

Selectmen's Work Session
January 19, 2009

The Selectmen met for a work session on the above date at the Town Office. Present were Selectmen Sharon Davis, Marsh Morgan, Charles Wheeler and Charles Cheney. Selectman Craig Keeney was home sick.

Before the Board began their discussion on the 2009 proposed budget, they met briefly with May Brosseau and Ann Marie to discuss the visit by DRA Monitor Josephine Belville. May and Ann Marie wanted to clarify some of the statements made by Ms. Belville last week. May explained the sales ratio study process in detail and referred to the study as a living document that can be tweaked until the ratio is actually set. Some of the properties that Ms. Belville indicated were not excluded were, but May indicated that she differed with her on the reason for the exclusion. Selectman Wheeler assured both May and Ann Marie that he did not take Ms. Belville's remarks as any kind of indication that the Selectmen's Office was not doing their job correctly.

The Board then went on with the work session. Ann Marie distributed copies of a draft of the Town Meeting warrant articles, and the working copy of 2009 proposed budget. Chair Sharon Davis invited Kelly Bolger who has been doing a lot of work with Building Committee members, and set up the meeting between the Board and three contractors to get estimates on the cost of the proposed building. Kelly indicated that the three contractors came in with estimates of 1.7 million, 1.72 million, and 1.6 million dollars. He indicated that these figures could be looked at further once actual bids and a contractor was picked, and to examine what could be cut to lower this figure. The option of going with a geo-thermal heating system was also something that needed to be researched further. Kelly and some of the Board Members had hoped to go and view and speak with some owners of public buildings in the area that use this method of heating. He also stated that he understood that the Board was struggling on whether to go forward with this project this year or not with the state of the economy and that it was a hard call to make. He did indicate that he thought it would not be responsible not to do anything at all, and looked at this project like someone looks at putting away money for their retirement. He recommended that given the economy that the Board not go forward with the project this year, but put aside at \$300,000.00 this year towards the project.

The Board then gave Cliff Barber, also a member of the Building Committee since its inception a chance to give his opinion. Cliff first stated that it was very obvious that the Town does need a new Town Office Building, and the question was not if, but when we go forward. He indicated that the Town voted the Board of Selectmen as their agents to decide what the best course of action for the Town was. He felt that with the recent increases in taxes over the past two years, and the deepening recession that the taxpayers would not be able to afford to fund this project at this time. Chair Davis thanked both men for their comments, and the Board went on to review the Town Warrant articles.

The Board also agreed to set the date and time for the budget hearing. They agreed on Monday, February 9, 2009, 7 p.m. at the Campton Historical Building. Ann Marie will check out the availability with Walt Stockwell, and get the appropriate notices in the newspaper and on the website.

Joseph McComiskey, a resident of the Town wanted to question the Board on some personnel issues involving the Police Department and Officer Michelle Toepel. Chair Davis asked if he was Michelle's representative, and he indicated that he was not. Chair Davis indicated that the Board could not discuss another employee with him, and that he would have to get her permission, and that the Board would also have to seek Town Attorney's advice as to whether this was appropriate. Mr. McComiskey also requested to speak with the Human Resources Committee. Again, Chair Davis indicated that the Board would have to seek counsel, and see if this appropriate, and if could, would set up an appointment.

The Board then went back to the subject of tonight's work session, the 2009 proposed budget. Chair Davis indicated that she felt that each Board Member needed to vote and give their reasons whether they wanted to go forward with a bond for a new Town Office Building or to put money aside, and what amount to put aside if that was the decision.

Selectman Cheney agreed to go first. He stated that he would like to see the budget stay as close to level funded as possible this year. He felt that the Board should not go forward with the bond for the building this year, and put aside \$100,000.00 which would keep the goal of the level funding or close to it within reach.

Selectman Wheeler than expressed his thoughts indicating that he likes to talk the issue out loud. He felt that we had no way to know if it would be cheaper to build now while the economy was down, and while he also knew the Town needed a new building, was not really comfortable putting forth a bond for over a million dollars in the budget. He also indicated that Jane Kellogg made a good point about letting the voters decide, but sometimes those attending Town Meeting did not represent the opinion of the majority of taxpayers. He felt that putting aside \$200,000.00 to \$300,000.00 might be the way to go this year.

Selectman Morgan indicating that the Town has been talking about a new building since the 1990's, and we are still talking about it today. He felt that we needed to put more than \$100,000.00 aside, but was afraid that if the Board tries to put forth a warrant article this year, it may jeopardize a future vote, if the voters take a negative approach to the timing of the article this year.

Selectman Davis indicated that she has been on the Building Committee since the beginning, and that Patrick Miller, Kelly and Cliff and the other committee members have put a lot of work and research into this project over the past two years. She was concerned that if the Board went forward with a warrant article for the building this year that it could be received poorly, and have a negative effect on future votes to try and get

the project approved. She also would like to see money put aside between \$200,000.00 and \$300,000.00.

After some further discussion, Chair Davis made a motion to recommend that the Board put forth a warrant article to put aside \$200,000.00 in the Capital Reserve Fund for the Town Building. This motion was seconded by Selectman Wheeler. The Board took a vote with Selectmen Davis, Wheeler, and Morgan voting in the affirmative, and Selectman Cheney voting in the negative. The Board also discussed encumbering the monies left in the 2008 budget for the architect which was to cover the overseeing of the award of the contract. This money would not have to be raised again, and could be used in 2010 if the project goes forward at that time.

The Board will meet next Monday to go over some final figures on the 2009 budget with the Police Chief, Road Agent and Town Clerk/Tax Collector. They are also meeting tomorrow evening at the Campton Fire Station to finalize the Fire and Solid Waste Budgets with the Thornton and Ellsworth Selectmen.

The meeting adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Foote
Town Administrator