

**FINAL**



**WEARE BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 8, 2007 \* 6:00 PM  
WEARE TOWN OFFICES**

**PRESENT:** JOSEPH FIALA, VICE-CHAIR, DONNA OSBORNE, SELECTMAN, THOMAS CLOW, SELECTMAN, A. CRAIG SLATTUM, SELECTMAN.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:** Fred Ventresco  
**RECORDING SECRETARY:** Jennifer Dutch

**GUESTS:** Catherine Courtemarche, Rodman Wilson, Richard Butt, Mike Atkinson, Frank Campana, Christine Hague, Greg Begin, Donna Meuse, Judy Rogers, Carl Knapp, Richard Townes, Tina Pelletier, Terry Knowles, Ruth Jones, Rod Betts, Tim Savaria, Nick Frasca, Sherry Burdick, Betty Straw, Malcolm Wright, Matt Esenwine, Brenda Lashway, Will Ottery, Jerry Little, Bob Nelson, David Hunt, Bill Tiffany.

**6:01 PM Vice-Chair Joseph Fiala called the meeting to order.**

**1. Public Participation**

*Richard Townes:* Mr. Townes said that he was appearing before the Board of Selectmen on behalf of his son, Eldin Townes. He said that the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) informed his son that, in order to be issued a building permit for Huntington Hill Road, he would need approval from the Board of Selectmen. The ZBA set the conditions that Eldin Townes would need to upgrade the road based on the guidance of the road agent and give assurances that the lot would not be subdivided. The Board of Selectmen needs to give permission to start the improvements to Huntington Hill Road.

Carl Knapp said that he has been working with Eldin Townes for six months on what needs to be done to improve Huntington Hill Road. He fully understands what needs to be done and will make the improvements. Joseph Fiala asked if Carl Knapp was satisfied with what would be done. Carl Knapp said that he was satisfied.

**ACTION:** Donna Osborne moved and Thomas Clow seconded that the Board of Selectmen allow Eldin Townes III to upgrade Huntington Hill Road, a Class 6 road, with road agent approval. Discussion: Craig Slattum asked how long the road was. Richard Townes said that the improvements would include about 200 feet, from where the road had already undergone some improvements to the Townes property line. The improvements include cutting trees, widening the road as far as boundaries allow, about 20 feet, and graveling the road. There will be no expense to the town. Vote: The motion passed 4-0-0.

Richard Townes said that he had another matter he wanted to speak to the Board about. He said that there had been discussion recently about the fact that town and school building projects are exempt from the building rules that apply to the public.

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He said that he would urge the Board of Selectmen to consider passing an article that would say that no matter who or what an entity is, all should follow the same rules and regulations. There should be no exemptions. Joseph Fiala suggested that Mr. Townes submit a warrant article on this issue. Mr. Townes replied that he thinks it is a safety issue. He noted that an individual needs the Board's permission before breaking ground. However, for example, the school broke ground before having the septic system approved. He said that the school should have followed the same rules that individuals follow.

Thomas Clow said that he was not sure if something that the Board of Selectmen passed would apply to the school since the school district is a different entity than the town. He said that he would need more information on how a warrant article would be applicable.

Mr. Townes said that the town has the power to strengthen codes that are in place. For example, the state roof recommendation is not as strict as the town requirement. Mr. Townes said that he would want the same rules to apply to all building projects; otherwise, once a project is started it would mean throwing money at it to make it safe. All projects should be on the same level.

Joseph Fiala said that he appreciated Mr. Townes' comment, but it may not be the Board of Selectmen's role. Mr. Townes said that it should be up to the voter's with a warrant article. Joseph Fiala suggested that Mr. Townes draft the warrant article.

*Richard Butt:* Mr. Butt said that he was concerned about the General Fund Balance. He said that, over the past few years, the Board of Selectmen has spent down the General Fund and it is no longer at the percent recommended by the DRA. He noted that last year, the Board borrowed money in order to fulfill its commitments. Mr. Butt pointed out that the fund balance is even lower this year than last year. He asked what plans the Board of Selectmen had to build up the General Fund Balance so that they would not need to borrow money again. Joseph Fiala noted that the revenues that set the tax rate were under-reported. Richard Butt pointed out that 2005 had an error that resulted in less revenue. Tina Pelletier responded that one reason is the late date for setting the tax rate and sending out the tax bills. This also meant a late start for the auditors.

Richard Butt said that his concern is that the General Fund Balance is running very low, nowhere near the DRA recommendation. He noted that the General Fund was running a deficit in November and December. Mr. Butt said that it reached the point where there is not enough revenue coming in and that is when the undesignated fund balance usually covers. However, it is not enough. Mr. Butt said that he would like to know what the Board will do to build up the General Fund Balance.

Donna Osborne said that the Board has not yet held those discussions. Joseph Fiala said that they may consider addressing it with overlay when they set the tax rate. He said that he would support overlay only within reason of being safe and would not want to inflate more than necessary.

Richard Butt said that it is an issue that needs to be discussed.

Craig Slattum noted that, in the past, the town had a bridge bond that could be used as cash flow if needed. He noted that the flip side of increasing the General Fund Balance is raising taxes. He noted that the books have not been closed yet and there may be a balance that could go to surplus. Tina Pelletier said that it may be \$80,000.

Richard Butt said that he also had a question about how the town pays for the School Resource Officer. He noted that the Town of Weare pays 100% of the SRO salary and John Stark pays 70%. This means that the taxpayers in Weare are paying 170% of the SRO salary. He said that he feels this is a problem and unfair to the taxpayers. Donna Osborne said that she thought Tina Pelletier and Chief Begin were

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working on the problem. Richard Butt said that it's like taking money out of both his pockets. Craig Slattum noted that the funds from John Stark goes into the Weare General Fund. Mr. Butt replied that it is a question as to where it actually goes. He said that it would be fair to the Weare taxpayer to tax only part of the salary. Joseph Fiala said that they would look into the numbers to see what comes up.

Richard Butt noted that there was an error in setting the tax rate with an underestimate of revenue from the Clerk's Office. This was a \$250,000 hit to the taxpayers of Weare. He said that last year there was an error in the current use tax. This means that there have been errors for two years in a row. Mr. Butt asked what the Board was doing to assure that the numbers are double-checked. He said that he feels it is a process problem that is causing the error and that there needs to be a process in place where Department Heads who generate revenue sign off that their estimates are correct and the numbers are accurate. Joseph Fiala noted that financial help has changed recently and that Tina Pelletier and Fred Ventresco are working together to smooth out the process. He said that he appreciated the fact that Mr. Butt brought the issue to the Board's attention.

*Frank Campana:* Mr. Campana asked what types of materials would be available for the public during next week's Public Hearing. He suggested providing up-to-date budget numbers and sample warrants as handouts. Joseph Fiala said that he agreed that a sample warrant would be appropriate. Fred Ventresco said that he had most of them ready to go, except for the Planning Board items. Joseph Fiala asked Mr. Campana what information had been provided in the past. Mr. Campana replied that there were years where no information was provided, but the past few years there had been some information provided. He said that he would not want to waste paper, but some information is useful.

Mr. Campana said that he also wanted to comment on the idea of increasing the General Fund through overlay. He said that, while it is an approved way of increasing the General Fund Balance, and the State advisors support it, he does not feel that it should be done because the taxpayers do not really get to see what they are being taxed for. Mr. Campana also noted that, at the last meeting, the Board had difficulty explaining what it is. He said that it may be an accepted practice, but it is a poor practice.

Mr. Campana said that, in the past, the Board had used this process to offset costs so that it would seem like expensive projects actually cost less than they really did. He said that the General Fund should be more like a bank account and that the taxpayers should know what is coming out of it. He said that the current situation began years ago and other Boards had spent down the General Fund. However, Mr. Campana said that he did not feel it was the responsibility of the taxpayers to dig the current Board out of the hole it was in. Joseph Fiala pointed out that the Board had the opportunity to do something similar this year, but did not do it.

Richard Butt said that he would not be as kind to the current Board. He said that, while the trend was set many years ago, the current Board spent down the General Fund over the past two years. They spent down the General Fund about \$435,000. If that \$435,000 were added back in, the General Fund Balance would be at the minimum 5% recommended by the DRA. Richard Butt said that the Board should take a hard look at the issue before offsetting the General Fund.

## 2. Department Head Reports

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*Police Chief:* Police Chief Greg Begin said that there was a change of Police Dogs. The dog that the Sweeney Family had donated was tested, but was so focused on protection, that he did not want to do tracking. The Sweeneys were thrilled to take him back and, in return, paid for a replacement. The dog was purchased from a vendor in Rhode Island. It is a much smaller dog, so residents may notice a difference. However, she is very good-natured and has a drive to do the job. Officer Kelley will start training her in March.

Joseph Fiala asked if there should be a Public Hearing to accept the donation of the second dog. Chief Begin said that they felt that the public hearing to accept the first dog covered the second dog because it was just a swap. Fred Ventresco said that he looked at it as a trade, but would contact the Local Government Center and ask if a second Public Hearing was necessary.

Chief Begin noted that last weekend's events were a big hit to the Police Overtime budget. One incident lasted from 10 PM Friday to 7 AM Saturday including ambulance and fire. The person involved has been under guard 24 hours a day until his arrangement, which also includes overtime. A second incident with a suicide threat at the Everett Dam included search teams with fire, ambulance, and State police involvement. There was even a helicopter involved in the search. The person came out of the woods and gave in to Police. Donna Osborne asked if there were a process for charging the person for a false alarm. Chief Begin said they were looking into it. Fish and Game has a process, but Chief Begin said that he did not know if something similar would apply in this situation. He said that he wanted to make the Board aware of the Overtime budget numbers.

*Health/Welfare Officer* – Donna Meuse said that she noted that the small increase that she requested for the Health Officer salary was removed from the budget. She said that she would like to know the reason. Joseph Fiala that while Donna Meuse clearly does more than many Health Officer, when the Board looked into pay for Health Officers, the pay was at the top of the scale. Donna Meuse replied that she did not think the comparison was fair because it did not take into account what she does compared to other Health Officer. Craig Slattum noted that all salary increases were removed. Fred Ventresco pointed out that the Health Officer salary comparison did not include information on number of years served and Donna Meuse has been the Weare Health Officer for twelve years. Donna Meuse added that, in the twelve years that she has served as Health Officer, this is the first time that she has asked for an increase. She said that after twelve years an additional \$700 is a small increase. Donna Osborne said that there were a lot of pay raises requested, such as the Fire Department requesting an increase of \$2 per hour, that need to be discussed.

Donna Meuse said that she works hard as the Health Officer. For example, over the past month she responded to two complaints and will be attending four meetings this month. She said that she will need to take annual leave to attend some of the meetings. She said that it would have been respectful to at least let her know that the increase had been removed. Joseph Fiala said that the Board looked at all stipends and also conducted the comparison to see what other Health Officers were making. Donna Meuse said that after twelve years of doing a good job as the Health Officer she would like the Board to consider her request for a small increase.

### *Assessor's Office*

Judy Rogers of the Assessor's Office shared a memo requesting that the Board of Selectmen consider two warrant articles for voters for March. The first is the Elderly Exemption and the second is the Disabled Exemption. She said that the Board needs to determine the numbers.

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Craig Slattum asked why the \$250,000 amount only increased to \$300,000 that is less than the others. Judy Rogers explained that it had been changed by a previous assessor while the others had not been changed. Judy Rogers said that, since the revaluation, the increases are necessary because it puts them back to the same as before. The revaluation doubled so the exemptions double. It could go higher or lower based on the Board. Thomas Clow asked what formula was used in the past. Judy Rogers responded that the State has limits, but it is ultimately set by the Board. Thomas Clow asked how the current amounts were set. Judy Rogers said that it was based on the State recommendation, but set by the Board.

Judy Rogers pointed out that the Disability Exemption is below State standards. Joseph Fiala asked when warrant articles are due. Fred Ventresco replied they are due by Monday.

Craig Slattum noted that it is difficult to make up for ten years in one year. He said that the amounts should be increased a little each year. He suggested raising the income level to \$32,000. Thomas Clow said that it should be based on percent increases over the ten years. He said that he was more comfortable with \$35,000. Fred Ventresco noted that most retirees have an income in the mid-\$30,000 range. Setting the income level at \$35,000 may exclude all the recipients. Craig Slattum said he thought that was a good point. Fred Ventresco said that it is important to consider what the average retiree earns. Judy Rogers said that they use a form to determine eligibility that includes income, checking account, assets. They look at everything. Craig Slattum said that he was not comfortable with \$35,000 because he felt it would make a big impact. Joseph Fiala suggested raising the income level at 1% a year over the ten years so it would be a 10% increase. That would mean the single rate would go from \$30,000 to \$33,000. He suggested doing the same with the Disabled Exemption, except making sure it was set at the State minimum. Fred Ventresco noted that the State does not require that the town have a Disability Exemption, but does set minimums if the Town does choose to have one.

**ACTION:** Joseph Fiala moved and Thomas Clow seconded to accept the warrant article related to assessing as follows:

### Elderly

#### Exemption Amounts

35,000 to 70,000

45,000 to 90,000

250,000 to 300,00

### Income Limits

30,000 to 33,000

40,000 to 44,000

75,000 to 80,000

### Disabled

#### Exemption Amounts

30,000 to 60,000

### Income Limits

10,000 to 13,400

12,000 to 20,400

30,000 to 35,000

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Discussion: Craig Slattum asked if it would go into effect in 2007. Judy Rogers confirmed that it would.

### *Library*

Christine Hague noted that at the last meeting one library CIP request related to funding a building consultant. She said that they found out that the reason the item was not on the CIP is that they had listed the entire library fund amount and the CIP committee thought that the library would use that money to cover the cost of the building consultant. She said that she is not sure if they will be able to put together a warrant article by the due date. She said that, if it is not included in the CIP, the library trustees would need to gross budget the item. That would be somewhat shocking on the library budget. She said that she just wanted to give the Board an idea of the issue.

### *Joint Loss Management Committee*

Christine Hague said that the State requires a Joint Loss Management Committee. The State also requires that the Joint Loss Management Committee work on health and safety policies and conduct a review of town buildings. Chris Hague said that the Joint Loss Management Committee has started meeting to review policies and has completed the inspection of the buildings. Now that the Committee has completed the inspection, the report needs to be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen and then sent to the State. She said that the buildings included in the inspections include the Town Hall, Town Offices, and Public Works shed. They followed a checklist template. Craig Slattum asked if there were physical corrections required. Christine Hague replied that there are.

Christine Hague said that the report needs to be filed soon. Joseph Fiala said that he would sign the report and send it in. Christine Hague said that the Board did not need to sign the report, just review it.

Craig Slattum noted that there were some major money items included. Christine Hague said that she spoke with the Local Government Center and others and all reassured her that they are not looking for immediate remedy to the problems. They want to make sure that there is a plan in place to address the issues. For example, the Fire Marshal inspected the library and noticed that there needed to be smoke detectors in some areas where there are none. With the wiring involved, it is an expense the library could not do right away. The trustees are looking at the issue and budgeting for it. That is what should come from the Joint Loss Management Committee's report. It would be a worse situation if the town did not file a report.

Thomas Clow asked why recreational facilities were not inspected. Christine Hague replied that the members of the committee were new. She said that there is a lot of guidance in the statutes, but they do not spell out exactly what to inspect. The Committee knew that the park had been addressed in the spring and decided to focus on buildings that were the most important to public and employee safety. She said that they could include more later on. She said that the Committee is open to input and all of the meetings are public meetings.

### *Historical Society*

Terry Knowles reported on a situation involving the Savaria property. She said that they received a letter from Attorney Nick Frasca asking that the town transfer two properties to his clients, the Savarias, without consideration because it was Mildred Hill's intent that the three lots be conveyed as one.

Terry Knowles said that there are three tracts of land, labeled A, B, and C. She said that tract C is undisputed and the Savarias own it. The other two tracts, A and B, are disputed. Terry Knowles said that she reviewed the materials and Mildred Hall

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received three separate deeds for the property. Only tract C was conveyed to the Savarias. The other two tracts of land were part of Mildred Hall's estate and passed to the town of Weare in trust as directed in her will. Terry Knowles said that their recommendation was that the Town of Weare cannot and should not transfer the land to the Savarias. She said that there was no indication in any of the materials, no contract, MOU, or other item, to indicate that the two tracts of land were part of the sale. Terry Knowles noted that the town had made the mistake of taxing the property as one. She noted that tract B included the driveway to the Savaria's home. She said that the town could offer to sell that parcel to the Savarias, however, there should be discussion on Tract A. She said that, in order to sell the land, there would need to be a warrant article authorizing the town to sell the land. She said that the town should sell the land, not convey it without consideration. Joseph Fiala asked if the Board could do it themselves. Terry Knowles said that it could not since the land is held in trust.

Attorney Nick Frasca asked to speak on behalf of his clients, the Savarias. He said that they believed that it was Mildred Hall's intent to convey to property as one parcel and that they were separate due to a mistake. Joseph Fiala asked what the evidence was to support that claim. Attorney Fiala said that he would show appraisals that combined the properties as one. He noted that the Savarias brought this issue to the town because they wanted to take care of it. He noted that the Savarias and the prior owner had paid taxes on the entire property as one lot. Terry Knowles noted that the letter that Attorney Frasca sent to the town indicates that the town owns the land. Attorney Savaria said that it was true, but they feel it is a mistake. Thomas Clow asked what boundaries were found during the title search. Attorney Frasca said that the impression of the neighbors and the Savarias was that Mildred Hall owned all three tracts as one. Mr. Savaria said that when he purchased the property, he purchased .78 acres and thought it was the whole lot. Craig Slattum asked if Mildred Hall paid separate tax bills on the three tracts. Attorney Frasca said that he would need to research the tax record to find that information. He noted that there were only two deeds, because one deed had never been probated.

Joseph Fiala noted that the legal opinion from the town's attorney did not agree. Attorney Frasca asked if he could see a copy of the attorney's opinion. Joseph Fiala replied that it was protected by attorney client privilege. Attorney Frasca said that he had been open with all of the materials that he had found and disclosed all of the facts. He felt the town should deal openly as well. Donna Osborne pointed out that the town paid its attorney and was entitled to the information, but not required to share it.

Thomas Clow asked what boundaries were listed on the mortgage. Attorney Frasca said that the mortgage would be based on the deed so if the deed is wrong, the mortgage is wrong. Craig Slattum noted that the three parcels were more than .78 acres. Attorney Frasca said that the Savarias thought they were purchasing the tax map boundaries and had been paying taxes on it ever since. Terry Knowles said what they would need is a document signed by Mildred Hall showing her intent, something like a purchase and sales agreement. Donna Osborne said that there seems to be a lot of what ifs, not facts. Joseph Fiala said that there is an assumption that it was accidental, but the Board cannot make that assumption. Terry Knowles said that the land is held in trust for the town, so it cannot be given away.

Attorney Frasca said that he questioned the value of the land to anyone but the Savarias. One parcel includes their driveway and leech field while the other is their back yard. Terry Knowles said that Lot A may hold value for the abutters. Joseph Fiala asked if there were a time limit. Terry Knowles said that they would have needed to own the property for over twenty years. That is not the case. She said that they are entitled to a refund of the taxes they paid.

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Thomas Clow asked what the next step should be. Terry Knowles said that the property should be appraised and there should be a warrant article giving permission for the town to sell the land. Thomas Clow said that the warrant article is necessary so that the town could sell the land if needed. He said if the warrant article is not there, the town cannot sell it. Then the appraisal is also needed. Terry Knowles said that the trust would pay for the appraisal. She said that the Board should arrange for the appraisal and then submit the bill to the trust. Thomas Clow asked who would construct the warrant article. Fred Ventresco asked if it needed a specific dollar amount. Terry Knowles said that it did not need a specific dollar amount, just a description because the taxpayers need to know what it is for. Fred Ventresco said that he would have Laura draft the warrant article.

*Joseph Fiala announced a short break at 8:12 PM.  
The meeting resumed at 8:16 PM.*

**ACTION:** Thomas Clow moved and Craig Slattum seconded to authorize the Board of Selectmen to sign manifests and order the Treasurer to sign checks dated January 11, 2007.

Accounts Payable	\$245,389.39
Gross Payroll	<u>\$ 62,008.02</u> (includes Credit Union and Taxes, Monthly Fire)
Total	\$310,397.41

Vote: The motion passed 4-0-0.

Donna Osborne noted that the Board was waiting for the next meeting to approve the December Minutes.

Joseph Fiala asked about finishing the audit. Tina Pelletier said that there is a balance in the account. She said that they would finish '05 when working on '06.

**3. Administrative Report**

*Piano Donation*

Fred Ventresco said that a resident of Weare has offered to donate a Baldwin Piano to the town. He said that it is a mid-sized piano in good shape. He said that all that would be needed is to pick it up. It is an outright donation to the town. He said that he did not know the value of the piano, but there would need to be a Public Hearing if the value were over \$500. He said that the owner would like to get rid of it as soon as possible. Craig Slattum asked how the piano would be picked up. Joseph Fiala asked Fred Ventresco to contact Janet Berry, who works on pianos. He said that Janet Berry also moves pianos and he has helped her in the past. Joseph Fiala added that he would be willing to help move the piano.

*Custodial Estimates*

Fred Ventresco said that he contacted a cleaning company for an estimate of what it would cost to clean the Town Hall, Town Offices, and Safety Complex. He said that it would cost \$308 per week for three cleanings at the Town Offices and one at the Town Hall. It would also cost \$224 per week to clean the Police and Fire areas of the Safety Complex two times per week. Donna Osborne said that the Town Hall is used a lot and needs to be cleaned more than once a week. Thomas Clow asked how this cost compared to the budget. Fred Ventresco said that the budget includes the salary and

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materials. The cleaning service uses its own materials. Craig Slattum said that the total for the cleaning service was about \$27,600 per year. Joseph Fiala said that it would be important to make sure that they knew exactly what was expected of them so that the town gets what it needs. Fred Ventresco said that the estimate was for basics like vacuuming and dusting. He said that the cleaning service would charge extra for things like waxing the floors, but the rates would be reasonable.

Craig Slattum said that it is important to have a maintenance person. Fred Ventresco said that his concern with contracting out is that the town would lose the ability to call on someone when needed. He said that it is helpful to have someone in the building to take care of everyday needs. Also, the Safety building has areas that are off-limits and there would be logistical issues with having those areas cleaned. Fred Ventresco said that he would prefer to have an employee since the cost of contracting out is almost the same. He said that it was useful to have someone during the flooding last year and to respond to daily calls.

Thomas Clow pointed out that it is late in the budgeting process. Fred Ventresco said that they could increase the salary line. Tina Pelletier said that the salary is currently \$13,000. Joseph Fiala noted that, when he was on the School Board, they went from an employee to a contract and back to an employee.

Fred Ventresco said that maintenance is budgeted at \$5,000, janitorial supplies is at \$700, and the salary for the custodian is \$13,000. He said that he would consider adding a few more hours to make sure that the employee can do a thorough job at the custodial tasks and maintenance. He noted that, because there was no maintenance employee, other staff, such as Carl Knapp, have been doing maintenance. Fred Ventresco said that he would like to increase the custodial hours to ten and not contract it out.

Donna Osborne said that she has heard comments that the custodian should know his job description. She said that, until it is changed, he needs to stick to what is written.

Fred Ventresco mentioned that the Fire Department may present a request to increase Sharon's hours.

### *Weare Finance Committee*

Joseph Fiala invited members of the Weare Finance Committee to ask any questions they may have on the budget.

Matt Esenwine asked what the most recent budget paperwork is. Tina Pelletier said that it is the papers dated 01/02/07. This is the date of the most current revenues and operating budget. Matt Esenwine asked about '05 numbers. Tina Pelletier said that they are still waiting for the audit to be finished. The MS 5 has the most current numbers.

Matt Esenwine asked where the most Cable Exchange Fee was located. Tina Pelletier said that she went by the '06 number of \$38,000. She said that she needed to add that group account and that is why it did not print out.

Matt Esenwine said that there were two columns, one was an '07 budget without a 3.5% pay raise and one had the raise. He asked which was correct. Tina Pelletier said that the 1/02/07 budget should reflect only the 3.5% increase because that is what the Board chose to support. Joseph Fiala mentioned that there is the possibility of including the 3.5% raise in the Default budget. Craig Slattum noted that they did include raises in the default budget when he was previously on the Board. Fred Ventresco said that there was support because the merit system is part of the personnel policy. Joseph Fiala said that he would be interested in the input of the Finance Committee.

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Matt Esenwine asked about the list of warrant articles and the Ferrante Property. Fred Ventresco said that the '06 numbers are pulled from the Town Report and the '07 list includes warrant articles that the Board has selected, except for the information from the CIP committee. Fred Ventresco noted that the Board approved the Circuit Rider and Forestry Vehicle at the last meeting.

Matt Esenwine asked Fred Ventresco to review the entire list of Warrant Articles. Fred Ventresco said they include:

### *Operating Budget*

#### *Road Account*

Joseph Fiala noted that the road account increased from \$25,000 to \$35,000 due to the cost of asphalt.

*Waste* (the transfer station and household hazardous) – due to leftover from last year, this does not have an amount

#### *Police – addition of one officer*

Joseph Fiala said that the Board did not want to recommend this article. He said that the Chief had indicated that he did not want to put the warrant article forward without the Board's recommendation. Fred Ventresco said that the Chief spoke with him and said that he does want to put it forward. Joseph Fiala said that his rationale for not supporting this warrant article is that the focus should be on the Police contract and this may distract from it. Thomas Clow said that he felt that Warrant Articles that originate from town departments should have the Board's recommendation or not go forward. He said that to put it forward without recommendation would seem divisive. Craig Slattum said that he would want to be consistent, especially if this was the only warrant article that the Board would not recommend. Joseph Fiala said that putting it forward without recommendation would at least allow the voters to vote on it. David Hunt said that it was up to the Board of Selectmen to decide if the warrant article is important enough to put on there or if it would distract from the contract. He noted that he works in the recording industry where it is a practice for companies to have lower ranked artists pulled to give another artist the chance to reach number 1. Joseph Fiala said that the Board had decided not to support this Warrant Article, unless that opinion changed.

#### *CIP - \$315,334*

Thomas Clow said that he thought the CIP warrant article would be just one article. Fred Ventresco said that it might be difficult to do that since the items have different tax impacts. Thomas Clow noted that the warrant article included a grid with each item in it last year. Fred Ventresco said that, since the town is already an agent to expend for the items, then he can see how he could write one warrant article. He thanked Thomas Clow for clearing up how to do it.

#### *Cable*

#### *Cemetery*

*Library Windows* – currently at \$0 due to mistake that Christine Hague described.

#### *Fireworks*

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### *Natural Resources Inventory*

Thomas Clow noted that the Natural Resources Inventory is a first step in overall planning for the town. He said that this information is critical for making decisions.

David Hunt asked how to distinguish new warrant articles. Fred Ventresco said that they were italicized and underlined on the handout.

### *Police Contract*

#### *Communication Fund (Public Works)*

Matt Esenwine asked about the current situation with Public Works using cell phones. Carl Knapp replied that the bay station is not working, so the Public Works are using cell phones to communicate. Matt Esenwine asked about tying in with the Fire communication system. Carl Knapp explained that they are a totally different and more powerful system. They cannot all be on the same system. Matt Esenwine noted that they were requesting \$20,000. He asked what that would cover. Carl Knapp replied that it would cover \$7500 for a new bay station, 5 mobile units, 2 desk units. From there, they would replace more mobile units next year and then replace mobile units as vehicles are replaced. He noted that the best radios they have now are ones that the Fire Department discarded. He said that it is a one-time big expense, but is followed by smaller expenses over time.

#### *Abijah Bridge*

Carl Knapp explained that there are two components to the Abijah Bridge project. First is a new bridge. The State is covering 80% of the cost of the new bridge. The second is a low-level check dam. This is supported conservation as well as many others. The purpose of the dam is to prevent the upper wetlands from draining when Horace Lake is drained down. When the upper wetlands drain, it kills all the wildlife that is there. He said that they would like to be able to do both projects at the same time, but there needs to be a little more money for the dam. Brenda Lashway asked about a timeline for the project. Carl Knapp said that they would start on the bridge in the summer. Brenda Lashway asked what would happen to the project if the \$20,000 for the dam did not pass. Carl Knapp said that the Conservation fund and others are on board for the dam project.

#### *Building Needs Assessment*

Fred Ventresco said that this would be a study to look at the town buildings for planning for the future. Matt Esenwine asked what the \$35,000 would buy. Joseph Fiala said that it would pay for a study by a consultant/architectural firm. He said that it is important to have professional guidance at the early stages of planning. Fred Ventresco said that it would also include logistics. Matt Esenwine noted the second floor of the Town Hall had not been used in many years. Craig Slattum said that it was a safety issue and also the fact that it is not handicap accessible. He noted that the Town Offices elevator does not go to the second floor. He said that the study would help to determine whether it is worth putting more money into certain buildings and how to best plan for the future. Thomas Clow explained that the CIP committee said that they needed the study and asked for estimates from architectural firms to complete the study. The scope was broadened by the Board. He said that it would be important to have some expertise involved with the committee's work. Brenda Lashway asked if the Board of Selectmen would go forward with bids and hiring if it passed. Thomas Clow said that it would be done through the Building Committee. Joseph Fiala noted that the Building Committee

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would welcome additional volunteers to help out. Brenda Lashway asked if the Warrant Article was necessary if there was no Building Committee to oversee it. Joseph Fiala said that there would be others involved.

Brenda Lashway asked what would be included, like handicap accessibility, safety, cost options, longevity and others. Joe Fiala said that it would be a needs assessment looking at what is there now and what would be needed in ten years. Matt Esenwine asked if the library and town hall would be included. Joseph Fiala said that it would include any buildings that the Board wanted to include. Matt Esenwine pointed out that a lot of the buildings have problems. Joseph Fiala said that the needs assessment would help with setting priorities. Craig Slattum asked if the Safety Complex was included. Fred Ventresco said that it would include as much as they could get for \$35,000.

### *Police Contract*

Matt Esenwine noted this was new this year. Fred Ventresco said that it would be retroactive to October. David Hunt asked how it compared to last year. Fred Ventresco explained that the \$42,000 was additional to the police budget. It is only the increase that was bargained for. He said that the Board of Selectmen has the sole discretion to approve the contract. Joseph Fiala noted that the first Public Hearing on the Police Contract is Thursday at 6:30.

### *Circuit Rider Program*

Fred Ventresco said that this would hire a part-time person from the Southern NH Planning Commission to work one day per week with the Planning Board and attend Planning Board meetings. Craig Slattum said that it would be helpful to have someone to help write Planning Board articles. Joseph Fiala noted that there had been discussion around having someone on call versus at the building one day per week, but the thought was that it would be better to have someone available.

### *Forestry Vehicle*

Bill Tiffany said that the current forestry vehicle broke down twice this fall and did not make it where it needed to go. Donna Osborne asked if the vehicle had to be new and cost \$60,000. Bill Tiffany said that he would be comfortable with a used vehicle if it were reliable and able to meet their needs. He would not want something older than four years and it would need to be able to take the equipment. David Hunt asked how much a used vehicle would be. Bill Tiffany said that he saw a used vehicle for sale for \$21,000 in Epsom that looked like it was in good condition. This one may not be available, but they may be able to find another. He said that he would feel comfortable with \$35,000 to purchase and outfit the vehicle. Donna Osborne said that she would be happy with that amount. Joseph Fiala said that \$35,000 made sense.

### *Per Diem EMT*

Fred Ventresco said that the cost for two per diem EMTs was \$49,850. Craig Slattum said that he did not support the request. Thomas Clow said that he was concerned about the money issue. He said that they have been frugal with the budget so far and he would question how much more could be added. He said that he is concerned about how the reassessment might have impacted tax views in the town. He said that the Board should be careful if it wants the budget passed.

Joseph Fiala asked if the Board should put the item on the ballot for the vote, but not support it like with the Police Officer. Thomas Clow said he thought those two items put the Board in an awkward position.

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### *Fire Wage Adjustment*

Donna Osborne said that she would not support a \$2 increase across the board. Craig Slattum noted that they asked for a 2.5% increase plus the \$2 increase. He suggested that they receive the same 3.5% increase as all others instead. He said that, without an increase each year, it is easy to get behind and have to catch up later which makes positions less competitive. Tina Pelletier noted that she makes wage adjustments almost on a monthly basis. Bill Tiffany explained that wage increases at the Fire Department are based on date of hire that is why there are changes regularly.

Craig Slattum said that the 2.5% and \$2 wage increases for the Fire Department should be changed to just one 3.5% increase. Thomas Clow agreed. Joseph Fiala agreed. Donna Osborne also agreed. Craig Slattum asked if the Board of Fire Wards would go along. Bill Tiffany said that he thought they would.

Joseph Fiala asked if the Board wanted to remove the police officer and two EMT position warrant articles. Craig Slattum said that he did not have a problem with that, but he thought that putting them out for a vote was respectful of the Department Heads who proposed them. Thomas Clow said that putting them out for a vote without the Board's recommendation would make it seem as if the Board was going in two separate directions. The perception would be that the Board was not a team. Joseph Fiala said that his preference would be to put them on for a vote without the Board's recommendation.

David Hunt said that there was a perception in the town that the Board just rubber-stamps everything. He said that putting items that the Board did not recommend for a vote might help to remove that perception. He said that the voters might see it as the Board trying to save money. Donna Osborne said that it would be a good idea to let people vote since the vote is the people's voice. Joseph Fiala said that it would be dangerous to assume to put thoughts in voter's heads and determine their reaction. Thomas Clow said that the only warrant article that the Board did not recommend was there by petition. Thomas Clow asked if the Board was required to offer recommendations on all warrant articles from the town. Fred Ventresco said that the Board was required to decide on a recommendation for all Warrant Articles dealing with money. Craig Slattum noted that, at some point, the town will need additional police and EMTs and this might be a way to increase support for the idea. Thomas Clow noted that a vote would be a way to gauge what the level of support is out there.

**ACTION:** Joseph Fiala moved and Craig Slattum seconded that the Warrant Articles for the Police Officer and 2 Per Diem EMTs be put on the Ballot indicating that the Board of Selectmen does not recommend them and that the Fire Department wage increase not be put on the ballot. Discussion: Thomas Clow noted that, instead of the combination of the 2.5% and \$2 per hour increases, the Fire Department would receive the 3.5% increase. Vote: The motion passed 4-0-0.

### *Conservation Land Purchase*

Fred Ventresco said that this is still in negotiations, but is close to being finalized.

### *Hire a Forester*

Fred Ventresco said that this would hire a person to review Weare Town forests, develop a plan, and oversee cutting and sale of timber. He noted that, with the sale of timber, this should pay for itself fairly quickly and would not have a tax impact.

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Joseph Fiala noted that the circuit rider warrant article is only for one year and would not go into the next default budget. Thomas Clow said that he would like to make sure it is worded that way. Fred Ventresco said that he would make sure that it was.

Brenda Lashway asked if the Ferrante Property would be included with the duties of the Forester. Joseph Fiala said that the Forester would work on town forests and he was not sure if the Ferrante property was considered a town forest or conservation land only. Brenda Lashway asked if the Forester position would be ongoing. Carl Knapp said that the town had a forester for many years and it would be difficult to manage the town forests in one year so it would need to be ongoing. Craig Slattum agreed that it would need to be ongoing. Fred Ventresco said that he would double-check the wording. Brenda Lashway asked if it would be revenue producing. Joseph Fiala said that was the intention. Craig Slattum said that it would have not tax impact. Carl Knapp said that it would not take much timber to cover the cost of the Forester so it would most likely produce revenue.

Matt Esenwine noted that the Finance Committee budget was reduced by \$10 and that needs to be reflected in the budget.

Fred Ventresco asked that Tina Pelletier and Carl Knapp provide the Board with information on including the 3.5% pay raise in the Default budget. Carl Knapp said that not including the raise in the default budget would harm morale. He provided the Board with a copy of a study that he did. Tina Pelletier said that when asked about this issue the DRA said to base it on the town policy. She said that the town's policy of merit raises is like a contract and supports including the raise in the default budget. She said that the policy says that the staff would have annual reviews that are signed and then a raise is issued from that process. The policy does not say that the raises are dependent on a passed budget. Fred Ventresco supplied copies of minutes from last year that note that it was the first year that raises were not included in the default budget. This means there is a pattern of including raises in the default budget.

Carl Knapp said that prior to 1995 there was no personnel policy regarding raises in place. This meant that they were not given on a regular basis so the positions struggled to be competitive. In 1995, the raise policy was developed through a long and tedious process. It was revised in 2005 to a range pay scale. The pay raises are enforced by the Merit Review Board that is the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator. He said that the raise system keeps positions competitive. He said that the 3.5% is a cost of living adjustment and he said that he thought it should be in the default to keep the positions competitive. Most positions are behind in getting increases.

Joseph Fiala said that he is in favor of putting the raises in the default budget. He said that it would be important to make it clear that the Board wants it in the default and that it keeps the steps in line. Carl Knapp said that he would not want the town to become a training ground where people come in, get trained, and then move on to a better paying job. Thomas Clow said that he had not know that the salary increases could be included in the default, but he supports doing so since they can be. Craig Slattum said that when he was on the Board in the past, they put the raises in the default. He said that he thought it was important to support raises because employees are told, even at the interview, that if they do a good job they can expect an increase.

Fred Ventresco said that he called the DRA for more information once they realized that the Board of Selectmen had included the raises in the default in the past. He said that the DRA said that if the policy supported it then it would go along with it. They said that it would be better to indicate that it is a merit raise instead of a cost of

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living adjustment since the policy is called a merit pay policy. However, the DRA does not audit the default budget. He said that he looked at the material and felt that it could be justified. Tina Pelletier said that she included information on the reports about the Default budget and how it would look with the 3.5% raise included. Carl Knapp noted that reviews were conducted on time this year. Fred Ventresco confirmed that they followed the personnel policy, conducted each employee's review and he signed them. Thomas Clow noted that the employees who received good reviews merit a cost of living increase. Donna Osborne said that she thinks the Weare town employees are a good group who work hard and deserve a raise.

**ACTION:** Joseph Fiala moved and Thomas Clow seconded to include the 3.5% raise based on merit as outlined in the personnel policy and/or cost of living increases in the default budget. Vote: The motion passed with three in favor and one abstention.

Carl Knapp reported that he recently spent \$1300 on trying to fix the current bay station but it still does not work. He said that, instead of spending more money to try and fix it, he would like to use that money to start the licensing process for a new license to include a repeater. Carl Knapp said that he feels strongly that it is time to move forward and start the licensing process. Thomas Clow asked if the equipment in the warrant article would match the new system. Carl Knapp said that he would check to make sure that the bay station would function with or without a repeater before purchasing it. He noted that the truck radios are the same with or without the repeater, they are just programmed differently. Bill Tiffany explained that a repeater needs two frequencies, which is why a new license is needed.

Bill Tiffany said that the Fire Department would like to request permission to increase the Sharon's hours. He said that she is currently working 2-7 on Mondays and 8-1 the rest of the week. Since moving to the new building, her duties have increased so that she is no longer able to get all of her work done in the allotted time. For example, there is now a window for people to come to for questions, permits and other items. This is a lot busier than a the old location. Also, Sharon is responsible for custodial duties and she has not had enough time to do all the duties. While she is allowed 2 hours for these duties, it often takes 4-5 hours. It is clear that Sharon needs more time for office and custodial work. Also, Sharon attends the monthly Board of Fire Wards meetings. This is not paid.

Bill Tiffany said that he took the request to the Board of Fire Wards. He said that he suggested increasing the hours to 30 per week. However, the Board thought that it would be better to increase to a full-time position with 35 hours of office work and 5 hours of custodial work. Bill Tiffany asked the Board to consider making Sharon's position full time.

Joseph Fiala said that he did not feel comfortable increasing the hours to a full-time position, but would support increasing to 30 hours. Craig Slattum noted that, if the position were full-time, it would also require benefits. Donna Osborne noted that a position is considered full-time if it reaches 32 hours on a regular basis. Joseph Fiala suggested adding increasing the scheduled from a total of 27 (25 in the office and 2 custodial) to 30 hours with two additional office hours and one additional custodial hour. He said that he would prefer the extra office hours be added to the day with the late start.

Fred Ventresco asked if the Board wanted the meeting on Thursday night at 6:30 posted as a Selectmen's meeting instead of just a Public Hearing. He said that they do have some items to discuss.

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Brenda Lashway asked about putting a custodian in the budget. Joseph Fiala said that it was discussed but not put in the budget.

Brenda Lashway asked about reporting revenues from the Patriotic Celebration. She said that, while it is handled by a non-profit entity, she feels that the town is entitled to know the revenue generated by the event. Joseph Fiala said that the non-profit is outside of the town. Brenda Lashway noted that the police offer protection during the Patriotic Celebration. Joseph Fiala said that they often offer protection at large events like dances. Brenda Lashway wondered if those events were charged for the police presence. Joseph Fiala said that the representatives of the non-profit reported last year that their revenues were only enough to cover costs for the next year. Brenda Lashway said that it would be nice to know that for sure. Joseph Fiala said that he felt comfortable with their word. He said that the event benefits everyone in town so he is fine with providing police protection. Thomas Clow pointed out that the fireworks are a town event so there is overlap with the Patriotic Celebration. He said that the event brings the community together and benefits everyone. Brenda Lashway said that she thought the town had the right to know what revenue it generated. Joseph Fiala said that they had very detailed discussions last year and asked the non-profits for that information. He said that he was satisfied that they just make enough for the next year.

Fred Ventresco said that he would be asking Laura for an opinion on the Fred Farmer land and deed. Thomas Clow said that he was concerned with setting a precedent in that issue.

Fred Ventresco asked if the Board would require the presence of the Department Heads at the Public Hearing and deliberative session. Thomas Clow said that he would also want input on Conservation issues and the Planning Board. Fred Ventresco said that he would also invite Board chairs to attend. Donna Osborne said that she would want anyone with the responsibility of crafting a budget to attend. Joseph Fiala said that he would want them at the Deliberative session, though not necessarily the Public Hearing due to space issues.

Fred Ventresco said that the Board needs to appropriate funds to take care of the junk trailers.

Fred Ventresco asked Board members to be thinking about the mailer that would be sent to people in the town.

Fred Ventresco said that the library would like to stay with a 4% increase since their employees do not receive the same benefits that other town employees receive.

**ACTION:** Joseph Fiala moved and Donna Osborne seconded "shall the Town authorize the Weare Historical Society to use the Stone Memorial Building for the purposes of preserving and acquiring artifacts pertaining to Weare's history. Furthermore, to affirm that the building is property of the Town and the costs of maintaining the Stone Building will be borne by the town." Vote: The motion passed 4-0-0.

Thomas Clow said that he thought that the Health Officer was entitled to the 3.5% raise as the others. Fred Ventresco said that he thought they had put that raise in

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the budget. Craig Slattum said that it should apply to all stipends, excluding the Board of Selectmen. Fred Ventresco said that some stipends were excluded by statute.

Thomas Clow noted that there would be a Public Hearing on Monday. Joseph Fiala said that they would review budget totals. Thomas Clow asked for more explanation on the articles involving money. Fred Ventresco asked if they would like to include the warrants. Thomas Clow said that he would like them included, especially spending warrants. Fred Ventresco noted that the only warrant articles he was missing dealt with the CIP.

Donna Osborne asked about the Town Report. Fred Ventresco said that he had a list and he had received most of the items. He said he was only waiting for areas that were waiting to finalize their numbers.

#### **4. Adjournment**

**ACTION:** Joseph Fiala moved and Donna Osborne seconded the motion to adjourn. Vote: The motion passed 4-0-0. The Board adjourned at 11:31 PM.

A true record.

Respectfully Submitted, Jennifer Dutch, Recording Secretary