

SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
June 22, 2009

Members Present: Paul Feeney, Chairman
Lynda Walsh, Vice Chairman
Paul Mortenson, Clerk
Lorraine Brue
Larry Harrington

Others Present: Andy Gala, Town Manager
Randy Scollins, Finance Director

The meeting held at the McGinty Room was brought to order at 7:30 p.m. by Paul Feeney, Chairman

7:00 – Citizens Input – No one present for Citizens Input.

7:05 – Goals and Objectives Discussion – Paul Feeney explained why this meeting was scheduled. After some discussion, Paul felt it was important to get input from all members of the Board and to establish issues and strategic planning for FY2010. He said this is an on-going process for the next year but gives guidelines for where the Board wants to go.

Lorraine Brue has established a spread sheet. Paul said it identifies some of the goals that Larry Harrington brought before the Board as well as things pointed out by other members of the Board. The members of the Board were asked to identify and rank issues coming before the Town that need to be addressed by the Board. It will help to allocate resources and keep the focus on the issues. The Board was asked to come up with ten items and indicate the importance of each. Brief comments were made relative to having meetings more often than every two weeks. Andy Gala said they would have to be separate meetings with probably not a full agenda. Larry Harrington suggested that the Board has been doing things that do not necessarily have to come before the Board but could be handled by the Town Manager. He suggested when the Board is working through a sub-committee that it is important to establish whether meetings of the sub-committee must be posted and minutes recorded. The reports from such meetings would then come back to the Board for discussion and vote if necessary. Paul Feeney likes the idea of scheduling other meetings, such as Saturday meetings. Paul Mortenson also likes the idea of extra meetings. He would like to hear from Andy and Randy to see what items on the list of approximately thirty items are under their purview or their general viewpoints. He would like to see the Board take two or three items and move them on to a point where they could be considered accomplished; that is a "victory in my mind." Larry Harrington suggested having a general discussion tonight, pick a number of issues and see if there is a commonality in them and how to move that forward.

The first item on the list is Strategic Planning – Establishing annual goals for the Selectmen, Town Manager and Finance Director. Larry Harrington said the contract with the Town Manager states that the Board and the Town Manager collectively set goals and objectives so that the Town Manager knows clearly how his performance is evaluated. He stressed that it is a collective discussion. The Board should follow the same procedure for the Finance Director even though his contract is not as clear as that for the Town Manager. As far as the BOS is concerned, Larry said the Board should tell the citizens what the Board is going to work on this year and if by election day the citizen is not satisfied with results they can vote for a change on the Board. This would give the voters a transparency into how to evaluate members of the Board.

Paul Mortenson said this process has helped him to focus on what the critical areas are and the need to evaluate and work on them. He pointed out that the “end game” really is the Board running the Town well. On establishing goals and objectives for the Town Manager and Finance Director, he feels that is very good to articulate that; sometimes things could be political. Lynda Walsh agrees that this is a good thing to be establishing goals and objectives. As far as Andy & Randy are concerned, Lynda feels that once the Board establishes the goals for 2010 she would assume that Randy & Andy would be looking at the goals and try to help the Board achieve them. Paul Feeney agreed that there has to be some kind of metric at the end of the year that is reviewed to say what the evaluation was based on. Paul Mortenson asked Randy about what he considers a successful year. Randy responded by stating the many administrative things he is responsible for. He said this is the critical starting point for the whole process to set goals for all three. Lorraine Brue pointed out that this is a team process including Randy and Andy. There has to be a team approach to achieve the most effective outcome. Larry Harrington pointed out that there must be support from the Board for resources that would be needed to accomplish the goals.

Lorraine Brue read the ranking for the top ten goals and objectives as submitted by members of the Board –

- 1) Work with W&S and others to develop a unified approach to effective sewer strategy.
- 2) Determine road repair programs and identify potential funding sources
- 3) Supporting W&S efforts to maximize revenue productivity from signage.
- 4) Rt. 1 Security
- 5) Implement successive planning for key roles.
- 6) Fall Town Meeting - Civil Service Status Police Chief, By-Law.
- 7) Liquor License oversight.
- 8) Establish annual goals for Selectmen, Town Manager and Finance Director
- 9) Working with Planning and W&S identifying future growth projections and the financial impact.
- 10) Reactivate land use committee as revenue potential and strategy for maintaining and renovating all town buildings.

After a brief discussion the Board decided to work with “Working with Planning & W&S, identifying future growth projections and financial impact.” Larry Harrington offered his thoughts on land that could be developed for homes or commercial growth and how that might impact the schools and Town services. He suggested the Town should be looking at new commercial development, what land is available, maybe rezoning some property or rezoning to age restrictive development. This would help in determining where the Town is going in the next 3 to 5 years, should the Town reshape that and what would be the dollar impact both in terms of revenue and expenses. That would feed into Randy’s five-year projections of where he thinks revenue is going. Larry feels this is important because it will help people to understand the 2-1/2% tax increase. If State aid continues to be cut, the overall revenue picture is going to be even more difficult. He said in this way the Town and the Board can sit down with the unions department heads in a transparent way and could help them realize what the revenue numbers are going to be. This type of dialog helps to determine where the Town is going to be in three to five years and would be helpful for Randy with his 3 to 5 year revenue forecast.

Lynda Walsh said the Board should not be identifying items that are going to require the work of a subcommittee in this discussion but rather evaluate each item, determine if a subcommittee is needed and move on. Paul Mortenson feels that it would be good to have Marc Resnick join the discussion on Planning to help on what might be developed rather than have a Board member on a subcommittee who is not knowledgeable in that area. Paul Mortenson said that he thinks Randy Scollins does a lot in terms of budgeting and coming up with a five year plan and having financial information in terms of bargaining with the unions. He feels that a fair amount is done in Randy’s office pertaining to projections and available revenue. Larry Harrington related his experience from having been on the School Committee. He feels it is important for everybody to understand what the revenue numbers are going to be and should be looking at the variances each year just to make sure all are in agreement. He feels there should be more dialog around the revenue numbers and understanding on how they are put together.

There was some discussion about how revenue projection numbers are communicated between departments, particularly to the school department. Randy Scollins said he has always shared the numbers and the five-year trends when negotiating with the unions. He said a better job can be done of communicating the trends and the sources of revenue. Lorraine Brue said she did not feel that this was not being done. Paul Feeney there are things the BOS needs to do from a policy standpoint decide something that Randy does not need to get involved with as the Finance Director but on a strategic planning level decide on how the Board would like to see the Town grow. Randy Scollins said it is important to have a fuller discussion with the Board about these things. There are some critical things that he would like to see settled in order to have the first complete full update He cited the budget, State aid and because there is such a large number budgeted for new growth for next year – \$2.9M – that is a very time intensive

process that is going on right now. The State has to ultimately approve the numbers. This will not be complete until September, that is when the new growth is approved and the tax rate would then be determined. Immediately after that is the time frame to review what he would have updated as the latest 5-year forecast based on the inputs that he has at that time.

Larry Harrington pointed out that two of the larger expenses for the Town are related to health care and pensions. He said these are things that the BOS would have to take a hard look at given the annual increase in the costs for these programs. He suggested having a joint meeting to strategize on what changes can be made to make them more affordable. Those are policy decisions. Paul Feeney said in addition a priority is to look at what type of growth does the Town foresee – growth on Route 1, effect change to minimize the multi dwelling complexes that does not impact services that drain resources or do we look to see what can be done planning-wise and zoning-wise to make sure that it is growth that does not drain resources but that are a source of revenue. Andy Gala commented on the cost of health care insurance. He said administration has started dialog within unions. Dr. Martes and Paul Jackson were part of some of the meetings that have been held. There have been six meetings with leaders from all the unions, had a speaker in from the Public Health Insurance Trust, trying to explain what is driving the costs and offered some suggestions. He welcomes any input from the Board on these issues. This is a collective bargaining issue. Randy Scollins explained that they have been supporting the Legislative delegations to allow the cities and towns to have the same authority as the State - the authority to change co-pays and deductibles which is really the key thing the towns are looking for. That would accomplish a key part of the goal in that it would result in municipal savings.

Reactivate Land Use Review Committee, identify revenue potential - Lorraine Brue reviewed what had been done earlier by that committee. The former committee identified all the Town owned properties with the idea to reactivate the land use review committee that would include members of Planning, Conservation Commission, BOS and ideally Bill Casbarra and Randy Scollins to identify all parcels and to take the next step to see if these parcels could actually be turned into money that potentially could be used look at different needs of the Town. Paul Feeney said going forward to maintaining and renovation of Town buildings; it was the goal originally when this committee was established that the revenue was going to be used towards that. Randy Scollins pointed out that some of these parcels are very time intensive themselves and in order to vet them through all various boards and committees in Town to come to an agreement that it is appropriate for a property to be brought forward. The first committee said that it was difficult to bring even one property to bring forward. He said this is critical to monetize these wasting assets to be used for municipal purposes, each one will be a time intensive process and it will need a dedicated subcommittee as it will take several months or perhaps a couple of years to complete the process of going through all of these processes. Relative to Paul Mortenson's inquiry about what are some of the obstacles to moving these properties along, Randy mentioned

abutters, Town committees or boards and Conservation Commission. Bob Boette said Conservation is very much in favor of cluster zoning with its smaller lots, less roadways and less water consumption and still have open area for preservation of natural resources. Bob said he would be interested in being a member of this committee representing Conservation.

Work with W&S and develop an effective Sewer strategy - Larry Harrington said the reason he put this on the list of issues to be addressed very soon. He feels that W&S Commissioners have had several years in trying to drive a strategy that has not been very successful in Town. It has not passed at Town Meeting. He said the Board has to work with W&S and others to try to craft a strategy that will be a compromise but one that will get through Town Meeting and move forward. Larry pointed out that time is going by and the Town might lose an opportunity to really put together a strategy that is effective for the Town from a cost standpoint as well as ecological standpoint. Paul Feeney said that it is very important to get together with W&S Commissioners and offer them resources and take an effective role. He said this is something that is broken and it needs to be fixed. Lorraine Brue said that ideally the Board should be collaborating and developing this plan together. Her hope is that there can be a group of people representatives from the BOS, Finance and W&S as well as Jay Barrows and people from the other Towns who can identify an approach that is going to make sense to the people who will be impacted by it. There has to be an organized approach and the Board has to make themselves available to work with the people who can come up with a good plan. Larry Harrington feels it is incumbent on the BOS to work with W&S Commissioners for a political solution; to try to come up with a solution before the window closes and we lose an opportunity. Lynda Walsh pointed out that W&S Commissioners really want what is best for the Town; they demonstrated that at the last Town Meeting when they removed a couple of articles from the warrant. Whether or not the BOS should invite W&S in see where they stand at this point, should the Board offer help but she does not want to get into micro managing another board in Town. She is willing to try again to arrive at a solution. Larry Harrington pointed out that with changes in the W&S Commissioners and the BOS maybe there is an opportunity to come back together to try to craft a strategy.

Determine road repair program and identify potential funding sources – Larry Harrington said he put that on the list because the last couple of years the town only used for a small amount of roadway and the roads are deteriorating faster than the highway department can keep up. He feels that a study, report or recommendation about what it would cost over a 20-year period to maintain the roads – is it \$2M or \$3M per year, how far behind, would the first year be \$3M and cut back on the next years. The voters will make the final decision on whether they want to do that. He feels the BOS owes the tax payer some kind of a plan with a ballpark figure on how much it would cost. The voters could then decide if they want to move forward with such a plan. Paul Feeney agreed but what is scary is looking at additional funding through raised taxes or betterments for a road repair

program. He finds it tough to justify allocating additional resources from the taxpayers for that. Paul Mortenson asked if this is something that could be on the CIP list. He pointed out that nothing additional to State money was allocated and perhaps that is something the CIP committee could talk about more. He agrees that Bob Swanson should come up with some kind of a plan even if it is just keeping "our head above water". Bob Swanson gave a brief overview of why it is difficult to estimate costs and each job is different. He said he could apply numbers but then when the work is actually done, the devil is in the details. Paul asked if there was a way to put into black and white Bob's thought process regarding road repair. Bob pointed out that he has spent two years worth just chasing sewer contractors whereas the Board should have told the Sewer Commissioners, houses going up with huge values that are having sewers put in, they are going to have to burden another \$400 or \$500 in betterments for curb to curb overlay as part of the sewer charge; don't dump it on the Highway Dept. and the Chapter 90 funds. Larry Harrington pointed out that this is another policy issue that needs fixing.

Paul Feeney asked to take a moment to address the Board. He said he thinks this Town has turned a corner with this meeting. The Board has put a lot of things behind them, some difficulties over the past two years and looking forward for the first time seeing a confluence of events, with two new selectmen that add a breath of fresh air to the Board. New leadership since reorganizing a month ago, a Town Manager and Finance Director who have always worked with the Board but in the next few months will understand more clearly their directives and what the Board's strategy is going to be. It is important that the voters, the townspeople and the taxpayers know that the Board has made a commitment to not only strategic planning but also to a healthy dialog and respect that has been missing in the past. If the Board maintains this level of decorum and have these discussions openly and honestly the Board can't go wrong. There will be times when we disagree, certainly get into some heated political battles because we have five different frames of reference; have five unique perspectives We are here for a reason and should respect each other and understand that going forward. Brief discussion was held on scheduling the next meeting on strategic planning.

Motion by Paul Mortenson to go into Executive Session to review and approve Executive Session Minutes and to exit for the sole purpose of adjournment. Seconded by Lynda Walsh.

Vote: 5-0-0	Paul Feeney, Chairman	Yes
	Lynda Walsh, Vice Chairperson	Yes
	Paul Mortenson, Clerk	Yes
	Lorraine Brue	Yes
	Larry Harrington	Yes

Meeting adjourned at _____ p.m.

Paul Mortenson, Clerk