

Selectmen's Meeting
January 16, 2006

The Selectmen met for their weekly meeting at the Town Office at 7:00 p.m. Present were Selectmen James McGarr, Charles Cheney and Charles Wheeler. Selectmen Homer and Johnson were not present. The Board spent the first half hour reviewing and signing the manifest. They also signed a land use penalty warrant and approved two new residents.

At 7:30 p.m. Tom Mullen from Owl's Nest came before the Board to discuss the assessments at the golf course and Pine Ridge. Accompanying Tom was his daughter Kelly. Tom indicated that as the Board was aware, he has filed abatement appeals with the Board of Tax and Land Appeals for the 2004 assessments on the Owl's Nest Golf Course, and on the behalf of the 11 owners at the Pine Ridge development located at Owl's Nest. Tom indicated that he had spoken with an administrator from the BTLA, and she indicated that the Board had received more appeals from Campton and Thornton than any other Town in the State to do with one taxpayer. He also read a letter that he had received from the BTLA, encouraging the Town and taxpayers to try and reach a settlement rather than go before the Board for a hearing. The letter also indicated that it would be quite some time before the hearings would be scheduled. Tom indicated he is sure that the Board like himself has better things to do than spend a day in Concord at these hearings. He also indicated that even though the Town would have Mark Nieder from CNP representing them, that at least one member of the Board of Selectmen is expected to be there as well. Also they want each party to have their attorney present. Tom wanted to suggest that the Town and Owl's Nest consider a third party appraiser to mediate a settlement between the Town and Owl's Nest. This person would be a non biased individual, and the cost of his services could be shared by the Town and Owl's Nest. Tom indicated that he had met with Mark Nieder on three occasions to discuss these values, and that he felt that he had made some fundamental mistakes that he could understand given the volume of work undertaken with the revaluation. He also indicated that Mark had corrected some of the inconsistencies as well. He felt that the values on Sunset Ridge that he had just received this 2005 tax year seemed fair, but he felt that the Pine Ridge values were out of line. He did not feel that Mark handled the appraisal of these lots in the same way, and that the real estate tax stamps were used to indicate market value. He had met three times with Mark, and felt that some progress was made the first time, but the second time, was when the reval company was having hearings with any taxpayers who had questions about their new values, and the line was getting long, and he felt that Mark felt rushed. Tom pointed out that the land that Owl's Nest sell can include intangibles for golf memberships, architectural fees, etc. These intangibles have to be clearly defined in the paperwork to the lending institutions. Tom then ask his daughter Kelly, who is an attorney, to explain the difference between mediation and arbitration. Kelly explained that mediation involves a neutral third party working with the other two parties to try to resolve a dispute. The mediator works to get all the facts, and works to get the two parties to come together to agree on a mutual resolution to their differences. Arbitration involves a finding that is binding like a contract, and is settled by a court decision. The cost of a mediator can run from \$300 to \$1,000. Tom recommended

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Capital Appraisal as a good third party source. Tom and the Board then discussed different land values in and around the golf course, and some of Tom's concerns about the differences in the values. Tom informed the Board that Owl's Nest has just purchased the Pike land on NH Route 175 which consists of 184 acres, and has been an eyesore for many years. He felt that the Town should give them a taxbreak on improving this land. The Board pointed out that this land is in Thornton, not Campton. There was also some discussion about the previous drainage issues with property owners on Owl Street, and how the resolution to this problems eventually cost Owl's Nest over a million dollars. Tom indicated that he just wanted to see the properties at Owl's Nest treated like every other property in Town, and if their values were correct than the other properties that he was using as comparable were too low, and should be brought up in value. He indicated that if other properties were brought up in value, he would have no problem as the tax rate would come down and things would be equal. The Board indicated that they want to talk with Mark Nieder again before they make any final decisions on a mediator.

The Board met next with Mike Piazza who had put some additional drawings together showing the proposed Town Office and Fire Department on five acres of land. He also indicated that he had an engineer look at the road to get an idea of what kind of costs to put in to upgrade the road. He did not feel that there would be a problem with the trucks getting in and out when they have a call the way the buildings are situated. A flashing light would be necessary that could be controlled from inside the fire trucks. Mike indicated that the trucks would not have built up too much momentum coming out of the bay, and even to the intersection of Vintineer and NH Route 49 so speed would not be a problem. The next step would be for the Board to meet with Mr. Haas and Ms. Roper to come up with a memorandum of understanding to purchase the land contingent upon the Town Meeting vote. Mike also suggested that some test borings may be needed. He also wanted to get the narratives from the department heads by Friday. Ann Marie will pass the word along. The Board also discussed the presentation at the budget and Town Meeting. Some comparisons on how the bond will effect the tax rate would be helpful, and perhaps some comparison as to how much these buildings would cost 10 years from now, and 10 years ago. It was agreed that the article to purchase the land should be separate from the actual buildings. The article for the bond covering the buildings will also be broken down so voters will know the price tag on each building.

The Board then reviewed their correspondence. We received a Petition for Writ of Mandamus filed by Beebe Valley Family LP which we had been expecting. Ann Marie has sent along a copy to Attorney Tim Bates for his review, and he indicated that a member of the Board, and Ann Marie should plan on attending the hearing on February 13th up at Grafton County Courthouse. Attorney Bates has filed a motion to extend the time to file an answer on the Spritzes Beverage lawsuit. Ann Marie distributed copies of Grafton County Commissioner Gabler's latest email detailing the damage done by the fire at the Maintenance Garage. He is willing to meet with the Selectmen anytime, just give him a few weeks notice. I told him that I will call him after we get the budget

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finished. A letter was received from Sidney Spill complaining about the condition of Beech Hill Road. The Board felt that the roads were being kept in good shape, and that Road Agent Dick Giehl was doing a good job. Greg Jencks has submitted his letter of resignation as the Town's representative for the Pemi Baker Solid Waste District. Gary Moulton who works at the Transfer Station is interested in being part of the organization, and Greg recommended that he be considered. The Board agreed, and signed an appointment for Gary to be the representative. Richard Szeliga will continue as the alternate.

Ann Marie then wanted to go over some of the proposed 2006 budget figures. She gave the Board Members a spreadsheet with the 2005 budget, expenditures and proposed 2006 budget. The first budget figures that the Board looked at were the service agencies which are fixed amounts from organizations like North Country Council, Grafton County Senior Citizens, Humane Society etc. The Board will talk to the Police Chief about funding for the Animal Control Officer which has been included in the line item in the past. Lakes Region Community Council is not requesting any funds this year, but money has been put aside to cover advertising for the street maps that we receive now. Ann Marie also put in the figures for the Fire Department based on the revised figures after the meeting with the joint Boards last week. Ann Marie talked to the Board about the recommendations from Stephanie Elson to continue with the GIS mapping project. The computer hardware and software will be put under Capital Outlay, printing under Planning Board, and the GIS planner/technician under Tax Maps. The Board discussed the additional \$5,000 for continued discussion of the growth of the Town using the GIS tool with another Brown University student. The Board decided that we have too many other items in the budget this year, and that we should get the GIS up and running first, and look into this another year. Ann Marie also mentioned that she had received some further figures on the health insurance if we go under a group plan with SAU 48. We would have the same exact insurance, but premiums could be lower. Ann Marie will prepare a spreadsheet for next week's meeting. She also mentioned that we had gone over the line item for life insurance and disability, and she had some recommendations from our insurance company that she will get figures for as well. Ann Marie also ask the Board what they wanted her to tell department heads about COLA and wages for their budget. The Board Members all had different views of what they wanted to do so decided that the department heads should present their budget without any increases, but be prepared to make recommended increases based on merit. Selectman Cheney felt that COLA had always been used, but Selectman Wheeler and McGarr indicated that we have heard in the past from taxpayers that they have not received COLA in their work places. The Department Heads could make recommendations for their employees, and the Selectmen could decide if any increases were merited for the Department Heads.

The Board then reviewed the minutes of the January 9th meeting. Selectman McGarr made a motion to approve them, and this was seconded by Charles Cheney, and voted in the affirmative.

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Under other business, Selectman Wheeler indicated that he will contact Terry Roper. Selectman McGarr wanted to comment again that he felt that the Highway crew was doing a good job on the roads.

The meeting adjourned at 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Foote
Administrative Assistant