

Board of Selectmen Meeting: February 17, 2015

Present: Searle, Gibbs, Tsagaris, Murphy (McCauley was absent)

Also Present: Larsen, Jop

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

Announcements: Ms. Searle noted that when the old MLP was demolished one of the goals was to see how much of the building material could be recycled. She announced that a 98.5% recycling rate was achieved, which was greater than expected and the project itself was \$30,000 under budget. Ms. Searle also noted the great job the DPW, MLP, Police & Fire have been doing over the past couple weeks during the various snow storms. She also reminded viewers to patronize the local merchants.

Ms. Gibbs announced that the Town Government Study Committee would like to solicit input from the public. They will be holding two meetings next week to garner information from residents regarding how well town government functions and meets the needs of residents. The first meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 24 at 7:30pm and the second meeting will be held on Friday, February 27 at 9:30am.

1. Citizen Speak

None.

2. Executive Director's Update

The Board voted (4-0) to approve the minutes of January 5, 2015.

Mr. Larsen explained that Wellesley is among the minority of communities that do not have abbreviated Friday Town Hall hours, at least during the summer months. He is proposing a pilot for the upcoming summer whereby the Town Hall would be closed on Fridays during the months of July and August. Employees would work the same number of hours, albeit spread over 4 days vs. 5. This would save one commute cycle for employees and it would enable the shutdown of the building for an extended period each weekend, which would translate into lower air conditioning costs. As in other communities, the plan would be for Town Hall to be open late one evening each week. It is hoped that the residents and other customers would find the revised hours helpful. If the Board is supportive of the idea, Mr. Larsen will work with the various Department heads to develop a detailed proposal.

The Board expressed its tentative support for this idea and will make a final decision upon receipt of the detailed proposal. It was also acknowledged that a concerted effort would be required to make the public aware of the change in hours.

Mr. Larsen reported the hiring of a new building inspector. **The Board voted (4-0) to appoint Socrates Sirafos as a local inspector with a term to expire on June 30, 2015.**

Mr. Larsen reviewed the request received from the Department of Public Works for a supplemental snow & ice appropriation. **The Board vote (4-0) to authorize a \$400,000 supplemental appropriation to the DPW's FY15 Winter Maintenance Appropriation.**

3. Town-Wide Financial Plan Update

Sheryl Strother, Finance Director, joined the Board and Mr. Larsen made a presentation regarding the FY16 budget. The budgets as currently submitted by the various Town departments continue to show a \$2.4 million deficit. Mr. Larsen presented one scenario for closing this deficit through a combination of:

- \$150,000 of additional revenue
- \$2,076,000 of spending reductions
- \$125,000 increased use of Free Cash

Mr. Larsen also reviewed an allocation of the proposed spending reductions by department, split between capital and operating. These reductions will be viewed as painful by all of the impacted departments, but closure of the budget is a “zero-sum” game, i.e., any lessening of the reductions in one area will need to be offset by greater reductions elsewhere.

Mr. Larsen will forward a copy of the related schedules to Advisory and the Department heads, and the Board will discuss the matter further at its next meeting. In addition, Mr. Larsen will put forth a plan for achieving the \$200,000 of spending reductions assigned to the Selectmen.

4. Annual Town Meeting Preparation

None.

5. School Facilities Update

Mr. Larsen provided a brief update on the local activities of the School Facilities Committee. The Committee has been relatively inactive for a number of months, pending Town Meeting action on the North 40 matter. The Committee has resumed meeting, and will be seeking the following appropriations at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting:

- \$50,000 for continued analysis of scenarios for the renovation/replacement of the Hardy, Hunnewell and Upham elementary schools.
- \$50,000 for a feasibility study of the possibility of expanding the PAWS Pre-School.

At the Committee’s most recent meeting, Kien Ho from Beta (Town’s traffic consultant) made a presentation regarding the potential traffic implications of various elementary school renovation/replacement scenarios. Principal among Mr. Ho’s points were the following:

- It would be advantageous to maintain a 2nd elementary school south of Route 9 and the railroad tracks (i.e., Hunnewell School). This would avoid incremental traffic volume at the intersection of Central Street and Weston Road during the AM commute. This intersection is already operating above capacity.
- Renovation of the existing Hardy School or construction of a new school on that site would not be more advantageous than a new school on the North 40 site. Much of the traffic going to the Hardy School in the morning crossed Route 9 at Weston Road, and travelling a few more blocks south on Weston Road would not have a significant impact.

- Further traffic analysis will require clarification of how the School Districts will be redefined as a result of the school renovation plans. Mr. Ho sees opportunities to positively impact traffic via redistricting.

In discussing Mr. Ho's report, the SFC also reviewed a map of the School Districts with the traffic impediments of Route 9 and the railroad tracks clearly delineated. In reviewing that map the Committee recognized the merits of a districting scenario whereby:

- Bates and a new school at Upham would accommodate all of the current Hardy, Bates, Upham and Sprague students living north of Route 9.
- Sprague would accommodate all of the current Hardy and Sprague students living between Route 9 and the railroad tracks.
- A renovated/new school at Hunnewell would accommodate all of the existing Hunnewell and Sprague students living south of the railroad tracks.

Such a scenario could potentially have a significant, favorable impact on traffic flows within the Town.

Mr. Murphy provided additional perspective on the SFC's deliberations.

6. Appointment of Special Counsel

Mr. Larsen reported the Planning Board has requested the appointment of Jonathan Witten as Special Counsel to the Planning Board in connection with the Board of Selectmen's lawsuit against the Planning Board concerning the recent Tolles-Parsons project denial. Mr. Witten has been recommended by Town Counsel, and Sarah Preston, Chair of the Planning has interviewed Mr. Witten.

The Board voted (4-0) to appoint Jonathan Witten as Special Counsel to represent the Planning Board on the Tolles-Parsons Appeal.

7. Old/New Business

None.

At 7:30 the meeting was adjourned.

Documents Presented:

- Town-Wide Financial Plan update
- Traffic barriers to School-related traffic circulation