

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SEPTEMBER 8, 2009

(tape recorded meeting)

Present: Chairman Bob Blagden, Bill Curtis, Vice Chairman Phil DiVece, Pamela Dunning,
Bob Fairfield and Town Manager Arthur Faucher

1. Call to Order

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

3. Approve minutes of September 1, 2009

Phil DiVece moved to accept the minutes of the September 1 Selectmen's meeting. Vote 5-0-0.

4. Citizen Comment

Ben Rines, Jr., said it was not appropriate for the board to have asked the town manager to investigate the Police Department comp time matter. He said the town manager as well as the police personnel were under a cloud of suspicion and the town manager was the wrong person to be leading the investigation, as he could not be impartial. Bob Blagden said that the selectmen would see the results of the investigation and would be the final judge in the matter.

Steve Mehrl asked about the comp time policy and was informed that it would be discussed at a workshop following the meeting.

Bill Barnes said that he was on the board when the town manager was hired and his first job was to eliminate comp time. He said something was wrong with the system when someone working under a union contract was allowed to accumulate 4500 hours of comp time as he had read in the paper that Lt. Allen had done. He added that department heads are hired with the understanding that their job is not necessarily a 40-hour week.

Bob Fairfield and Bill Curtis said that any discussion about personnel should be held in executive session. Bob Blagden said that payroll is a public record.

Richard Hanson said that in response to his inquiry at the previous meeting, the town manager had informed him that \$19,000+ was due in interest from Point East. He asked the status of interest on the \$42,000 payment that was due for 2006-2007. The town manager said he would look at the records. Hanson also said that the town attorney should look into the time sheet situation, not the town manager.

Bob Blagden said that he had spoken to the town attorney who had recommended two other attorneys specializing in personnel matters and he (Blagden) would contact them.

Paula Gibbs asked if any record of a warranty on the roof had been found. Arthur Faucher said he would check with Pam Lear, building maintenance.

Ben Rines asked further questions about the altering of time sheets: were there any parameters to the investigation, who made the decision about comp time, was it done in a legal meeting, and how could the board allow the town manager to look into the matter? He said the board should be able to trust the town manager to correctly prepare the warrant for the selectmen. Blagden responded that if the majority of the board were not satisfied with the investigation, it would take a different action. He considered the situation serious and that it called into question all payroll

sheets. He added that it takes a leap of faith to assume that the warrants are correct before signing. Pam Dunning said that the board has hard copies of all information so none of it will disappear and that if the board doesn't get an answer, it will pursue the matter further. Bob Blagden said that if the public is unhappy with the resolution, he was sure the board would hear about it.

5. Erv Deck: Airport Grassland Mowing Bids

Two bids had been received as follows:

William Barnes	\$2,295
Roy Barnes	1,994

In response to Richard Hanson's question, Bob Blagden said he had recused himself from discussion of the mowing bids at the August 18 meeting because he had submitted a bid. He had not submitted a new bid, as he had not received a bid sheet and the bid policy had not been followed. Bill Barnes agreed that the process was not working when bid packages were not sent out because the list could not be found.

Phil DiVece read from the August 18 minutes, which indicated that the bids received at that meeting would be held until new bid packages were sent out and then all bids would be considered at the same time. Bob Blagden said he had complained about the process before, as it was never handled the same way twice and never handled according to policy; in fact, the process had failed twice on this bid. The policy says that the town manager will maintain a bid list and send bids out to those on the bid list on these kinds of services. He asked that his bids be returned to him and not considered. The policy will be discussed at the workshop following the meeting.

Erv Deck said he had advertised for the first bids in the newspaper; he was not aware of the policy. After speaking to Arthur Faucher, new bid packages were sent out to the bidders' list and it was advertised three times in the newspaper. He apologized if the bid process was not followed correctly, but said it should be a simple process. He recommended that the mowing in September be cancelled and that it be taken care of in the spring.

George Green said if the town couldn't handle bids for cutting the grass, how was it going to deal with a \$2 billion expenditure for a project in the town, which would move 15 million cubic yards of gravel. He said the town should have a plan for dealing with this and be able to negotiate benefits for the town.

Pam Dunning moved to accept the bid of Roy Barnes for \$1,994 for airport mowing. Vote 3-1-1 (Fairfield opposed, Blagden abstained).

In response to Bill Curtis' question regarding bids for snow maintenance, Deck said he would use the town maintenance staff, assuming the road commissioner would agree.

6. Board of Selectmen: The year-end fund balance and new mill rate

Jim George said the audit was substantially complete and the fund balance was \$700,000. The auditors recommend keeping 30 days of funds (\$800,000) available for emergencies and not touching the fund balance. Last year the fund balance was \$1.3 million and \$600,000 was used to lower the tax rate. He said revenues were less last year and depending on the referendum on excise tax in November, they may be less this year. MMA has advised that the revenue estimate be reduced.

The reserve account principal and interest total is \$10,566,877.90. The endowment account total is \$1,800,517.67. \$1,318,000 is available in cash.

Unpaid real estate taxes amount to a half million and unpaid sewer fees are \$50,000 to \$60,000. Phil DiVece said that there would be more people and businesses unable to pay taxes if the mill rate isn't kept at a manageable level.

Richard Hanson urged those present to vote down the school budget if they wanted lower taxes, as the school budget is \$792,361 more than it was last year even though expenses under the reorganization have gone down.

The board discussed enterprise accounts that depend on tax revenues but have balances carried over from the previous year. Pam Dunning said the board should decide whether to go to gross budgeting and whether these lapsed balances could go into the general fund. The Transfer Station and Waterfront accounts have balances that were carried forward although some of those funds had been figured into the budget for the current year. The carryover amounts in several accounts were questioned such as Shaws Impact, road/sidewalk replacement, ambulance replacement, and EMS pager replacement. The auditor and department heads will be consulted on using these funds. The Chair and Vice Chair will meet with the auditor on balances that have been carried forward.

The timeline leading up to the fourth Friday in October when taxes are due was discussed. In order to send out bills a month in advance, a public hearing would have to be held on September 23. The selectmen will sign the warrant at the September 15th meeting so that it can be posted on the 16th, a week before the public hearing.

Five scenarios calculating the mill rate based on taking no funds to using \$1.5 million from the reserve fund were presented and discussed. **Bob Blagden moved to approve taking \$250,000 from the Undesignated Fund Balance and transferring \$1 million from the Designated Capital Reserve account in order to reduce the mill rate.** The above action will result in a mill rate of 14.5. **Vote 5-0-0.**

7. Town Manager

Officer Simmons: Arthur Faucher displayed the plaque that will be given to Simmons for 10 years of perfect attendance.

High Street Signage: Greg Griffin said that the High Street sign on upper Main Street made it easier for people to find the library and the Musical Wonder House. Don Jones said that in order to maintain the correct name of that portion of Main Street, he would favor an arrow or a sign that says "To High Street" at the intersection of Route 1 and Main Street. He said High Street extends from Lee Street to the Courthouse and naming the road that goes from High Street to Route 1 as High Street would result in a forked street; moreover, a house with a Main Street address would then be on High Street. There was a consensus of the board that the name of this section of road will remain Main Street and a sign with an arrow will indicate the direction to High Street.

8 Other Business

Arthur Faucher said that interviews with police personnel were going well but he still needs to speak to the union representative who, he recommended should meet with the board next Tuesday in executive session. Bob Blagden said he was only looking for a report. Bill Curtis recommended contacting MMA about the need for an executive session.

Faucher distributed to a memo to the board concerning the Douglas Koehling property. The Koehlings have been given a deadline for removing their property from the site and the Town Manager asked the board to consider the disposition of the property. The DEP has been notified and will determine the extent of pollution on the property. Phil DiVece and Bob Blagden will meet with the town attorney on the matter.

At Faucher's recommendation, **Pam Dunning moved to reject the RFPs (for fuel tank replacement) and go out to bid with specifications. Vote 5-0-0.**

Don Jones asked how the airport deficit would be handled inasmuch as the warrant article on funding the airport shortfall had failed. Bob Blagden said the airport would have to squeeze funds out of the current year's budget. Phil DiVece suggested the auditor be asked for suggestions. Ed Polewarczyk said there is not enough money in the budget to cover the overdraft.

9. Adjourn

Bob Blagden moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Vote 5-0-0.