

**TOWN OF EPSOM  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
Monday, March 29, 2010**

**Bob** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Joanne** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Keith** \_\_\_\_\_

**Final** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Accepted** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Accepted as Amended** \_\_\_\_\_

**Present:** Joanne Randall, Chairperson; Keith Cota, Vice Chairman; Bob Blodgett; Darlene Phelps, Recording Secretary

**Also in Attendance:** Gordon Ellis; Rick Bilodeau; Wayne Preve; Stewart Yeaton; Mary Frambach; Tim Harkness; Nancy Wheeler; Betsy Bosiak; Barbara Clark; Debbie Tibbetts; Len Gilman; Dave Fiorentino; Chuck Reese; Loren Martin; David Hines; Diane Frechette

**5:30pm to 6:15pm Emergency Disaster Review (No Public Input)**

Joanne stated that she received an email about an hour ago that President Obama has granted Governor Lynch disaster funds for the wind/rain event from February 25 and 26; so Epsom will be eligible for some disaster relief funds.

Joanne noted that with the current rain storm, there is a potential to receive about 8" of rain. Depending on how fast the rain falls, Rick Bilodeau has said he'd like to set up the EOC at the Fire Station. Even if it's not a full emergency, it would be a good opportunity to practice opening the EOC by setting up the phone lines and meeting to review procedures.

Joanne asked if the Police Department has completed its ICS200 Training. She said there were no Police Officers at the ICS 200 class because they were going to take it at the station during shifts and had asked Chief Preve to confirm that everyone had taken the exam. Keith said he thought that was part of their training. Joanne said she left a message for Wayne Preve checking to be sure all of his officers are certified & she has not heard back from him. Joanne said there are 3 other employees who took the course but did not take the test online at the end of the class, because it required a SSN to be entered on line & they did not want to do that. She has inquired about an alternate way for the tests to be taken, but Keith indicated that FEMA is requiring that it be taken on line, as that is how they are tracking certifications. Anyone who is involved with the EOC in any capacity *must* be certified.

**Wind / Rain Storm February 25 – 26, 2010**

**Bob Blodgett:** Bob said he felt everything went very smoothly, everyone worked very well together & there was good communication. He worked mostly with Gordon on Friday checking roads, rivers & streams. He felt it was good teamwork throughout the entire event.

**Keith Cota:** Keith felt that communication was the difficult part. He received a voice mail on his cell phone telling him to check his email, but without any power or cable, he couldn't do that. The total loss of communication made it very difficult. He felt the responsiveness of the utility companies (PSNH) has always been difficult, but will leave it to Rick to provide comments about that. Fortunately, cell phone coverage was still available, as that was the only means of communication. Also, fortunately the majority of town roads were accessible & passable. Keith asked if there is a database of residents who might require special medical assistance when there is no power. Stewart said they have been working on this, but some people are very private about their needs and it makes it difficult to help them. They are trying very hard to keep their database up to date with people who are on oxygen, or are blind, etc.

Joanne Randall: Joanne said an emergency meeting was held on Saturday morning (2/27) at the Town Office & the decision was made to open the Web EOC. She was able to enter information about road closings as they occurred. She said they also kept in touch with the radio stations & WMUR to keep people aware. The decision was made not to open a shelter, as they did not feel they had the required resources – including transportation, police, fire, etc. A Red Cross shelter was open in Concord & a non-Red Cross shelter in Deerfield. Rick said the State of NH is trying to open regional shelters as needed, as most towns do not have the proper resources to staff them individually.

Nancy Wheeler had given a list of the information the team should be gathering during an emergency that would be needed if there was a disaster declaration. Gary Miller from Unitil had called her to advise that they had opened the MOC (Municipal Operations Center), which the Town can call for updates about the power outage. Rick said that PSNH has a similar type of OC, but NH Electric Co-Op doesn't have one.

Joanne said the things that went well were communication. Joanne felt that personally it was very difficult to keep in touch with everyone involved & be able to pass information along to everyone. She feels that each BOS member should have pre-assigned duties before an emergency, which will avoid the question of "what should I do?", when an emergency takes place.

Another thing that added to the labor of this event was driving around & checking on personal property damage. This was a new requirement from the State and required additional property checks.

Joanne said when there is an emergency Rick sends her information from the State and wondered if Keith & Bob want her to forward those bulletins to them as well. They said yes, and it was noted that these bulletins are confidential and are only for Town Officials.

Joanne said she has notified the Office Staff that it may be necessary to open the EOC.

Gordon said he doesn't see the need for that until probably in the morning. It was decided that as soon as a road is closed, he will call Joanne & she will send a text to Wayne and Stewart so they are aware.

Gordon Ellis: Gordon said he doesn't feel that being without power for 3 or 4 days should be considered a major emergency, but people's expectations have changed – we live in NH & we should expect to lose power during a storm. For instance, during a snow storm, people expect roads get plowed every couple of hours. Rick stated that the Town has a responsibility to be sure that all the citizens in town are safe. Gordon said 80% of the problem was trees falling on power lines. But in order for the utility company to maintain their poles, trees have to be cut or trimmed & in order to do that, they must receive special permission. Gordon also indicated the problem that occurs with all the generators hooked up which back-feeds the power. This is why downed trees are not removed sooner. Joanne said that while driving around to check on some properties, they were checking to be sure that people who had generators had them the proper distance from their home. Stewart said they stopped at some homes to let them know their generators were placed too close to their home. Gordon doesn't feel things could be handled much well. Everyone seems to work very efficiently.

Gordon said a major problem is missing cones. Many cones from the Highway and Police Department were stolen during the storm so he's going to need to buy some more – and they can be expensive.

Stewart Yeaton: Stewart said they helped a couple of people sand-bag their homes today to prevent water coming into their basements. One was on Silver Hill Drive & the other on Webster Park Lane. Stewart said he was not included in the conference call with the utility company on Saturday morning & it was difficult to get information because Epsom was not on the list. Rick stated that that issue was fixed and Epsom was added to the communication list.

Joanne stated that the Fire Department was at Kingstown early on and made their presence known, and the residents appreciated that. Stewart said they had 50 calls, and they were handled very well, as everyone knows where they are supposed to be.

Wayne Preve: Wayne said they were out driving around checking roads. Bob felt that the sharing of areas worked out well.

Rick Bilodeau: Rick said Joanne's idea of deciding ahead of time who is covering what area, would be beneficial. This would be best handled by an initial meeting at the EOC (Fire Department) & dividing the affected area then, as not all emergencies affect the entire town. Rick asked Gordon if there are 2-way radios in his trucks, and Gordon said no. Rick said this is something that should be worked on, as it would be very helpful. Gordon said he has his cell phone & that's the best way to reach him.

Rick said he'd like to see the use of the Code Compliance person (Jay Hickey) to assist with completion of necessary paperwork after an event; especially since many people who are involved already have to work, and using Jay to do some of this work would be a big help.

Stewart noted that off the subject – he is finding more & more homes that have more people living in them than expected, as lots of people are in need of a place to live, and friends & family are taking them in.

## **6:15 PM (Regular Meeting)**

### **6:30pm Staff Discussion**

**Debbie Tibbetts** said in regard to the potential office move, she has contacted Starving Artists Movers, but hasn't heard back from them with a time to come out & give an estimate.

McLaughlin-Mayflower will be here tomorrow to see what would need to be moved & give an estimate.

Debbie said she spoke to McLaughlin-Mayflower about the generator and they said if they are not able to move it, they will subcontract with someone who can. A pad will need to be prepared for the generator at the new location.

Joanne said our lease is up on June 1, not June 30<sup>th</sup> as she had previously stated and Keith said it will require about 2 weeks to prepare the new office space with partitions.

**Barbara Clark** said she spoke to Northeast Electronics & they will be doing all of the wiring for the new office space, so that all computers can just be moved in & plugged in. He strongly suggests having a dedicated area for the server. She is waiting for pricing from them for this job. She also suggested asking Doc who will be doing the non-computer related wiring inside. Barb also said repairs to this building will be started here on Wednesday at 8:00 AM.

**Nancy Wheeler** said Phil Demerit, Planning Board Chairman has requested a cell phone for his use as Chairman. The cost for the 300 minute plan is \$34.99 per month, plus taxes. Nancy has emailed the sales rep to get that phone for him.

Nancy said the Police Department has asked for the texting option to be added to the cell phone plan.

The MS7 was mailed to DRA last week.

A check for the balance due of the grant money for the remaining culvert was received from the State for \$92,300. A Public Hearing will need to be held to accept those funds.

Joanne said she met with Doc, the Maintenance Man, at the new location, and noted some ceiling tiles that need to be replaced. There is also some water damage on some of the walls. She noted that the walls need to be painted and the tile floor cleaned and finished. There are two bathrooms, and plenty of room in the back. There was a discussion about there being

enough room for the server area, and a storage area. Nancy said Bob had done a preliminary drawing of the space and has asked the other office staff for their input. Keith also did a drawing of the area. There was a brief discussion about the need for a public bathroom, especially if meetings will be held at this location.

**6:45pm Assessment Review - Chuck Reese – DRA & Loren Martin - Avitar**

Chuck Reese from DRA reviewed the Assessment Review Guidelines. He said postcards went out last Thursday announcing that some homes will be chosen at random for review. They will also be reviewing some valid property sales (approximately 12) in order to determine various property values, reviewing building permits issued between April 1, 2009 – 2010, also a sampling of current use properties and elderly exemptions. He does not anticipate any issues. The 2010 report will be received in March or April 2011.

He said the postcards are sent to residents ahead of time to let them know that they may be chosen for their property to be reviewed & they have the right to decline. The Town will be notified of all residents who decline. They plan to visit 80-90 homes beginning next Tuesday.

David Hines from Avitar said the town-wide property revaluation was completed on February 12. They have completed the permit work, and the preliminary new valuations were completed on February 26. As of 2010, the base land value in Epsom is 2 acres with 200' of road frontage is \$75K (down from 90K in 2005). The base price for a home is \$75 per square foot. The valuation included all properties; residential, commercial, just land, etc. The largest drop in value was for mobile homes. Loren explained that there was a large increase in mobile home values in 2008, which explains a lot of the drop this year. Commercial properties had the smallest decrease in value.

Currently the valuation ratio is 97.5. The Town's assessed value has dropped more than \$49M with this revaluation.

In response to Keith's question, Loren said the likelihood of abatement requests for mobile homes will probably decrease because now the valuation has been brought down.

Loren said property owners will get a statement of property value, and since values are down, there will probably not be a lot of hearings. May 3-14 will be the time for hearings. Although when the valuation is down & the budget remains the same, then a tax increase is inevitable, she didn't feel that each homeowner will see a large difference in their tax liability. She also wanted to note that the new property values will not be reflected until the 2<sup>nd</sup> property tax bill is sent out. Keith asked her to prepare a summary for the process and expectations that can be electronically posted on the website so taxpayers can view that & begin to be educated.

Barbara said that a note will be put on the 1<sup>st</sup> tax bill in regard to the property value reflecting the 2009 value.

**FOR SIGNATURE**

1. **Accounts Payable** has been signed.
2. **Manifest** has been signed.
3. **Intent to Cut** has been signed.
4. **Abatements (4)**
  - a. Keith made a motion to deny this abatement request for property U03-21 as recommended by Avitar. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.
  - b. Keith made a motion to grant the abatement request for property U04-17-11 of \$800 as recommended by Avitar. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.
  - c. Keith made a motion to grant the abatement request for property R03-24-3 of \$500 as recommended by Avitar. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.

- d. The abatement discussed last week was signed.
5. **Application for Current Use (2)** were signed.
  6. **Earth Excavation Tax Levy** was signed.
  7. **Appointment Paper** - Keith made a motion to reappoint Linda Martel as Deputy Treasurer until March 31, 2011. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.

**7:17 PM – 7:21 PM Break**

**FOR DISCUSSION**

- A. Default Budget** Joanne prepared an Excel sheet with a list of requested amounts vs., appropriated amounts, for BOS review, for discussion regarding reallocating funds for wage increases for full-time staff. She noted that if the BOS decides to approve a 3% wage increase for full time employees, those funds could be reallocated from the 4 top lines that were budgeted with more funds than requested. If a 4% wage increase were granted, then the top 6 lines would be reallocated. There was discussion about wage increases for the Police & Fire Departments – in that they requested higher increases than 3%-4%, and the Fire Department request for an increase in the amount of training pay.

Joanne noted that in the past when the Town has been operating on a Default Budget, a COLA increase has been minimal (2% - 4%). She doesn't feel that it would be appropriate to offer varying percentages – each full time employee should receive the same percentage. Bob agrees.

Keith felt those are good points, but noted that by not increasing the pay in certain departments, we will continue to lose employees because of it. He feels that a 4% increase would be appropriate to help compensate the employees who didn't receive an increase at all last year, and will help the Police Department salaries as well since they had requested 8%.

A 4% across-the-board salary increase for full time employees would require moving \$32,032.15. This can be accomplished by moving:

\$8100 from the General Government Buildings line  
 \$7500 from the Welfare-Vendor Policies line  
 \$6890 from the Roads Maintenance line  
 \$4000 from the Roads General Maintenance line  
 \$3500 from the Roads PT position line  
\$2043 from the Welfare Vendor Policies line  
 \$32033 Total

Len Gilman asked who received salary increases last year. Keith said the Police Department and Road Agent did. He said the majority of voters didn't pass the budget this year,

and didn't want to give salary increases. He feels that most people in Epsom didn't receive a 10% - 12% salary increase and it could be considered unethical to move money around from line to line to grant salary increases that the townspeople didn't want. Lenny asked what the COLA was for this year. Joanne said there was no COLA this year. Keith explained that the BOS is responsible for directing the default funds to address the major issues and needs of the town. Should the Board feel salary adjustments are needed in order to address stability in staffing, it would not be unethical to proceed in this direction.

Keith asked why the BOS shouldn't grant the additional training pay for the Fire Department, since the funds can be reallocated *within* the Fire Department budget. Joanne said she was just trying to focus solely on the full time employees.

Keith wanted made a motion to adjust the following line items:

\$8100 from the General Government Buildings line

\$7500 from the Welfare-Vendor Policies line

\$6890 from the Roads Maintenance line

\$4000 from the Roads General Maintenance line

\$3500 from the Roads PT position line

\$2043 from the Welfare Vendor Policies line

to account for an across-the-board 4% salary increase for all full time employees. However Nancy indicated that a very specific procedure (RSA 32:10 Transfer of Appropriations) must be followed in order to do a line transfer on a budget. It was decided to do some research this week to determine the best way to do this transfer & it will be discussed again next week.

- B. Letter from Tony Soltani** in regard to a request from the owner of the “Old Post Office Plaza” wants to change the official name of the plaza to the Ronald Reagan Plaza. The Postmaster has indicated that in order to allow for this official name change, it requires a vote of the BOS. Keith made a motion to authorize the owner of U11-25 to alter the name from Old Post Office Plaza to Ronald Reagan Plaza, as required by the Postmaster. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.
- C. Friends of Epsom Meetinghouse Committee – Grant Application** This Moose Plate Grant Application is complete and must be signed by the BOS. Penny Graham sent an email to Joanne stating that a letter of support must be sent by members of the community said in the past the BOS has provided a letter. It was decided to ask Debbie to draft a letter & Joanne will sign it. Keith made a motion to authorize Joanne to sign the 2010 Moose Plate Grant Application. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.
- D. Properties to Deed in May** – Joanne filled out the deed waivers for all of the properties that the town will not be accepting as tax deed so far & they are still in the file for review.
- E. Grant Application – Pre-Disaster Mitigation** – Keith said early in the fall the Town of Epsom applied for this grant to stabilize the river avulsion, in the amount of about \$3.5M. A letter was received by the Department of Homeland Security stating that the grant was denied.

#### **MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

- **Final – March 15, 2010** - These minutes do not include Barb's changes, so Darlene will add those & they will be reviewed next week.
- **Draft – March 22, 2010** - Keith made a motion to approve these minutes as amended. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.

#### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION (No action required)**

- ZCO Letter
- Representative for Senator Gregg

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE BOARD**

Gordon is requesting to hold over his unused vacation time until July 4. The BOS advised him that if he doesn't take the time, he's going to lose it. Gordon recognizes this. Keith made a motion to allow Gordon to hold over 167 hours of vacation time until July 4, 2010. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.

Gordon said he's been working 4 - 10 hour days because he doesn't feel it's worthwhile to have the work release program workers come unless they are going to be there for 8 hours and travel time is about 2 hours a day. From now on, he will not be scheduling work on Fridays.

Rick Bilodeau announced the following upcoming meetings:

April 26 @ 5:45 PM will be a meeting with Lee Kimball re: the Table Top – at Town Office.

June 5 @ 8:00 AM – 1:00 or 1:30 PM will be the actual Table Top – at the EOC.

### **Board Member Liaison Reports**

Bob doesn't have anything to report. Joanne asked Bob to notify Gary Perry that the storm was declared a disaster on a national level, so he should be prepared to work with Nancy to apply for FEMA funds.

Bob said he did go to a BCEP meeting, but nothing is going on. He'll forward minutes to Debbie for the file.

Keith attended the Planning Board meeting last Wednesday and Phil Demerit was elected Chairman and Deirdre Davis was elected Vice Chair. They also selected representatives for various committees.

Keith expressed his disappointment in the denial of the FEMA grant. He'd like to prepare a letter expressing his disappointment, perhaps to the Governor, and would like the BOS support of that. Joanne said that a representative for Senator Gregg will be here at the Town Office tomorrow from 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM, and suggested that he be approached at that time. Keith suggested Deb provide a copy of the denial to Senator Gregg's liaison expressing the Town's disappointment in the program. He also stated that he'll prepare a letter to be sent to the Governor and US Congressional representatives. Betsy suggested this letter be copied to all of our elected officials.

Joanne said the SVRTA is meeting in April & will be discussing the Health Insurance Plan which will be expiring this year, and they will begin shopping around again as a group.

She received an email from John Dodge & Sharon Burnston saying that they had been selected to represent the Planning Board on the Hazard Mitigation Committee.

A Hazard Mitigation Plan Committee will hold its quarterly meeting on April 1 at 7 PM at Town Office.

Confidential information was received about mediation. Bob is planning to be in attendance, and Keith and Joanne are both going to try to attend.

### **Public Comment:**

Mary Frambach asked when it was discussed that the Town Office would potentially move, as she was not aware of it until tonight. Joanne stated it was brought up last week, and the BOS is only gathering information at this time.

Mary suggested contacting the prior tenant to ask why they left & also to inquire about the cost to heat.

Len Gilman asked for some detail about the FEMA grant that was recently denied.

Tim Harkness asked for some detail about the Kingstown plan that was signed last week.

**8:40 PM Keith made a motion to adjourn. Bob seconded the motion. All in favor.**