



# Meeting Minutes

Judge Welsh Meeting Room – 1:00 p.m.  
September 12, 2013

**Members Present:** Mike Canizales, Duane Steele, Clarence Walker, Catherine Russo, Doug Cliggott, and alternate Sean Patrick Harrington

The minutes of the Public Session were approved as submitted by a vote of 6-0-0.

Minutes of the Executive Session of July 31, 2013 were approved as submitted by a vote of 5-0-1.

**Member Statements:** Catherine Russo stated the need to tone down the “businessman” rhetoric. She also discussed the need for a strategy, especially using the local comprehensive plan, and suggests that we pay attention to the experts that we have paid for information as in the housing specialist whose recommendations were not implemented after a \$25,000 fee. She recommended considering using two police officer salaries to hire a substance abuse counselor.

Clarence Walker stated that we need to be paying attention to the details of work being done by contractors and subcontractors for the town, especially with regard to change orders. He expressed dismay that we have errors and omissions, and conflicts with our charter. He also expressed unhappiness with the Town Manager’s statement that a contract with an employee does not meet the requirements of our charter. Clarence also expressed unhappiness with the work done by our town attorneys.

Mike Canizales suggested a review of that contract by someone other than Koppelman and Paige, our town attorneys, who would be in conflict if they reviewed the contract that they initiated. Mike states that the aforementioned conflict between the employment contract and charter has been resolved, but he suggests that in the future a private attorney should review any instances of contract disparity. Mike praised the use of the VMES building for the Council on Aging. He also offered kudos to Pat Hudson, Benefits Administrator, our Payroll Administrator \_\_\_\_\_, and Council of Aging Director Chris Hottle. Mike read a letter published by The

**Banner regarding the proposed police station, police staffing, and possible sharing of facilities and/or staff with other towns. The writer, Mr. Kelly, suggested that we have all information available before spending more money for studies and discussions.**

**Clarence Walker stated that we need to pay attention to costs for errors and omissions, and conflicts with our charter. He feels that we are currently approving change orders by contractors who are not fulfilling their original contract, and that we are continuing projects with no fiscal oversight. He further states that we have spent in excess of \$50,000 on schematic design for the police station, and now we are being asked for an additional \$37,000. A discussion ensued, and members agree that we need to wait for more information before we spend more money blindly on a police station design.**

**Mike discussed a debt management policy (see handout) which the BOS and Finance Committee approved in December 2009. This is our current policy as it has never been amended. The policy states that we limit the total debt service on 10% of gross revenues including self-supporting debt and debt exclusions. The policy also states that the town will limit its general obligation debt to 2.5% of total assessed property values for the town. Doug Cliggott stated that an agenda item for the Board of Selectmen on policy amendment and clarification on enterprise/debt fund is necessary. Doug also suggested that the BOS have made a five year fiscal plan a priority, and that we need to have a discussion with policy makers, voters, and town employees on this five year plan. CIP and debt service, which are linked, need to be a major part of this discussion. Doug stated that he has received much support from Dan Hoort and Pam Hudson regarding employee and retiree benefits, expenses, etc. He also shared that Seabrook Consultants have provided information on healthcare liabilities, and that we need to fund \$800,000 to cover retiree healthcare.**

**A general consensus from the Board was that they all support Doug's 5 year plan. There is concern than we have more retirees and their spouses than current employees, and other questions relating to paying for OPED were discussed. Discussion centered around implementation of this plan, why we allowed this to exist for so long, and how we petition the BOS to raise the \$800,000.**

**Mike suggested four motions: Number 1: we make our number one priority funding to Siegel recommendations for OPED, and add \$200,000 for pension for retired staff. Number 2: staff and BOS, inclusive of revised 5 year debt service and CIP, achieve a 2 ½ % growth rate over 2014. Number 3: BOS study their 5 year capital and fiscal plans, and achieve a 13% growth rate 2019 over 2014. Number 4: All free cash goes first to unfunded OPED liabilities before being made available to use as free cash. Stan Sikorski made a motion to accept all four proposals, seconded by Clarence Walker. The vote was 5-0-1 with Duane abstaining.**

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Mike announced there will be a meeting the upcoming Saturday at the school between 3 and 5 p.m. to address the harbormaster's budget with the possibility of eliminating the detective's salary from the harbormaster's budget and putting it back into the police department budget.

There was a discussion about the possibility of using secret ballots with their historic use and studies which provide information. The studies show that people are more fiscally responsible when using a secret ballot because they are not reacting to peer pressure to fund A, B, or C. The cost to rent equipment per town meeting is \$1300 per town meeting so that this can be done electronically. The Town Moderator, Mary Jo Avellar, thinks that she has no difficulty dealing with secret ballots, especially electronic ones. The former method of pencil and paper is cumbersome and time consuming, and may have been dropped for those reasons.

The Town Moderator mentioned that she is concerned about a complaint filed by the Finance Director, Dan Hoort, against members of the Finance Committee under the guise of discrimination simply because "he doesn't like your politics". She ask, as do members of the Finance Committee, how will they get reliable information and help from this employee especially now at such an inopportune time right before the budgeting processes begin. Mike thinks that he will deal with this through the Town Manager and the proper channels, and cautioned against the use of the press to air complaints against the town official.

The meeting was adjourned after two hours and five minutes.

Respectfully submitted,

Maghi Geary