

**MINUTES OF THE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
September 30, 2009**

Present: Scott Lingenfelter, Timothy Reynolds, John Smith, Brian Fitzgerald and Vicki Spellman. First Selectman Lingenfelter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall lower level Conference Room on Wednesday, September 30, 2009.

Minutes:

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to approve the Minutes of September 2, 2009. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Public Comment:

John Maziarz, 160 Dusky Lane. Reported that the condition of Suffield Meadow Drive needs to be re-paved. He also stated that he was against putting the trash fee into the real estate taxes because it would mean a double tax for condominium owners.

Lisa Sabatella, 5 Pebblestone Drive, stated she was against rolling the trash fee into the taxes.

Brian Phelps of 92 Spring Lane was against rolling the trash fee into the taxes unless some concession are made for condo owners.

Tom Accarpio of Preferred Electric submitted paperwork to the Board regarding his claim that he wasn't paid for the electrical work done at the Town's green. He said if he isn't paid, he will have to turn the matter over to his lawyer.

Request for funds to complete the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD):

Town Planner, Bill Hawkins was present. Mr. Hawkins said that Zoning & Planning has been updating the 1999 POCD. A large component of this update to the Plan involves public workshops to gather input from residents. The ZPC budget has \$10,000 in contracted services line item which will cover the majority of the costs associated with the workshops as well as the plan adoption process. However, there will be approximately \$3,000 worth of costs that the ZPC budget cannot absorb. This \$3,000 will cover the expense of \$1500 for 100 colored copies of the updated POCD and \$1500 for additional consultant fees associated with the adoption process above and beyond the public workshops.

Selectman Smith made a motion to authorize the expenditure of \$3,000 from the Board of Selectmen's Professional Services Line item to aid in the completion and adoption of the updated Plan of Conservation and Development.

Police Department: Request to temporarily increase staffing. Don Miner, Chairman of the Police Commission and Captain David Bourque were present. They were requesting a temporary increase in staffing. The Police Department has had an Officer out on Workmen's Comp for some time. They want to temporarily fill this position with

an Officer who is currently working for the Department as a Part Timer. Should the Officer who is out on W.C. come back, then this temporary Officer will be placed back to Part Time status. Captain Bourque said this will mitigate the overtime issue. Mr. Lingenfelter said if the Officer who is out on Workmen's Comp returns, then the Town would need to layoff the temporary Officer, who would then be entitled to unemployment. He also suggested instead of moving a Part Time Officer to Full Time, just advertise for more Part Time Officers. Mr. Lingenfelter said he supports the Police Department but gets concerned over the current budget situation with the reduction of funds from the State.

Selectman Spellman asked can we go from a Part Timer to a Full Time Officer and then reduce him back to a Part Timer again under the terms of the Police Contract. Mr. Bourque said there will be a "Memorandum of Understanding" that the Officer will be hired under these conditions. Mr. Lingenfelter asked if they were also including the cost to the Town for the benefits, including Pension of the new person who becomes the temporary Officer? Mr. Miner said he did not know what costs are. Mr. Fitzgerald wanted the Board to set a time when the temporary increase in staffing would expire.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to authorize the Police Department to temporarily increase staffing to 21 Officers until the settlement of the Workmen's Compensation case, or through June 30, 2010, whichever occurs first. The motion was approved with all voting in favor and Mr. Lingenfelter voting opposed. Motion carried 4-1.

Energy Conservation Grant:

Economic Development Director Patrick McMahon was present to discuss the Energy Conservation Grant Program. The Town is eligible to apply for a \$68,735 through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program funded through the Federal Stimulus Program. The Town must make an application to the Office of Policy and Management by Thursday, November 5th. He looked at several potential projects for the use of these funds which will include 1) replacement of windows at Town Hall; 2) energy audits of town-owned buildings, and 3) lighting improvements in the gallery of the Library.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion that the Board of Selectmen authorize the First Selectman to submit a grant application for \$68,735 to the Office of Policy and Management for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds for replacement windows at Town Hall and an energy assessment of town-owned buildings and replacement to energy efficient lighting at the Library. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Elderly Property Tax Relief Proposal:

Mr. Lingenfelter explained that as property taxes in municipalities across Connecticut continue to rise as a result of decreased revenues from the State, some of our most vulnerable residents are being driven out of their homes. Many seniors who are on fixed incomes cannot keep up with the growth in their residential property taxes and are being forced to make difficult decision, which may include selling their homes. The State of

Connecticut provides municipalities with options that will allow some relief for these taxpayers, as in a Tax Credit, Tax Freeze or Tax Deferral Programs.

Mr. Lingenfelter felt Suffield should explore the Tax Deferral option for our residents. Connecticut General Statutes provides municipalities with the authority to provide property tax relief for certain homeowners age 65 and over or for those permanently and totally disabled. He suggested that the Board of Selectmen appoint a Committee to investigate the effects of this tax deferral program and make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen and Finance. This Elderly Tax Relief Committee should be charged with investigating the effects of a program that provides elderly and disabled residents with an option to defer part of their real estate taxes on the residents and the total property tax revenues for the town and then recommend to the Board of Finance whether or not Suffield should have such a Program.

Mr. Lingenfelter said that he is not ready to appoint a Committee tonight, but wanted to get the Board's feeling for such a Program. Selectman Spellman suggested that this Committee look at a Tax Freeze for the elderly as it would be easier to administer and for the elderly to understand. She felt that anything the Town can do for people on fixed incomes who are elderly and would like to stay in their homes, would be a good idea.

Suffield has a tax credit program currently in place now for those who meeting income requirements of \$28,800 a year and is at least 65 years of age and also includes people who are disabled.

State Budget Impact on Suffield:

The town received \$600,000 less from the State in revenues than what was originally anticipated when the budget was set. This leaves the town with options to explore on what to do. The first option is to make no changes and continue to operate with the expenditures we budgeted. The other option would be to make different adjustments within the budget on the expenditure side to make up for the lost revenue. Fortunately, however, there was money given back at the end of the fiscal year from the Schools to the general fund. This was approximately \$600,000. The Board of Finance asked the Board of Selectmen to recommend to change something in the budget, or not. Certain members of the Finance Board suggested not to make any changes at this time to the expenditure side of the budget because of the surplus. Mr. Lingenfelter met with all the Department Heads a few weeks ago to discuss the impact on the budget next year because we will be getting \$600,000 less next year. So he asked the departments heads to find a savings of 1% in their budgets to help deal with the decrease in revenue next year.

Snow Removal Policy:

A few years ago, Highway Foreman Mark Cervione and Chris Koren worked on drafting a Snow Removal Policy which has been followed over the last few years. Mr. Lingenfelter has requested the Public Works Commission to make a recommendation to the Selectmen on it. Selectman Fitzgerald said the "tone" of this document seems to reflect that it protects the town employees, rather than servicing the public. What we do is to try to serve the residents and the "tone" of the policy should be made to reflect that.

Public Works director Jack Muska who was present, interjected and said he would lean towards the other way. For example, regarding parking on streets, he would change the wording to make parking on the street prohibited in stead of saying residents are discouraged from parking on the streets.

Tax Rebates:

Selectman Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the following tax rebates:

Ralph J. Petillo	\$81.83
Brian J. Moson	\$23.26
Marie J. Morales Johnson	\$17.88
John E. O'Neill	\$56.21

The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Selectman's Update:

STEAP Grant: The town was awarded grants for a generator for the Police Station, for the Senior Center as well as work at the Landfill. The town will receive \$150,000 for the landfill and \$45,000 for the generators. This will be back on the Agenda in a future meeting.

Congressman Joe Courtney: He will be in Town on Friday, October 2nd to tour Suffield Water Pollution Control Plant.

Lake Area Assessments: Several Lake Road residents who attended Selectmen's meetings in September, were very concerned that their assessments were too high. Mr. Lingenfelter talked to Vision Appraisal and met with some of the residents living up at the Lake Roads to review their assessments. Vision Appraisal looks at the sale's ratio on what the assessment actually is and what the property sold for. There is a range that the assessment on sales need to be within, and if you look at the Lake Road properties compared with properties in the rest of the town, they are in line with each other and if anything, the Lake area is actually lower. All indications show that the assessments were not done improperly and are in line with the value that the land is selling for.

CL&P: Information regarding the Greater Springfield Reliability Project was sent to residents in the area where the project is proposed. They informed residents that subcontractors will perform engineering and environmental assessments in the CL&P's rights-of-way.

Committee Report on Rolling Trash Fees into taxes:

Mr. Lingenfelter said that the Public Works Commission who was heavily involved with this matter for years, is looking into the Committee's Report. They will come back with a recommendation to the Selectmen.

Executive Session:

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to go into executive session to discuss real estate negotiations and a legal matter. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The

Selectmen went into session at 8:25 p.m. Attorney McAnaney and Patrick McMahon was invited into the Executive Session.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to come out of executive session. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The Selectmen came out of session at 9:30 p.m.

Adjournment:

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to adjourn. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Koren, Recording Secretary