

Board of Selectmen  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
Town Hall  
August 4, 2009 – 6:00 P.M.  
**MINUTES**

- 1.0 First Selectman Joyce Okonuk called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Selectmen John Bendoraitis and Russ Blakeslee, and Administrative Assistant Patti Handy were also present. Audience 10.

2.0 **Public Forum**

Resident Teddy Randall questioned as to why she received so many separate tax bills this year. Okonuk replied that this year the bills were processed by Quality Data Company instead of by hand by temporary help. Although this saved the Town a considerable amount of money, there were some noticeable differences; this is also why some of the bills were mailed later than usual.

3.0 **Minutes**

3.1 Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Blakeslee to approve the minutes from the July 14, 2009 Regular Meeting, amended as follows: Item 6.7 should read: “*Resident Ron Cowles spoke to the Selectmen...*” Also, Item 6.9, regarding the proposed Code of Ethics, should read: “Bendoraitis stated that the policy should not be so ‘boiled down’ that it becomes open to interpretation *and Blakeslee remarked that he hopes it would be kept simple.*” Item 6.13, on the discussion regarding the new switch that was to be purchased for the Town Hall computer system, comments should include: “*Blakeslee asked if the less expensive switch would do the job; Bendoraitis replied that yes, it would, but it would be slower.*” Item 7.1 should read: “Okonuk re-capped her progress in *combining* animal control resources with surrounding towns.” Vote: yes, unanimous.

3.2 Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Okonuk to approve the minutes from the July 27, 2009 Special Meeting. Vote: yes (2), abstain (1), motion carries.

3.3 Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to approve the minutes from the July 30, 2009 Special Meeting. Vote: yes, unanimous.

4.0 **Correspondence**

None

5.0 **Old Business**

5.1 Okonuk re-capped the July 14<sup>th</sup> meeting where the Right to Farm Ordinance was presented to the Selectmen by resident Wayne Budney, President of the New London County Farm Bureau. Several people from the community were present to voice their opinions. Resident Susan Davis read a letter from Budney once again voicing his support for adopting the proposed ordinance, and his desire to have it presented at Town Meeting and voted upon. Davis commented that she and Budney feel that personal bias and vindictiveness are slowing down the progress of this proposed ordinance. Resident Teddy Randall also commented that this proposed ordinance would benefit the whole town, both present and future residents, and that it is time that we support the agricultural community and farmers, or else more farmland will become developed. Resident and Connecticut Farm Bureau Government Relations Specialist Joan Nichols spoke at length on the purpose and benefits to the Town in adopting such an ordinance. Nichols stated that although much of the wording in the proposed ordinance models existing State Statutes, it is important for individual towns to make such policy statements in support of farming. Most people are not aware of what is written in State Statutes, and having a town ordinance helps to make the information more available to the public. Nichols sees this proposed ordinance as an “insurance policy” for current and future farmers. Matt Johnson, resident, also spoke in

favor of the proposed ordinance, stating that it is tough for farmers to survive, and that the Town should support them. Liz Rogers, resident and owner of Field of Dreams Horse Farm, stated that horse farms in particular are farms of the future, an idea that Nichols also supported, citing other towns that have adopted similar ordinances. Both Nichols and Rogers reiterated that all laws and regulations are to remain in place and under control of the appropriate state or local authority. Resident Ron Cowles added that he feels the proposed ordinance “smacks of protectionism” and questioned the need for the town to adopt an ordinance if it’s already a State Statute. Resident Oliver Manning replied that the proposed ordinance would put the information out from the town, in writing, stating that farmers have the right to continue to farm. Okonuk interjected that the proposed ordinance does not change any law, but allows the Town to come together as a community to say that we support agriculture. Okonuk made reference to the new Town signs that read “preserving our history and agriculture”—the two facets of the community that Lebanon is most known for. Cowles continued, saying that in over 30 years of living here he has seen numerous problems involving improper farming practices. Okonuk agreed, but stated that most of these incidents happened more than 20 years ago, and that farming practices have greatly improved. Discussion continued. Blakeslee stated that although he agreed with most everything said at the meeting, he does not support this proposed ordinance. Blakeslee read from a prepared statement, saying that he is a staunch supporter of the family farm, but that he has several reasons for being against the proposed ordinance. Most importantly he feels that it could “provide a crutch, an umbrella which huge mega operations could hide under and it would not help the family farm in any way.” Blakeslee added that “if this ordinance passes, I truly believe it will come back to bite us.” Discussion followed. Okonuk and Bendoraitis agreed that it is time to let the community decide. Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Okonuk to bring the proposed Right to Farm Ordinance to a future Town Meeting for action. Vote: yes (2), opposed (1) Blakeslee Motion carried.

- 5.2 Bendoraitis spoke with town handyman John Dudek regarding repairs to the roof of the larger garage at former Duntz property. Dudek provided a repair estimate and state he is capable of doing the work. Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to authorize an expenditure of up to \$1,000.00 to repair the roof of the larger garage at the former Duntz property, funds to come from TIP Account #208-510-5117. Vote: yes, unanimous.
- 5.3 Blakeslee addressed the status of the ice clips at the Fire Safety Complex. He stated that he had spoken to the contractor, Blakeslee Construction. Joyce also spoke with Frank Blakeslee and he indicated that not only did he need warm weather to install the clips he also needed the surface to be dry. He agreed to begin repairs next week. Because the original bid did not include the cost of screws, grommets and silicone, the Selectmen agreed to pay for those costs should the contractor make the request. The Selectmen will not pay for labor to re-install the clips.
- 5.4 Okonuk proposed going out to bid for improvements to the Fire Safety Complex Hall. She reported that there is currently \$20,000.00 budgeted for repairs and improvements that include a new drop-ceiling with insulation and the stripping and refinishing of the walls. Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to allow Okonuk to develop bid specs and prepare to bring to bid proposed improvements for the Fire Safety Complex. Vote: yes, unanimous.
- 5.5 Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to authorize Okonuk to go out to bid for replacement of the Town Hall handicap ramp. Vote: yes, unanimous.

## **6.0 New Business**

- 6.1** Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Okonuk to accept an Affirmative Action Plan for the Town of Lebanon. Vote, yes, unanimous.
- 6.2** Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to approve a request by Colleen Barr to use the Lebanon Town Green for horseback wedding ceremony on September 12, 2009. Vote: yes, unanimous.
- 6.3** USDA Farm and Ranch Land Grant Agreement – no action needed – acted on prior.
- 6.4** Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to authorize the re-purchase of cemetery plot #919 in the New Lebanon Cemetery by the Town in the amount of \$300.00, as requested by Janet L. Nixon and approved by the Cemetery Sexton. Vote: yes, unanimous.
- 6.5** Okonuk met with consultant Steve Gothers of ATC Associates last week regarding the Library asbestos abatement project; he will submit a proposal including fees next week.

## **7.0 Appointments/Reappointments to, and Resignations from, Boards, Commissions and Committees**

- 7.1** Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Bendoraitis to appoint Craig Durand to the Code of Ethics Drafting Committee effective immediately, term to end with completion of project. Vote: yes, unanimous.
- 7.2** Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Blakeslee to accept, with regret, the resignation of Ron Cowles from the Code of Ethics Drafting Committee effective immediately. Vote: yes, unanimous.

## **8.0 Financial Reports**

Okonuk presented the year-end financials for the Selectmen's Budget. No surprises and any budget needing adjustment will be handled by the Board of Finance. Overall budgets (other than Legal Counsel and Snow Removal) were within the appropriations.

## **9.0 Tax Refunds**

Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Bendoraitis to approve the Tax Refunds for July 2009 as follows:

NAME	AMOUNT
Gorman, Melanie C.	\$14.37
LaFontaine, Shirley A.	\$17.68
MacDonald, Francis & Evelyn	\$13.30
Delorme, Keith A.	\$10.49
Olszta, Kenneth M. or Marsha M.	\$78.63
Streilkauskas, Paul	\$30.93
Watkiens, Michelle L.	\$17.90
GMAC	\$83.66
GMAC	\$364.10
US Bancorp Equipment Finance	\$342.72

Vote: yes, unanimous.

## **10.0 Executive Session**

None

## **11.0 Adjournment**

Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to adjourn at 7:40 pm. Vote: yes, unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joyce R. Okonuk, First Selectman