

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

January 10, 2005

PRESENT:

Ruth I. Clough, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Douglas W. Lyon, Selectman
Mark Kaplan, Selectman
Jessie Levine, Town Administrator

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Seastrand, Chief of Police
Debbie Cross, Intertown Record
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Clough called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

Meeting Minutes: The Board of Selectmen approved the minutes of January 3, 2005.

NEW BUSINESS:

Tracy Library Request to Serve Alcohol: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from the Ginny Foose and Linda Miller, co-directors of Tracy Memorial Library, seeking permission to serve alcohol at their volunteer party on January 25, 2005. Their letter states that they will comply with the requirements of the Town's alcohol ordinance. Mr. Lyon moved to approve the request, seconded by Chair Clough. Unanimously approved.

Police Department: Chair Clough thanked Chief Seastrand for joining the Selectmen to discuss their meeting with Police Department staff this Wednesday night. Chief Seastrand said that his staff is under the impression that after receiving the final management study, they would have the opportunity to review the recommendations with the Board of Selectmen and discuss their thoughts. He said that they also hope that communication with the Selectmen will be ongoing, and that they will be a part of it. Mr. Lyon asked if the staff were aware of what Chief Seastrand and Ms. Levine had worked out and what was being worked on. Chief Seastrand said that he is not sure that they are aware, and Chair Clough said that perhaps on Wednesday the Selectmen should discuss their recommendations and what has been happening since. Chief Seastrand said that he has been going through the list and checking things off as he goes along. He said that he is 80 to 85 percent completed or in the process of completing the projects on the list. He said that some of the recommendations that called for staff committees he attempted to implement right away; some employees were interested and some were not. He said that his department has drafted all of the new job descriptions and has engaged Jacques Personnel to manage the recruitment for the sergeant's position. An officer has been placed to handle school traffic, the restructuring of the department is in the process of being done, and use of Crimestar has increased (it took a while to get the computers up-to-speed). He has not given the list of priorities to members of his department. Chair Clough said that the Selectmen should address the fact that they have identified priorities, and provide an update on the progress that has been made.

Chair Clough said that the reason for the whole study was to help them do their job in comfort and safety. She asked Chief Seastrand if there were any areas of the report that he wanted to talk about specifically, or if the Selectmen should just listen. She asked if the staff were uncomfortable with recommendations from an outside source, and Chief Seastrand said that they were uncomfortable from the interview process on. The Department thought that they would get more out of the results, especially after they spent so much time detailing how they want things to work. He said that people have mentioned that they did not see anything attributable to their own comments. He said he is not sure that they will be forthcoming in meeting with the Selectmen; it is possible that they could get there Wednesday and find a mute group. Chair Clough acknowledged that this is a new process for members of the Department, and perhaps it would help for the Selectmen to be more interactive with employees and to meet more frequently. She said that she knows Chief Seastrand brings the Selectmen's concerns back to his Department on a regular basis, but Chief Seastrand added that face-to-face contact helps.

Chief Seastrand said that overall, the Department is doing fine. They have rehired Rob Thorp as a part-time officer, and he will come on board when he has completed the recertification requirement. Chief Seastrand said that he was happy to have Mr. Thorp back, as he brings a level of maturity to the table. He will continue his full-time job as the superintendent in the New London-Springfield Water Precinct.

Chair Clough asked if the Department would be at full staff when the sergeant's position is filled, and Chief Seastrand replied that it would if the position were filled from the outside. If the position were filled from within, then there would be another open position to fill. He said that the process is going well; he was surprised at the number of applicants (11) for the position, from as far away as Colorado, Florida, and Rhode Island. He said that one candidate is in Iraq, and it is hard to know when he would be coming back. All of the candidates have good experience and training. Mr. Lyon said that the benefit of using an outside agency is that even if the inside candidate is picked, they will know what else is out there. Chief Seastrand said that with the recent retirement of the Chief in Newbury, there may be ripples in the area as police officers move around.

Chief Seastrand said that BJ Hardy has been hired back as a full-time dispatcher, and has committed to a year in that role. He is already trained and certified. The Department is still looking for part-time dispatchers. Mr. Lyon said that he hopes the Department can get some stability.

Chief Seastrand reported that the building seems to be running fine, and they are going longer and longer without problems. He said that Century Mechanical and Steve Hawes Plumbing have been in and out, trying to research the problems with the HVAC system. Ms. Levine said that she is waiting for an overall proposal from Century or Milestone to address improvements that could be made to the system. Mr. Lyon said that it will be important to keep the roof cleared off to prevent ice damming.

Chair Clough asked Chief Seastrand if he had any comments about the budget process, and he said that he was glad that all issues were addressed, especially the detective vehicle. Mr. Lyon said that he thinks that everyone on the Budget Committee got their questions answered and were satisfied.

Chief Seastrand said that he looks forward to Wednesday's meeting with staff, and the Selectmen agreed that they do as well.

Adelphia: Ms. Levine referred to two letters received from the new General Manager of Adelphia, Pete Jablonsky. One letter notified the Board of Selectmen announcing changes to Adelphia's programming and services, including rate increases to cable and digital services. The second letter announced a change in digital packaging called "Valuepacks." Notices will be mailed to those customers 45 days before the effective change, planned for March 2005. Ms. Levine noted that she had received some recent

complaints about Adelphia's internet service, and asked the Selectmen if they had received any as well. The Selectmen had also heard or experienced a few issues.

Joint Assessor: Ms. Levine said that she would be meeting later that afternoon with Dennis Pavlicek, Newbury Town Administrator, and Donna Nashawaty, Sunapee Town Manager, to work on the intermunicipal agreement. Ms. Levine said that advice from the municipal attorney at the Local Government Center was that the towns would not have to seek Town Meeting approval for entering into the agreement with other towns, but that it would be advisable to have town Meeting authorize the Selectmen to appoint a representative to the joint board established by the intermunicipal agreement. Ms. Levine said that she would bring a draft to the Selectmen as soon as it is ready for review.

Quicklink: Ms. Levine said that the Quicklink had been mailed out last week, thanks to Accumail. Mr. Lyon asked if there had been any feedback about the financial information, and Ms. Levine said that she had heard none. However, she has received about ten subscriptions to the e-mail list since the link went out. Chair Clough said that she had spoken to Bob Lavoie at the Planning Board meeting, who is interested in serving on that Board. Ms. Levine said that she has received some volunteer interest forms, most of which are interested in the Conservation Commission.

Phillips Preserve Timber Project: At 9:00 AM, the Selectmen were joined by Les Norman and Peter Stanley of the Conservation Commission, and Leo Maslan, a forester from Cornish, NH. The three were present to discuss the Conservation Commission's forest management and field reclamation project in Phillips Preserve, land on Otter Pond that was donated to the Town by Bessie Phillips. Mr. Stanley said that ten years ago, at the request of the Commission, Pierre Bedard and Clayton Platt prepared a forest management plan for the Preserve. Mr. Stanley showed that plan to the Selectmen. The goal of the plan is to create fields, timber management, maintain views from the Preserve, and provide resources for the Conservation Commission. Initially, the plan was received with some hostility in the immediate neighborhood, and it has taken a long time to meet with abutters and discuss the project. Two years ago, after receiving an easement from the Adies to access the Preserve, the Conservation Commission invited abutters on a tour of the property to explain the forest management project. The Commission completed the road this past summer, and is now ready to continue the project.

Mr. Stanley explained that the next stage is the cutting of timber and generation of revenue to stump, grade and seed the field area. They have received two estimates: \$10,000 if the stumps are buried on-site, and \$16,000 if they are removed. The final decision will be depend on the revenue received from the timber harvest, but the preference is to dispose of the stumps off-site. Mr. Stanley referred to the plan, showing the area of the timber harvest. He explained that the area of the cut is an even-aged forest, formerly an open field, but now full of small pine. The forest is thinning itself by dominating over healthier varieties of trees. The selective timber harvest will help the process by removing one-third to one-half of the trees. Mr. Maslan explained that basal area is the measurement used by foresters, and 90-110 trees per square feet is recommended for a productive pine stand. This area in Phillips Preserve has well over 200 trees, so it is considered well overstocked. Mr. Stanley said that the goal is to grow good quality pine, so it is a long-term investment for the community to improve the stock by taking out the lower quality trees. Mr. Maslan said that this project would be the first tree thinning of any kind that has happened here. The primary focus would be to remove the lowest quality trees, but not all of them, because to do so would leave the area too open.

Chair Clough asked if they would be chipping the trees, and Mr. Stanley said that the harvest would consist of saw logs and chips. Mr. Maslan said that he thinks there is a load of hardwood pulp as well. Mr. Stanley said that no cutting will be visible from anywhere outside the immediate cut, unless one is flying overhead. The Conservation Commission is seeking approval from the Board of Selectmen to

approve the project, the cost of which will be entirely covered by revenue. Mr. Maslan explained that the conditions are perfect to begin the cut now, in the winter, and that to wait for spring would be more difficult due to mud and soft soil. Mr. Stanley said that no wetlands will be crossed during the project.

Mr. Stanley also showed the field reclamation area on the plan, and explained that the area has been moved slightly due to wetlands in the lower portion of the proposed field. He and Mr. Maslan located the bounds of the property and are confident that the entire project is well within the bounds. Mr. Maslan said that he had spent Saturday inspecting the property and marking the timber that should be cut. He said that the logger is Lou Caldwell from Vermont, who is currently completing a logging project for the Bucklins. Mr. Maslan will manage the project on a day-to-day basis.

Mr. Lyon said that this is Town-owned land, and asked if the purpose of the project is to improve the forest. Mr. Stanley said that the goal is to improve the quality of the timber and to keep the field open for wildlife habitat (it will have to be mowed every two years or so). The field will create an element of wildlife habitat that is missing in this area because it is all forest. Certain birds need the open space, as do deer and turkey. He said that the Conservation Commission is trying to balance the use of the land for revenue for the town in the long run and wildlife needs. He cautioned that a timber harvest is not pretty; it will be a shock to walk into the area even after a limited harvest, but in the long run it will benefit the land. Mr. Maslan said that they will leave most of the hardwood, especially where there is evidence of nesting. They will not cut dead trees because of their habitat component.

Chair Clough said that a whole tree harvest will minimize the impact. Mr. Lyon moved to approve the cutting operation, seconded by Mr. Kaplan. Approved 3-0. Mr. Maslan gave the Selectmen a copy of his contract; his commission is 20% of the net proceeds from the harvest, and the remainder goes to the Town. He conservatively estimates that approximately 35,000 board feet will be cut, not including the field area. There is a dead red maple that will need to be cut at the entrance to the road, which is okay with Richard Lee.

The Selectmen will receive another contract from the logger. Mr. Maslan has asked the logger to make sure that he stays clear of the public trails. Mr. Maslan offered to meet with citizens who are interested in this timber project or timber harvesting in general. He would not charge for those meetings. Mr. Stanley said that the Commission will talk to abutters again; they have talked to Cindy Adie already. Mr. Maslan said that the project should take about three weeks. If there are any issues during the cut, he will contact the logger immediately.

Chair Clough asked if the abutters could be notified immediately, and Ms. Levine said that she will draft a letter. Mr. Lyon asked that the letter include Mr. Maslan's offer to meet with people. Mr. Maslan suggested that the letter should discourage people from entering the area of the cut on their own, due to the danger. The Selectmen thanked Mr. Stanley, Mr. Norman, and Mr. Maslan for their time and their attention to this project.

OLD BUSINESS:

Fieldstone Lane and Little Cove Road: The Selectmen were joined at 9:30 by Richard Lee, Road Agent. Ms. Levine said that she had met with Bob and Lynne Bell on January 5, and referred to her memorandum summarizing their conversation. She said that she and the Bells had discussed alternatives available to them and the property owners on Fieldstone Lane and Little Cove Road, the gravel roads that the Selectmen did not accept as Town roads following the public hearing on December 20, 2004. The points that they discussed are:

1. If Bells pave the portion of the roads they own, will the Selectmen definitely accept them?

2. If Bells paved their portion, what will the Town do with its portion?
3. If the Town receives a check (security) covering the cost of paving, will it accept the road unpaved since it will have the funds to do the paving? If so, what about the portion already owned by the Town?
4. Should the Bells petition Town Meeting to accept the road unpaved?
5. Should the Bells petition Town Meeting to accept the road unpaved, and have Town Meeting vote that it will not be paved until a future Town Meeting votes otherwise?
6. Betterment – Richard thinks this is not legal for road improvements.

Ms. Levine said that the Bells did not seem inclined to bring a petition to Town Meeting, because they do not want to politicize the question or circumvent the process. However, they will notify property owners of that option. Ms. Levine said that Richard Lee believes that betterment is not legally allowed for road improvements, and would be politically difficult if not all of the property owners wanted the road paved.

Mr. Kaplan said that his gut feeling is to ask the Bells to pave the road. If it is paved and he comes back to the Selectmen and asks for acceptance, that follows the Selectmen's policy of not taking unpaved roads. Mr. Lyon said that he would be inclined to agree, unless Richard Lee saw interest in doing it another way. Mr. Lee said that he agrees with Mr. Kaplan; as Road Agent, he does not want to see the Town accepting roads that are unpaved. However, looking at things from the Bells' side, they are caught in the middle because their road was completed before the Selectmen adopted their current policy, and the Town probably would have accepted the road had they applied sooner. He said that the material on those two roads is very good; the surface material on Fieldstone is of excellent quality. He is not willing to take the roads as gravel, but suggested that as a compromise, the Bells be asked to put down 2" of base instead of 3". Eventually, the Town will pave the remainder of the road, and at that time the Town will put the final 1" on the entire road. The 2" base should last a long time.

Mr. Lyon asked if there is a disadvantage to having the road go from paved to gravel to paved, and Richard Lee said that they will have to sand the graveled portion more in the winter and grade it in the summer, but that section of the Town road gets good sun and is generally not icy. The portion that the Bells still own will be icy if it remains gravel.

Chair Clough said that to summarize, it sounds like Richard Lee recommends taking the road with a 2" paved base. Eventually, the town could pave the middle section of the road and put the top on. There is no timeline for that project, however, and others in Town have been waiting a lot longer to have their roads paved.

Mr. Lyon said that he understands the sensitivity to other gravel roads, and asked if there were any advantages to paving the middle section at the same time that the remainder of the road is paved. Mr. Lee said that there is no discount in paving one vs. two miles. Mr. Lyon said that the only reason he voted against accepting these roads is that they were unpaved. Chair Clough asked if the road were paved, would the Selectmen recommend accepting them as town roads, and the other Selectmen agreed. Mr. Lyon made a motion to tell the Bells to pave with 2" of base, and that he would then be comfortable recommending the acceptance. Ms. Levine cautioned that the Bells would have to go through the public hearing process again, which the Selectmen acknowledge.

Mr. Kaplan asked how many homes were on the section of the roads owned by the Bells. Mr. Lee said that there are eight homes. Mr. Kaplan asked what would happen if those eight do not want their road paved, and Ms. Levine said that the road would not become a Town road and they would own it. Mr. Lee said that they will inevitably change their minds after a few years of spring thaw and summer dust.

Mr. Kaplan seconded Mr. Lyon's motion, and it passed unanimously. Mr. Lyon said that he thinks the decision showed that the Selectmen are attempting in good faith to keep the costs down, and the Bells are obviously interested in working things out in a mutually agreeable fashion.

SIGNATURES:

Building Permits:

- Begin Construction, LLC, Castle Lane (130-015-004), permit to construct colonial home with 2-car garage – Approved (Permit 05-002)

Other Items for Signature:

- Payroll and Disbursement Voucher for the week of January 10, 2005 and Disbursement Voucher for the week of December 31, 2004
- Contract for Forestry Services with Leo Maslan - Approved
- Intent to Cut for Town of New London, Phillips Preserve – Approved
- Contract with Capital Alarm Systems for alarm services to Highway Garage – Approved
- Consulting Contract with Jane Hubbard of Andover, NH, for updating the Emergency Operations Plan (fee of \$6000 will be covered by grant from State Department of Emergency Management).

There being no further public business, the Board of Selectmen voted to convene a non-public meeting to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 I (a) and a real estate matter pursuant to 91-A:3 I (d). Roll call vote: Lyon – yes; Kaplan – yes; Clough – yes.

Upon returning from non-public session, the Selectmen voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator