

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

(Tape recorded meeting)

Present: Bill Curtis, Chairman Duane Goud, Vice Chairman David Nichols, Alex Robertson, Nicole Viele and Town Manager Arthur Faucher

1. Call to Order

In Duane Goud's absence, David Nichols called the meeting to order at 7 pm.

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

Old Business

3. Request to Accept Harrison Lane as a Town Road

The request was tabled.

New Business

4. Board Discussion and Vote to Accept Tyler Revaluation

While waiting for the chairman to arrive, David Nichols asked the Board members their position on accepting the revaluation. Nicole Viele said that she was in favor of accepting the revaluation, recognizing that there were some problems that could be dealt with by the abatement process. Alex Robertson and Bill Curtis agreed. Bill Curtis added that the Board could look at the consistencies in the next six to nine months to make the process more equitable. David Nichols agreed that the Board had to accept the revaluation, but said he could not vote for it as it is.

Asked by Dick Grondin what his Plan B was, David Nichols said he would eliminate factoring, reduce land values by 20%, and apply \$175,000 base value for acre-based home sites of all tidal water properties. Between now and the next time tax bills are issued, he recommended developing a figure for tidal water properties that is comparable with deep-water properties. Alex Robertson said that reducing land values by 20% would only increase the mill rate, putting the burden on the small property owner rather than making it fair and equitable. He added that there had been three revaluations and people had not been pleased by any of them. He said rather than take money from reserves to lower taxes, the town should learn to pay its way. Several members of the public expressed their dissatisfaction with the revaluation.

(Duane Goud arrived) At Arthur Faucher's request, the Board members repeated for the benefit of the chairman their views on accepting the revaluation. The four members who had spoken previously agreed that the revaluation should be accepted conditionally and problems dealt with through abatements. Bill Curtis added that the Board should grant abatements when problems were found regardless of whether a taxpayer had filed for abatement. Duane Goud said he was in favor of accepting the revaluation and using it as a base from which to work out the inequities.

Discussion followed on how possible reductions in valuations during the abatement process would affect the already established mill rate and how the mill rate could then be changed. Also discussed was how refunds would be handled if the method of valuation was found to be in error and whether a corrected valuation should then be made for all affected properties and abatements granted whether applied for or not.

The total valuation of the Town according to Tyler Technologies is \$457,252,010, an increase from last year's valuation of \$346,285,450. The total appropriation is \$15,741,348.82, a decrease from last year's appropriation of \$16,235,435.30. Total revenues this year were \$8,909,057, leaving \$6,832,291 to be raised by taxes.

Nicole Viele said one reason for accepting the revaluation and dealing with problems through abatement was that it could be defended. If an across the board change or a change in one neighborhood was made, it may not be defensible in court.

Asked whether parts of the revaluation could be accepted rather than the whole revaluation, Duane Goud said he would prefer to accept the entire reval with conditions. Although given examples of inequities or errors in calculating the replacement value or market value of vacant land, Duane Goud said looking at all properties in Wiscasset, land values seemed to be in line with market values.

Arthur Faucher said he recognized there were reasons for disparity in values such as factoring, deep water and tidal water, and he appreciated the workshops, which provided citizen input. He added that the Board has to accept the valuations, but that does not mean that taxes will go up; taxes increase because of an increased budget. He said the town had spent money for the revaluation and he recommended working with the new numbers and addressing disparities.

Duane Goud moved, Alex Robertson seconded, to accept the Tyler revaluation. He said the Board would take as long as necessary to address problems. **Vote 3-1-1** (Nichols opposed, Curtis abstained).

5. Board Discussion to Transfer Money out of Reserve Accounts to Offset FY 2007/2008 Mill Rate

The Board discussed whether to take money from the reserve account in order to reduce the mill rate. A town vote is required if money from the reserve account is to be used. The earliest a town meeting can be held is October 4. Following the Town Meeting, the Selectmen will be able to set the mill rate and tax bills can be issued. There will be no change in the date taxes will be due. **David Nichols moved, Duane Goud seconded, to set October 4, 2007 as the date for a special town meeting to vote on the amount to take from the reserve account. Vote 5-0. Duane Goud moved, David Nichols seconded, to recommend taking \$900,000 out of reserves. Vote 3-2** (Goud and Viele opposed). The Selectmen's recommendation with vote will be on the warrant.

6. Sign Tax Commitment and Set Mill Rate

No action was taken.

7. Other Board Business

Bill Curtis and Nicole Viele will attend a meeting on Friday, September 28, 9 a.m., at the School Superintendent's office at which the engineering report recommending which school to close will be presented.

The Town Meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on October 4, location to be determined.

The Selectmen will meet on Wednesday, September 26, to sign the warrant for the special Town Meeting. Duane Goud said he would like to begin identifying concerns the Selectmen have with the assessments at that meeting.

It will be necessary for the Budget Committee to meet before the Selectmen's meeting to make its recommendation on the amount to be taken from reserves.

Steve Mehrl asked that it be publicized that the vote will be by a show of hands. A motion to change the form of voting will be necessary.

9. Announce Future Meetings, Workshops and Events

10. Adjourn

At 8:35 p.m. **Bill Curtis moved, David Nichols seconded, to adjourn the meeting. Vote 5-0.**