

Final

Final _____

Accepted _____

Accepted as Amended _____

TOWN OF EPSOM

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

JANUARY 20, 2009

Present: Bob Blodgett, Chairman; Joanne Randall, Vice Chairman; Keith Cota

Other Attendees: Gordon Ellis; David Fiorentino; Joni Kitson; Andrew Walton; Wayne Preve; Nancy Wheeler; Barbara Clark; Glen Horner

Bob opened the meeting at 6:15 P.M., inviting Andrew Walton to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

FOR SIGNATURE

1. **Accounts Payable was signed**
2. **Manifest was signed**
3. **Veteran's Exemption (2) was signed**
4. **Warrant Attest was executed**
5. **CDBG – reimbursement request & request to pay vendor was approved.**
6. **Committee Appointment Papers – Epsom Town Office Building Committee**

Joanne noted the appointment papers were for Dawn Blackwell, Nancy Wheeler, Ed Nutter, Dick Frambach and George Carlson.

Joanne made a motion to sign the appointment papers for those people to the Epsom Town Office Committee with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion.

Keith volunteered to continue as the committee liaison.

There being no further discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Gordon Ellis

Gordon discussed he wished to begin the hiring process for a full time employee. The pay range would be from \$11.00 to not to exceed \$14.00. Due to the current economic environment Gordon suggests limiting the advertising of the position to the Town's Website and TV Channel.

Joanne asked if Gordon had a job description, Gordon noted the office does.

Bob noted the Old Town Hall was flooded due to a water pipe break; he will be assessing the situation tomorrow. They may have to have Serve-pro clean up the water. Gordon noted a fitting for cold water in the bathroom went. Gordon

said the water ran down the ramp and into the wall. He suggested the water be turned off unless the building is being used.

Bob requested a consensus from the Board that he assess the situation and do what has to be done and report to the Town's insurance carrier, the Board gave their consensus.

Keith asked if Gordon had a write-up for the scope of the Highway Department position, Gordon said yes. Keith asked if the position required a CDL, Gordon said yes. Gordon noted yes that driving the one-ton required a CDL now.

Joanne noted Gordon had to provide an end date for accepting applications. The Board agreed to have the Gordon proceed with seeking a candidate for the Highway Department position.

Joanne asked Gordon on average, for a 6 inch snow storm, how much it cost. Gordon noted from \$6,000.00 to \$10,000.00 with one-inch storm costing almost the same.

Staff Discussion

Barbara Clark noted the Board had to decide a date for a public hearing for the petition Warrant Article to rescind SB2. Joanne noted it has to be between February 8 and 23. The date was set for Monday, February 9th. As this meeting room holds only 60 people Barbara will check to see if the room at the Fire Station would be available if the capacity of this meeting room is exceeded for this public hearing.

Barbara noted Keith requested a copy of the lease for the old Library building. Per the last documentation Attorney Soltani has not heard from the Trustee's attorney.

Bob asked Barbara if she had called the insurance company about the Town Hall situation. Barbara needs a report before she can call them.

Nancy noted the Town has received a letter from the LGC rescinding the 2009 dues increase. The dues will remain the same as 2008.

Nancy noted, regarding payment under the CDBG (#5 under "For Signature"), Donna Lane, the grant manager, is requesting reimbursement of invoices and provided forms to request reimbursement of invoices. Joanne noted everything has been signed.

Nancy discussed the audit by Mason & Rich for 2007 and deficiencies. She noted one was a management letter for the findings. There were six issues of concern listed with Mason & Rich in which they are looking for a Selectmen's response. The findings were reviewed with the Selectmen developing responses.

Nancy noted the Budget Committee has held its public hearing and decided on its final budget amount. Nancy gave the Board a draft Warrant with the amount of the proposed default budget. She noted the Board has to decide if they are

recommending the Budget Committee's budget, they also have to vote on Article 5 petition. Nancy reviewed the petition warrant articles.

Joanne noted the Budget Committee took out a number of specific items to get to a bottom line number. These included COLAs and the Police Department vehicle line was reduced by \$15,000.00. Nancy reviewed the lines reduced by the Budget Committee. Chief Preve noted the school and Library employees received raises and express concern for targeting the town employees unfairly.

Joanne noted the Budget Committee discussed the areas of specific expenditures, but that is the responsibility of the Selectmen, whereas, the selectmen have the authority to expend funds. The original Selectmen's budget increase was approximately 12% with the Budget Committee reducing it to 8.78% for an approximate decrease of \$90,000. It was noted by several of the Budget Committee members at the last meeting that they felt even this increase would not pass. Joanne feels the Town should present a united front as the Selectmen could move money around; she felt she could not support the Budget Committee's budget. Bob agreed with Joanne.

Keith noted they still have two other forums to put the budget up for discussion, but also agreed that a 10% budget increase would be difficult to pass. He noted they have the option of accepting the Budget Committee's budget or they go with the Selectmen's budget and defend it at the deliberative session. He expressed concerns with the targeted area changes by the Budget Committee and felt the town employees are being treated unfairly.

Keith noted that he received a call from a Chichester Selectman Richard DeBold regarding employee increases that the Town is considering. Selectman DeBold explained that he has found the regional average is 3.5% with some limited towns considering no increase. Keith felt the Board could find other cuts within the budget, but \$90,000 will require difficult decisions by the Board of Selectmen.

Keith inquired if the Board truly wants to go to the deliberative session and say they agree with the Budget Committee or go with another number that we feel is needed to provide the services the town has expected from its tax dollars. Joanne did not want to support the Budget Committee number but felt they did not have a choice. Bob felt the Selectmen should have a chance to speak their peace.

Keith noted that his biggest concern with the Budget Committee's budget was reduction to the Police Department as it was taking too much of a hit. He felt taking \$30,000.00 out of their budget was way too much. Joanne agreed with Keith saying she did not feel it was an appropriate budget. Keith noted that in the end he could support the \$60,000 reduction in the remainder of the budget as suggested by the Budget Committee.

Joni felt if the Board did not agree with the budget then they should not vote for it.

Nancy noted they are only constrained by the categories in the MS7. She reviewed the areas the Budget Committee neglected to adjust, i.e. Medicare, FICA, Social security, etc. which are currently underfunded in their budget.

Andrew Walton noted no matter what the budget figure is the voters should be made aware that the amount of increase the Town would have to pay for the Merrimack County Nursing Home. He suggested instead of raises the Town pay more toward adjustments to the health insurance. He noted gas prices have decreased but road costs have increased. Nancy pointed out that about half the employees do a buy back or are single so the insurance idea would be no advantage to them.

Chief Preve said his assigned liaison from the Budget Committee never contacted him during the budget cycle development to seek his input and felt this was short-sighted of the process. He asked the Budget Committee on Thursday how they determined how much he needed to run his Department – he felt they pulled numbers out of the air. He noted the Selectmen asked for a budget and then cuts were made to it. He gets frustrated as the Budget Committee did not talk to him about the Department budget decreases before they voted to reduce it. Chief Preve noted that he tried to tell the Chairman of the Budget Committee that the Town would have problems with the Fire and Police Departments if they don't get competitive salary adjustments this year. He would rather see raises (COLA) equal across the board for all town employees.

Dave Fiorentino (a member of the Budget Committee) noted that as he watches the news around the country (economic situation) he pointed out that Epsom is not separate from what is going on and it is not anticipated to be getting better. He felt the Board needs to hold the line on increases including employee COLAs. Chief Preve noted his Department would be better with a default budget instead of the Budget Committee's proposed budget.

Nancy asked if the Website Committee had met. Joanne said yes, Brad Keyes was to contact Nancy to put budget information on the Website.

Joanne reiterated she did not feel right recommending the Budget Committee's budget. She thought when some lines were reduced by the Committee without concern or explanation of why they were cut. The liaisons did not notify the Department heads of the cuts to obtain their feedback.

Keith agreed with Dave Fiorentino's concern with the economy and felt that if the economy is going downhill, questioned why we should be cutting 23% from the welfare budget. If Dave's fears are realized then it would seem that more welfare assistance could be expected over the next year. Keith summarized that the Board will have to make some tough decisions with either the Budget Committee's or Default Budget, regardless of what comes out of the deliberative session. He felt the Board needs to go to the voters at the deliberative session to defend the Selectmen's budget and to let the "process" happen.

Bob asked how the Highway Department was to operate with cuts; Betsy Bosiak noted the Highway Department Budget was not cut.

Andrew hoped that it would not look at the deliberative session like the Selectmen and Budget Committee were fighting; he noted that people with long term jobs are getting laid off.

Nancy's sense at the public hearing was about half the Budget Committee members felt the Budget would not pass even with the cuts and people would vote a default budget. Andrew said they had to sell increases that were beyond Department control, i.e. Police Dispatch increases.

Joanne noted they are in a default budget and can't help it if some people are angry. The Board has a responsibility to do what is best for the Town in the long-term, which is to support the employees. She feels supporting the Budget Committee's budget isn't the best for the Town. Keith noted they will have to make some tough decisions that not everyone will agree to if the Town goes to a default budget.

Joanne made a motion to recommend Warrant Article 1 based on the Budget Committee's proposed budget of \$2,687,846.00 with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion failed with three nos.

Warrant Article 5

Joanne reread the article. She asked clarification if this would be in addition to the default budget. Nancy said the money would not go on the line; it would be a one time distribution of funds similar to Article 2.

Keith thought the way it was written was confusing; Nancy said as a petition article they would have to ask Attorney Soltani about changing the language. Keith noted they should have a discussion at the deliberative session regarding the intent and wording. The wording could be adjusted if the deliberative body present agrees to an amendment

Joanne made a motion to recommend Warrant Article 5 to appropriate \$100,000.00 as stated in the petition article to the Highway Department with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed with 3 yeases.

Warrant Article 2

Nancy noted both Gordon and she and the BOS forgot to add the money into the operating budget for the final payment for the truck. Joanne felt the Board could suggest it be added at the deliberative session.

PRIORITY

Vote on Operating Budget
Petition Warrant Article
Petition to rescind SB2

All items were discussed above.

FOR DISCUSSION

A. Default Budget

Joanne reviewed the increases for 2009 including the 5.7% COLA. Keith noted the Board of Selectmen need to carefully review the Employee Handbook as the COLA is a commitment to employees and indicates to use the Northeast COLA. Given the past practice of Boards he recommends maintaining a 5.7% COLA with Joanne agreeing.

Joni asked the savings for health insurance and workers comp. Joanne noted they would save approximately \$7,000.00.

Dave noted for the last few years Chief Preve had complained the patrolmen were underpaid, he asked if the default budget addressed that. Keith said only with the 5.7% COLA. He explained that the Board will need to consider what default budget lines need to be left unspent so the salary adjustments can be approved next year should the Town's budget not pass.

Keith noted the Town Office has extra hours for town office staff. The Library budget includes a merit raise; he has concerns as to whether the Library Trustees can legally enter into a single year contract without the budget being approved first or the Town voters granting them the authority to do so by warrant article.

Keith and Joanne noted their comfort with the default budget they had.

Keith made a motion to approve the default budget in the amount of \$2,569,281.00 with Joanne seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed with 3 yeases.

The Board took a break from 8:27 P.M. to 8:35 P.M.

FOR DISCUSSION

B. Agreement (Signature), in Confidential Section

Joanne noted the agreement for Colby Brook's Estate as worked out through our attorney and mobile home park owner needs the signature of the Chairman.

Joanne made a motion to approve and sign the agreement for Colby Brook Estates with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Bob signed the agreement.

D. Quote for Color Cover(s) for Town Report

Joanne made a motion to allow Debbie to go with the quote of an additional \$350.00 for color covers for 600 copies of the town report in the amount of \$2,560.73 with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion.

Joni did not disagree but felt the extra cost for color cover would be a contention this year.

Joanne felt they should go with color.

There being no further discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed with 2 yeses with Keith voting no.

E. Epsom Historical Society – Sign Lease

The Board sent the lease to Attorney Soltani for final review.

C. 15 Year Stewardship Agreement

Joanne noted Attorney Soltani indicated he did not have a final copy of the agreement. Keith will follow up with this.

MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Draft – January 12, 2009

Draft – January 5, 2009

It was discussed the January 5, 2009 minutes should be a final, Joanne will request Darlene change this for next week.

The review of the January 12, 2009 minutes was postponed until next week.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY

- a. Primex – Non-renewal
 - b. ZBA Record of Decision
 - c. Town of Bow – Abutter Approval
- Keith noted this was relative to the power plant upgrades. He asked if they wanted to provide a copy to the Health Officer so he could attend and say the Town of Epsom would like clean air.
- d. Letter from LGC
 - e. NHDOT Notice of Intersection Improvement Route 4 & 107
 - f. NHDOT Notice of Bridge Replacement on Route 107
 - g. LGC Basic Financial Policies: A Guide for NH Cities & Towns Publication
 - h. NH Highway Safety – Financial Assistance
- Joanne noted they are looking for projects based upon traffic data.
- i. Water Street V. Town – Supplemental Rule 49-A
 - j. NH Electric Co-operative – Emergency Communications Contact info
 - k. LGC – Refund of Difference
 - l. Paul W. Hodes, Member of Congress – Economic Stimulus
 - m. Miscellaneous Folder

LIAISON REPORTS

Bob noted at the Suncook Valley Regional Town Association meeting he was asked what the Town's budget for office supplies and dispatching costs are. He was asked if the police dispatch calls were recorded.

Joni asked how Gordon made out with the meeting for the ice storm, Bob will find out.

Joanne had an e-mail from the NHMA. They are having a meeting Friday, 1/30/09 to discuss the financial status of the State, each municipality has one vote. None of the Selectmen can attend so she will ask Barbara if she wants to attend.

Joanne noted there are 4 people on the Website Committee with all having education and experience in Information Technology. Norm gentry will continue to update the existing site with the others to design a new site to be implemented next year.

Joni asked who was responsible for putting minutes on the site. Joanne noted Darlene sends them to Deb who reformats them and forwards them to Norm. Joni noted they have red writing and lines through some of the items. Joanne will check on this.

Joanne noted there is a Hazard Mitigation Plan meeting tomorrow night. Joanne noted she has told her Departments she expects them to attend every time there is a Department Head meeting and if they are not able to they will need to provide a written report.

Joni suggested thanking the Department Heads for attending when the meeting is done and letting them know the Board is finished with them.

Keith noted that he has only minor corrections to complete for the Selectmen's report for the Town Report and will forward the final report to Deb for the Town Report.

Keith noted the Police Department has purchased some new furniture. They have older furniture to surplus. They have someone willing to take the metal items at no cost. There is one PC unit the State Fire Warden's Office would like to have; there was a consensus to let them take it. Keith noted other Town Departments took several items and the remainder items are not considered marketable. By consensus of the Board, the Police Chief can proceed to dispose of the surplus furniture and to donate the PC to the Forest Warden's for their use. Keith noted the Planning Board held a hearing for two zoning adjustments, junkyard fees and windmills. They have started the hearing process for the Bartlett property that includes a total of 42 residential units.

Joanne made a motion to adjourn the meeting with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Bob adjourned the meeting at 9:22 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Substitute Recording Secretary