

Monday, February 9, 2009

This regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held this evening in the Juliani Meeting Room, Town Hall. In attendance were: Gregory B. Mills, Chair, Barbara D. Searle, Vice Chair, Owen H. Dugan., Secretary, Harriet S. Warshaw and Katherine L. Babson, Jr. (9:15pm). Also in attendance were Hans Larsen, Executive Director, Christopher J. Ketchen, Deputy Director, Terrance Connolly, Deputy Director and Albert S. Robinson, Town Counsel. The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Warrant #32 was executed in the amount of \$3,256,421.02.

1. Citizen Speak

Joan Gaughan and Neal Seaborn, members of the Natural Resources Commission, asked the Board of Selectmen to provide a letter that guarantees an accessible 8 foot wide pedestrian corridor from Washington Street to the Lower Falls DCR Bridge.

2. Executive Director's Update

Approval of January 28, 2009 Minutes

Dugan moved, Searle seconded and the Board voted (4-0) to approve the minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

3. Town-Wide Financial Plan

Mr. Larsen presented the first draft of the Town-wide Financial Plan, including the Five year Capital Plan. Mr. Larsen outlined financial planning challenges including a reduction in state aid, declining local revenues, new high school, facilities maintenance needs, health insurance changes, and resumption of pension funding. Mr. Larsen stated that although an override will not be necessary in FY10, it seems very likely in FY11. Initial planning has 5% growth for schools and 2.5 % for other departments for FY11. Mr. Larsen outlined the Town's facilities maintenance needs which have not been adequately funded in the operating budget. Mr. Larsen reviewed the FY10 Sources and Uses, showing a balanced budget in FY10 with a \$590,000 use of Free Cash. The projected Sources and Uses for FY11 showed a \$2,500,000 deficit. Mr. Larsen reviewed the Town's Reserves trends, cost saving initiatives, benchmarking, and reengineering initiatives.

Ms. Warshaw believes that we should start thinking about the FY11 budget and its challenges now. Mr. Mills expressed interest in benchmarking how we deliver our services with similar towns in our area.

4. Senior Center

Ms. Warshaw was joined by, Linda Cohen, Chair of the Council on Aging, and Gayle Thieme, Director of Senior Services, to report on the Tolles-Parsons Center Feasibility Study. Ms. Warshaw showed an initial concept plan of a senior center to be located at 496 Washington Street (the former American Legion site). The architect's initial project cost is \$5,830,493. Net

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cost for Town would be \$5,005,293 after the Tolles bequest of \$825,000. Ms. Warshaw reviewed a pro forma budget for FY10 of 244,355 a \$33,000 increase over the present budget. Ms. Warshaw reviewed some benchmark information of other Senior Centers in our area. Ms. Warshaw discussed several parking mitigation options. There are 34 on-site parking spaces. The Board of Selectmen will be seeking an appropriation at the Annual Town Meeting for detail design and bidding costs. The full appropriation will be sought at a fall Special Town Meeting. Ms. Thieme noted that seniors like the idea of a centrally located facility and noted the proximity to existing senior housing, the library, and Town Hall. Mr. Mills asked about opportunities for additional funding sources for the Senior Center. Mr. Larsen would like to get the Board of Selectmen's support for going forward to Town Meeting with this project. The detail design and bid documents would be prepared by the PBC and funded through Free Cash. Mr. Dugan asked about the interaction of the Senior Center with the school next door. Mr. Mills, Mr. Dugan and Ms. Seale all expressed their support for this project.

5. High School Traffic Study

Chief of Police Terrence Cunningham and Kien Ho, BETA Group joined the Board for discussion on the High School Project PSI Traffic Study. Ms. Babson again informed that Board that she is considering herself an applicant in the Board of Selectmen's review of the High School Project. Mr. Mills explained the Board of Selectmen's role in the PSI process, particularly related to this project. Mr. Larsen was asked by the Board to review the adverse impact of the proposed plan on Paine Street, dedicating a single driveway for busses only, and to develop a contingency plan after the post construction project review is completed.

Mr. Larsen showed a newly developed circulation plan. The fundamental change is rerouting the bus entrance to Smith Street exiting through the Peck Avenue Extension. A gate controlled by the buses would be located at both the entrance and exit. Both entrances on Rice Street could then become two way rather than one way driveways. Mr. Larsen noted that Andrew Keough, High School principal, was supportive of this revised circulation plan.

Mr. Ho noted that a follow-up study would be an important part of this or any circulation pattern.

Chief Cunningham expressed his support for the revised circulation pattern.

Liz Peart, HSH, explained that the majority of buses currently enter the site from Rice Street.

Mr. Dugan asked whether exclusive right turn lanes on Smith Street would be helpful.

Mr. Ho noted that a right turn lane could be helpful for vehicles leaving the site at the risk of drop-offs occurring in the exclusive right turn lanes rather than on the site.

Ms. Warshaw sees this plan as a significant improvement to the original plan. Ms. Warshaw asked about the new bus drop-off point.

Wayne Keefner, SMMA, explained that the new bus drop-off area enters the school in the same cafeteria and lobby area.

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Mike Eby, Chair of the PBC, outlined some concerns with the new circulation plan but is willing to investigate them further if asked.

Ms. Babson noted that the new plan follows the original objectives set forth by the School Committee.

Ms. Peart explained that this new plan does not add to or change the impacted intersections as it is primarily a site circulation change.

Ms. Searle noted that the plan is a big improvement.

Marlene Allen, School Committee and Permanent Parking Group, stated that her groups were trying to avoid two-way traffic at the entrances and pedestrians crossing in front of parent drivers. Ms. Allen suggested that students on the buses use the secondary school entrance near Seaver Street instead of the proposed entrance.

Elizabeth Senecal, 5 Paine Street, asked if Peck Avenue was considered as a vehicle access point rather than only used for buses. She suggested alternatives and asked if using Peck Avenue would help alleviate congestion in the general area.

Ken Shepsle, 35 Forest Street, supported the idea of exclusive right turn lanes on Rice Street and perhaps buses could double stack at the new bus drop-off location. Mr. Shepsle also believes that there should be a curb cut for emergency vehicles to enter the parking lot through Peck Avenue.

Lana Peta, 30 Park Avenue, said that Peck Avenue is a dangerous intersection and takes skill to navigate the area. She also likes the idea of improvements to the Wellesley Avenue traffic island. Ms. Peta believes that pedestrian safety should be looked at if Peck Avenue is used by buses.

Gene Mayell, 27 Seaver Street, stated that Seaver Street is a cut through street with vehicles travelling at high rates of speed. She feels that opening Seaver Street to vehicles other than buses is potentially dangerous and unsafe. She feels that buses should drop off in front of the building in order to encourage increased ridership.

Rise Shepsly, 35 Forest Street, addressed the Forest and Paine intersection mitigation options. One option was land taking. Where would crosswalk go? There are two driveways across the street. If turning radius is increased would it encourage speeding? Ms. Shepsly is concerned with safety at the intersection and the telephone pole is the chief obstacle to improving site distance.

Mary Anne MacDonald, 80 Seaver Street, thanked the Board and fully supports the new plan.

Anita Alden, 62 Seaver Street, thanked the Board for their efforts.

Mr. Mills stated the Board would make their decision on February 23, 2009.

Ms. Babson noted that there is a meeting with the high school neighbors tomorrow and that the Planning Board's second session of Public Hearing is on February 23, 2009 at 9:00 pm

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School Committee Busing Proposal

Marlene Allen, Suzy Littlefield, and Suzi Newman represented the School Committee for this discussion. Ms. Allen outlined the background of cuts to the School Committee transportation budget as well as the assumptions used to develop this busing proposal. Total cost of 4 buses for 4 hours each is \$183,600. The School Committee is requesting a one year only bus “balance” appropriation for FY10 of \$50,000 to assist in the phasing in of an effective busing program at Wellesley High School.

Rusty Kellogg, Chair of the Advisory Committee, expressed their concern about what would happen if the stand-alone article failed.

Babson moved, Searle seconded and the Board of Selectmen voted (5-0) to support the School Committee’s request for a one year only bus balance appropriation for FY10 of \$50,000 in addition to the amount requested by the School Committee under Article 8 of the Annual Town Meeting. The \$50,000 would be taken from Free Cash.

Old Business/ New Business

- 27 Washington Street - Lower Falls DCR Bridge

Mr. Larsen reported that the current plan for the redevelopment of 27 Washington Street preserves pedestrian access to the bridge. Approximately half of the Town’s Right of Way to the bridge from Washington Street will remain open space with the other half used for public parking.

Ms. Warshaw suggested a possible land swap with the NRC for additional parking at Morton Circle for the proposed Senior Center. The Board will investigate this further before making any decisions.

Ms. Dugan asked where the funding for the bridge would come from. Ms. Searle explained the financial involvement of the state, the Town of Wellesley and the City of Newton.

At 11:15 p.m. the Board was polled all aye to go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy for negotiations with non-union personnel.