mentioned the School budget will be presented on January 13th to the School Committee, and it will be given to the Warrant Committee on the 14th as well. He asked Dr. Missal to attend next week's Warrant Committee meeting to help present the budget to the Committee. Member Stratford also pointed out the School Department's FY05 Budget Hearing will be held on Saturday, February 28th at the Selectmen's Meeting Room at 9 AM.

Oil Spill

Assistant Town Administrator Munro has been designated as lead person of the response team, which includes members of the School Department and many other departments.

We are trying to wrap up the Clay Pit Pond area. The storm drain system will be cleaned up shortly. The Burbank site still needs the last stage of clean up. By September 2004, we expect to conclude this project. We are still trying to identify the cause of the leak. It is important for insurance factors and whether we can make claims against a third party. Costs should not exceed \$1 million. We are currently negotiating with the environmental company that is providing the actual cleanup services, and we hope to contain those costs as best as we can.

Member Kobus asked if there was possible grant money for this project. Assistant Town Administrator Munro said it is not likely to be available.

There are also further costs than just cleanup. Assistant Town Administrator Munro cited a new tank, new landscaping needed, Town Counsel fees, and Town employees' time as examples of further costs other than cleanup.

Member Hofmann thanked Assistant Town Administrator Munro for her work and stated his concern is that the Town know what the total costs (even approximate) are for this issue. He also asked if there is any sense of the oil spill cause.

- *Member McCormick made a motion, Member Schafer seconded said motion, and with 14 members present, the Committee unanimously voted to enter into Executive Session for the purpose to discuss litigation at 7:58 PM.*

The Committee resumed from Executive Session at 8:45 PM.

Precinct meetings on Fiscal 2005 Budget

There has been a subcommittee planning another financial presentation similar to the one done after Town Meeting in the fall. Chairman Widmer said the subcommittee had initially thought for this to include precinct and Town Meeting members, but we decided to broaden it to invite all the public. There is a proposal to have four meetings, three in the evening (one at each Winn-Brook, Butler and Wellington) and one in the daytime (the daytime one at the Senior Center). This will be a collaboration of the Warrant Committee, Board of Selectmen, and School Committee, but it will overall be put on by the Warrant Committee.

Member Curtis asked what is it that we want to get out of these meetings. Chairman Widmer thinks our first responsibility is to broaden the education of the public of the long-term dilemmas facing the Town, i.e., the fiscal picture over the next five years. Selectman Brownsberger added he is comfortable with Chairman Widmer's format, and he thinks the most important thing for most people to know is that we have struggled with cutting costs while still providing value to the Town. People really need to know all the things we have been doing to make the impact of the cost-cutting initiatives minimal to services.

Member Schafer said the real choice is: do we raise more money or do we cut services? Chairman Widmer responded that long-term we are faced with higher taxes, reduced services, or some combination of the two.

Member Hofmann suggested we find out what people's concerns are to see if they are things we have not looked at yet. This is an opportunity for them to express some issues to us. Member McCormick affirmed that people need to understand that revenues are not keeping up with costs.

Member Hobbs is not sure how meaningfully people will say things other than what we've already heard since they have not had time to digest the presentation. Maybe on the last night, there could be more of a quest from the people.

The Committee decided to have three meetings:

- **Wednesday, January 28th at 7:00 PM (Butler)**
- **Tuesday, February 3rd at 2 PM (Senior Center)**
- **Thursday, February 12th at 7:00 PM (Winn-Brook)**

Chairman Widmer sees three brief presentations: long-term picture (Robie), long-term capital, and something brief on the FY05 Budget. Member Hofmann suggested that Town Administrator Kleckner should mention how he got to a balanced budget from the projected deficit initially anticipated. However, this should not turn into the budget discussion hearings that occur around Town Meeting time.

The Committee discussed the fact that we focus on the long-term areas and not things within the FY05 Budget. Member Stratford will confirm with the Schools those meeting dates, and Selectman Brownsberger will confirm February 3rd with the Senior Center.

Other

Member Hofmann made a motion, and it voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell

Recording Clerk