

**TOWN OF DIXFIELD
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 11, 2016 – 5:30 PM
LUDDEN MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

Present: Board of Selectmen, Hart Daley, Malcolm Gill, Dana Whittemore, and Eugene Skibitsky, Norman Mitchell was absent.

Town Employees present: Town Manager Carlo Puiia, Police Chief Jeff Howe, Paul Pomerleau from Ted Berry Co., Eng. Al Hodsdon, Eng. Nick Champagne, PW Foreman Randy Glover, and Town Auditor Ron Smith.

Citizens present: Dan McKay, Rick Davis, Peter Holman, Royal Swan, Aaron Jamison, and note taker Norine Clarke.

Non- Citizens: Carol Glover

Press present: Matthew Daigle, Sun Journal, WVACTv

1. 1. Call to Order: Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Daley opened the meeting at 5:30 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Agenda Adjustments

a. to item 4a add #64

b. to 4b add #63

3. Minutes: Mr. Gill asked for a clarification in the minutes regarding the salary of a former employee which was covered by more than one department of the Town. TM Puiia recorded the change and Mr. Gill made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected. Mr. Whittemore seconded and all present were in favor.

4. Warrants: Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to accept the Warrants as adjusted and Mr. Gill seconded. All present were in favor.

5. Department Head Reports:

a. Auditor Ron Smith of RHR Smith was present to answer questions about the Sewer Audit. Christina Howes, an RHR Smith employee, will have that audit done soon. Mr. Smith noted that prior to 2012, a study was done on the 2008/2009 budget, but it was not accurate and the rates were never adjusted. There was a deficit of over \$100,000 and when the rates were raised, they were not adequate. It is worse now. In 2012, a 25% increase was proposed which was not enough and less was raised. Mr. Daley wondered where the rates should be but did not require an answer. Mr. Skibitsky said no capital was put away and one concern was and still is the “Permastrand” pipe between Dixfield and the treatment plant in Mexico. Mr. Daley asked when the Selectmen will be able to look at the audit and Mr. Smith said probably 30 days. Mr. Smith said he felt the less than 25% increase was done out of sensitivity to the rate payers, but it was not enough then and all issues cost more now than in 2012. Mr. Gill noted that the plan was to try a 15% increase and re-visit it a year later which was never done. Mr. Whittemore asked what about the water department and Mr. Smith said it was not done then but could do it now. Mr. Skibitsky noted he felt it was time to increase the sewer rates. Water rates need to be

approved by PUC, sewer rates do not. In the both the water and sewer budgets, bad debts are charged against revenues. TM Puiia noted that the Mexico Water District office employees have gotten the Town of Dixfield's water and sewer books up to date. Mr. Smith said that he could give an update at the Feb 22 meeting or the first meeting in March. The utility department's Book 99 which mentioned at the last meeting that it contained bad debts which could not be collected because the lien process was not followed and should be discharged to reflect a current accounts receivable. Mr. Skibitsky said that Supt. White will have to adjust his budget to accommodate the bad debts. Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to discharge the uncollected water fees in the amount of \$3411.94 to a bad debt expense effective immediately. Mr. Gill seconded the motion and all present were in favor. Mr. Skibitsky then made a motion to discharge three sewer accounts totaling \$670.70 also effective immediately. Mr. Gill seconded and all present were in favor.

b. Town Engineer Al Hodsdon was present to discuss the current construction projects. He was accompanied by Nick Champagne his project manager. \$827,000 in improvements were made from a 20 year loan set at only 0.7% .There will probably be a need for rate adjustments to cover the \$42-43,000 per year payments. CH Stevenson has done the Pine and High Street project, the pumping station, the stand-by generator building, and some partitions inside the water building. All of these should be finished in Jan. with the paperwork done by mid Feb. \$66,000 has been withheld from his payment until the repairs to the Pine and High St. projects are done in the spring. The "Route 2" project is going to require a box culvert for "Easter's Brook" just east of the town garage. They need an April contract for work to be done this summer. The Town needs to engage a surveyor to get an easement near the culvert. Hodsdon reported that the Porter Road looks good. An Asset Management report is due to the DEP. The grant required some reserve funds for sewer as part of the budget. All projects including replacing water/ storm drains and surfacing for Howard St. cost about \$100,000 The Town still has \$180,000 it can draw down with no strings attached from the project money. This is Bond Bank money with about 2.6% interest. Coburn Ave, Bradley and Brackett streets all need work. Mr. McKay asked if that money could be put in Road Reserves in this year's budget to help with tax relief. -He was told they would have to check on the sewer and water which would go along with those projects. Mr. Hodsdon said that the Lancaster St. project has held up well during the recent rains. He is hoping the new road surfaces do not rise and fall during the winter.

c. Police Report: Chief Howe handed out the monthly reports and said that this past Halloween was quite quiet. Weather has helped with lack of incidents. What ice there has been has been well handled by the Town crew. He addressed the issue of lack of space at the current location of the Police Office. They have applied for a grant for body cameras and if they have them, there will need to be a separate computer program and not connected to the internet. It may require them to have to go into a locked closet across from the office. The public is prohibited from viewing their computer and it is very difficult to protect that from happening under the current conditions. Chief Howe is working on a policy for maintaining the records. There are also other space issues. There is a great deal of noise from the garage area which makes it very difficult to conduct interviews. He feels that Public Works could also use some more office space. Two

locations were mentioned as possibilities for the PD, the closed Catholic Church and 31 Main St at the intersection. Mr. Jamison suggested that they take another look at a merger with Mexico. Chief Howe said that one of the drawbacks of that would be the time lost going to and from Mexico to make reports etc.. Mr. McKay suggested that a committee should be formed to save the Selectmen time for their many other duties. Mr. Gill asked if Mr. McKay would chair that committee and Mr. McKay said he would be involved. Mr. Holman said that he felt the Church was too big and Mr. Daley said his original idea was to put the Town office there and put the PD in the old Town Office.

d. Public Works: Mr. Glover told the Selectmen that they had been spending time calibrating the trucks for spreading salt and sand. He said he had ordered 150 tons and still had 60-65 in the shed. They have been refining the sidewalk priorities. First done is Main St from Hall Hill to High St, second is from the traffic light to the High School and then the side streets. In the last storm, it took approximately one hour to clean the High and North street sidewalks. He thanked the Police Dept. for their cooperation in reporting conditions to him. He has been working on disposing of the old fuel tanks and pumps at the Town Garage which have become a liability. He has spoken to many folks he thought might take them but only one has made an offer. Clint Bradbury of Dixfield Discount Fuel drafted a written proposal that Mr. Glover gave to the Selectmen. It says that if the Town will give him the tanks, he would remove them with no cost or liability to the Town. Mr. Glover asked the Board for a decision. Mr. Daley questioned if the letter was binding and asked the TM to run it by the town solicitor. Mr. Whittemore made a motion to have DDF remove the tanks upon the approval of the attorney. Mr. Skibitsky mentioned it should be checked against the Policy for disposal of town "equipment" and checked with the attorney. Mr. Glover said he had worked about 8 months off and on and talked to many people. It was suggested that Mr. Glover check with Mr. Ellis of Hometown Energy. Mr. McKay asked about the contract with the state for providing fuel and was told it was open-ended. Mr. Skibitsky seconded Mr. Whittemore's motion and all present were in favor. Mr. Gill asked Mr. Glover if the roof at the garage still leaked and the answer was yes. They leave the door to the third floor open to avoid build up and slow down the leaks..

6. Old Business:

a. Maintenance Agreement for Traffic Light: TM Puiia reported that there will be no agreement needed.

b. Wind Ordinance Referendum Question: Mr. Daley questioned if this item should be tabled because of the absence of Mr. Mitchell. An agreement was reached to move the vote to the 25th of Jan. meeting so all will be present. If anyone is not going to be present they should present their opinion in writing. Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to table and Mr. Whittemore seconded, Mr. Holman questioned exactly what was being tabled and was told it was a vote for the wording of the referendum question to be placed on the June ballot. Mr. Whittemore and Mr. Daley have been waiting to hear from state employee Mike Rodgers to come to answer questions. His presentation should have no effect on the referendum question. Mr. McKay asked if they would set a date for a public hearing on the night of the vote. A vote was taken and the motion was approved by all present.

7. New Business:

a. Release Deed for 30 Third St.: Mr. Whittemore made a motion to accept the release deed and Mr. Skibitsky seconded. All present were in agreement and Chief Howe was a witness for the signatures.

b. Appointment of Code Enforcement Officer: TM Puiia said that the Board could review the application in an executive session at the beginning of the next meeting. When asked who was doing it now, TM. Puiia said that he was. Mr. McKay asked if a Planning Board member could do it and was told no.

8. Other Business: Letter of Resignation/Retirement from Vickie Carrier: TM Puiia read the letter from Ms. Carrier and said she had been at the job nearly 33 years. Her resignation would be effective July 1. She has offered to help with information and with training of a new person. Mr. Whittemore said that he felt that the motion should come from Mr. Gill and Mr. Skibitsky who have known and worked with her the longest. Mr. Skibitsky made a motion to accept with deep regret the resignation and thanked her for her years of service. He said she is a wonderful person and they are going to miss her. Mr. Gill seconded the motion and all those present were in favor.

9. Public Correspondence: CMP has notified the town that they will be doing tree work/maintenance in town. An email from the assessor offered options about re-evaluation. TM Puiia has invited the firm to come and provide information to the Board. An email from Dan McKay expressed concerns that because the sound limits are in the Ordinance may be the same as the states, that the Town may be liable instead of the DEP. He asked to have it verified. Mr. Daley said he felt lower limits were more responsible but that if they were the same as the DEP, they would accept responsibility.

10. Public Comment: Mr. Jamison asked why Dixfield lost the water business. TM Puiia explained that during a meeting in Augusta, the business plan presented relied heavily on obtaining new Market Tax Credits. It was later revealed that, because Dixfield had too high a per capita income to qualify for the New Market Tax Credits, the proposed water business would relocate to another town in order to seek those tax credits.

11. Board Questions and Comments:

Mr. Gill asked for an update on the SAD withdrawal talks. Mr. Whittemore said they were still on schedule and doing well. In answer to some concerns, he said that there were members of the committee who were not in favor of withdrawal so all ideas are being covered. Mr. Whittemore also apologized to Mr. Gill and Mr. Skibitsky for suggesting they make the motion concerning Ms. Carrier. Mr. Skibitsky noted his regret at Ms. Carrier's leaving and Mr. Gill said he regretted it also, but Ms. Carrier is happy and that is what is important. Mr. Daley noted that there would be an executive session at the beginning of the next meeting and that there should be some action taken on renewing the wind moratorium.

12. Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Board will be held on Monday, Jan. 25, 2016 at 5:30 pm at the Ludden Library.

13. Adjournment: Motion by Mr. Whittemore, second Mr. Gill to adjourn at 7:54pm. All present were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Norine H. Clarke, secretary
nhc/nhc