

Board of Selectmen
SPECIAL MEETING
March 5, 2009 – 6:00PM
Town Hall

MINUTES

1.0 Call to Order

First Selectman Joyce Okonuk called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm; Selectmen Russ Blakeslee, John Bendoraitis and Administrative Assistant Patti Handy were also in attendance: Audience 5.

2.0 Public Forum

Residents requested that the subject of an Agricultural Committee be added to a future meeting, one that would include Town Planner Phil Chester, resident farmers Teddy Randall, Susan Davis, Marc Reynolds and other interested parties. The selectmen agreed to look into it.

3.0 Minutes

Motion by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to approve the minutes from the February 24, 2009 Special Meeting: Vote yes, unanimous.

4.0 Correspondence

None

Motion by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to amend the order of the meeting and take up item 6.1 under item **6.0 Old Business** on the agenda: Vote yes, unanimous.

6.0 Old Business

- 6.1 Selectmen discussed the previously proposed Ordinance Authorizing Tax Exemptions for Farm Buildings. Blakeslee re-capped that Chester had presented the proposed ordinance at the February 10, 2009 Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. The proposed ordinance has been discussed with the Board of Finance. Initially Chester presented a model that showed the fiscal impact on taxpayers for a \$50,000 exemption. He also presented fiscal impact models for \$75k or \$100k exemptions. As there was only a minor difference in the tax impact between all three levels, the Selectmen felt at that time that the \$100k would provide a better benefit to farmers and have a negligible fiscal impact on taxpayers. Blakeslee stated that he would be more in favor of lowering the amount to “up to \$50,000” before bringing it Town Meeting. Okonuk expressed that she is 100% behind the exemption at either amount, but feels that due to the economy, the timing may not be conducive to getting an exemption passed at any amount. She also expressed a desire to have more information available to the public, to help educate tax payers on the purpose and scope of the exemption. Discussion followed regarding fiscal the impact on taxpayers, the timing of the proposal and the impending budget implications. Susan Davis read a letter from Wayne Budney, who was unable to attend, regarding the proposed ordinance (see attached). Ms. Randall also spoke in favor of getting this ordinance passed. Chester pointed out that the time for implementation is not effected by postponing this discussion until after the Town Meeting in March. Marc Reynolds agreed that a few weeks is not enough time to fully educate the public on the issue, and he added that in his opinion the \$50,000 amount would be inadequate. The Selectmen discussed the issue at length. A motion was made by Blakeslee to cut the amount of the proposed tax exemption for farmers to \$50,000 and bring it to the Town Meeting in March. Motion

failed due to lack of a second. Discussion followed, and the Selectmen agreed to take up the item again when accurate budget numbers are available. No action.

Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to return to the regular order of the agenda and take up item 5.1 under item **5.0 New Business**: Vote yes, unanimous.

5.0 New Business

- 5.1 Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to approve a request from Boy Scout Troop 58 to conduct Earth Day in Lebanon on Saturday, April 18, 2009 and conduct a Plant Sale on the Green the same day. Vote: Yes, unanimous.
- 5.2 Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Blakeslee to approve a request from Boy Scout Troop 58 to conduct an overnight campout on the Lebanon Green on Friday, April 17th in celebration of Earth Day. Vote: Yes, unanimous.
- 5.3 Selectmen listened to a proposal from Master Gardener Stacey Whitney to install a tree identification system for all the newly planted trees on the Lebanon Green. Whitney gave a detailed explanation of the project, including her source(s) of funding, materials to be used and how the trees would be marked. Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Blakeslee to permit Stacey Whitney to install a tree identification system for all specimen trees on the Town Green; Whitney will also return with more detail on the tags to be used. Vote: Yes, unanimous.
- 5.4 Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to approve the request from Kenneth Giella of the Lebanon Towne Militia, to use the Town Green for purposes of a “School of the Soldier” event based on the detailed information supplied by Giella. Vote: Yes, unanimous.
- 5.5 Selectmen discussed the possibility of reducing the number of street lights in town for the purposes of lowering the cost of electricity. Selectmen reviewed current bills as well as lists of lights provided by Bozrah Light and Power and CL &P. Okonuk reported that she has spoken to a representative of the Town of Sprague who said that they were able to cut the number of lights by half, saving approximately \$40,000 annually. Bendoraitis said that he would like to see more data, such as seeing the lights plotted on a map and perhaps accident reports before making a decision. Okonuk agreed, and also felt that it would be beneficial to visually inspect the locations at night, and to get input from the Department of Public Works as well. Bendoraitis added that residents who would be affected should be notified before any lights were turned off. The Selectmen agreed to postpone action on the item until a future meeting. No Action.
- 5.6 Selectmen discussed the Capital Projects Ordinance that was introduced from the floor at the Annual Town Meeting in May, 2008. This issue was discussed at the February 10, 2009 Special Meeting as well. Although the Ordinance originally passed at Town Meeting by a vote of the residents, it was deemed to be illegal inasmuch as the warning for the meeting did not include this item. The originator of the Ordinance, Tim Wentworth, he has asked that his proposed Ordinance be warned on this year’s Annual Town Meeting agenda. The specifics of the proposed Ordinance, which states that “Any capital project with a cost of \$1,000,000.00 or more must be approved by a majority vote of the electors at the Annual Town Meeting”, were discussed at length in February, and again at this meeting. Bendoraitis feels that the stipulation of the Annual Town Meeting might be restrictive when time-sensitive grants are involved, and that potential funding opportunities could be lost; all agreed. Bendoraitis proposed a compromise, where the

language of the Ordinance be changed to reflect the actual tax impact on the taxpayers based on a percentage of the Mil Rate, rather than the proposed dollar amount. This idea was discussed at length and in detail.

Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Blakeslee that the proposed Ordinance be brought to the Annual Town Meeting and be amended to read as follows: "AN ORDINANCE REGARDING THE APPROVAL OF CAPITAL PROJECTS: Any capital project with an estimated tax impact in excess of 5% of the Mil Rate must be approved by a majority vote of the electors at the Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Lebanon, or any referendum to which said meeting is adjourned, before any funds may be expended for said project." Vote: Yes, unanimous.

Vote: Yes, unanimous.

- 5.7.1 Moved by Blakeslee, seconded by Bendoraitis to appoint Laura Cascio as an alternate to the Rails to Trails Committee to fill a vacancy, with a term to end 05/09/2010.

Vote: Yes, unanimous.

- 5.7.2 It was brought to the attention of the Selectmen that there was an error in the appointment/reappointment dates on the Conservation Commission. It was discovered that the original appointment date for Marc Lang was in error. Motion made by Okonuk, seconded by Bendoraitis to correct the term end date for Marc Lang from 03/01/2011 to 04/01/2010. Vote: Yes, unanimous.

6.0 Old Business (taken out of order)

7.0 Financial Report Update

Selectmen reviewed the recommendations of the Capital Needs Planning team for Capital Reserve and Capital Expense Requests for FY 09-10. Moved by Bendoraitis, seconded by Blakeslee to submit requests totaling \$1,003,375 for the Capital Reserve and Capital Expense Funds for FY 09-10: Vote: Yes, unanimous.

8.0 Tax Refunds

Motion by Blakeslee, seconded by Okonuk to approve the tax refunds for February as follows:

Tax Refunds for February 2009

NAME	AMOUNT
Manning, Albert R. & Lynn E.	\$2,363.55
Jones, Kathleen	\$8.08
Hodge, Kevin & Cynthia	\$31.05
Thompson, Mary & Timothy	\$2,379.46
Russo, Joseph	\$32.23
Fearn, John A.	\$789.75

Vote: Yes, unanimous.

9.0 Adjournment

Moved by Okonuk, seconded by Bendoraitis to adjourn at 9:45 pm. Vote: Yes, unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce R. Okonuk
First Selectman