

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES MARCH 31, 2003

1. Convene the meeting

Chairman Paul Binette convened the meeting at 7:02 PM on the above date. Also present: Bob Eastman, Joe Pace, Bill Campbell, Lionel Ingram and Town Manager George Olson.

2. Minutes of the Board of Selectmen's meeting of March 17, 2003

It was moved by Mr. Pace, second by Mr. Eastman, to approve the minutes of the March 17th meeting as presented. SO VOTED.

3. Bid openings: Vacuum Truck; Solid Waste/Recycling

Chairman Binette opened the bids on the vacuum truck (see attached). **It was moved by Mr. Pace, second by Mr. Eastman, to send the bids to the Town Manager for review and recommendation back to the Board. SO VOTED.**

Chairman Binette next opened bids on solid waste disposal and recycling (also attached). **It was moved by Mr. Pace, second by Mr. Ingram to send the bids to the Town Manager for review and recommendation back to the Board. SO VOTED.**

4. Bid Award: District Court sound system

Chairman Binette turned to Mr. Olson who explained, in response to a request that the State pay for the system, that this had been attempted and had failed. He noted a memo from Kevin Smart explaining the details of the situation and recommended that the bid be awarded to Williams Communication in the amount of \$3,500. Mr. Eastman asked where the money for the sound system would be coming from. Mr. Olson responded from funds set aside to cover the cost of the elevator and stage repair. Mr. Eastman asked if it was being absorbed out of elevator funds. Mr. Olson indicated that he did not know, but that it was coming out of the cost of the project as a whole. **It as moved by Mr. Campbell, second by Mr. Ingram to award the bid for the District Court sound system to Williams Communication in the amount of \$3,500. SO VOTED.**

5. Second reading of Selectmen's Policy on religious holidays

It was moved by Mr. Eastman, second by Mr. Pace, to adopt Selectmen's Policy 03-31 as read. SO VOTED. Mr. Ingram noted that the policy would be updated each year to reflect changes in the actual dates of the holidays listed.

6. Water and Sewer rate adjustment

Chairman Binette invited Bob Kelly, Chairman of the Water and Sewer Advisory Committee to the mic. Mr. Kelly congratulated Mr. Binette on being elected Chairman of the Board of Selectmen and went on to address the issue of rate adjustment. He went over some of the material presented to the Board back in January and the material provided to the Board at the Meeting of the 17th. He described the need to increase rates and the increasing decline in reserves that had been used to make up for operating shortfalls. He offered to answer any questions the Board might have.

Mr. Campbell expressed concern with the amount of the increase for customers with 1" services. The problem turned out to be a typographical error. Mr. Eastman noted that the proposed increase amounted to 50%, or \$221 a year for the average family and asked why such a large increase. Mr. Kelly noted that rates had not been adjusted since 1996 and that the utility could no longer absorb the loss out of reserves; particularly now that the voters had approved the new vacuum truck and design of the new water treatment plant. He went on to note that revenues have been relatively flat due to most of the Town's growth taking place is outside of the area served by water and sewer. Mr. Pace opined that it looked as if the utility had been keeping its rates artificially low over the past few years. Mr. Kelly agreed, stating that an increase could have been justified three years ago, but the increase had been delayed in the belief that residents would be more receptive to increases if they were associated with construction of the new plant. He stated \$30 of the \$55 per quarter increase is associated with current operating expenses, and stated that the utilities rate consultant recommended that reserves not go below \$500,000 each for both water and sewer. Reserves are currently at these levels.

Mr. Eastman asked if the bond for the new water treatment plant passed at next year's Town Meeting, would there be another rate increase and what will it be? Mr. Kelly responded that he did not have a figure, but that another increase could be expected in the next 18 to 30 months. Mr. Eastman questioned if the voters would have voted for the new vacuum truck and design of the water treatment plant at March Town Meeting if they had known the cost. Mr. Kelly responded that the presentation to the Board in January was for this very purpose and that the newspapers at the time reported an even greater increase than is being proposed.

Chairman Binette asked if the matter of a rate increase had just come up or was the Committee aware of the need in the past? Mr. Kelly reported that 4 years ago the Committee was aware that the utility was moving into the red, but that reserves were available to cover the small shortfall. He reiterated that the coming together of the decline in the reserves and plans for the new water treatment plant lead the Committee to pursue the rate increases. Chairman Binette asked if the Committee could not have slowly increased the rates over the past years so that the impact was not so great on the rate-payers? Mr. Kelly indicated that yes, it could have been done, but that it was questionable if a 10% increase 4 years ago and a 40% increase this year was a better approach than was being proposed.

Mr. Eastman asked if the water line replacement described in the utility's water plan was to be paid for out of the rate increase? Mr. Kelly responded no it was not and the schedule would not be set until the matter of water treatment plant replacement was settled.

Mr. Kelly was thanked for his presentation and Chairman Binette noted that action on the rate increase would be taken at the Board's meeting of the April 14.

7. Renewal of District Court lease.

Chairman Binette turned to Mr. Olson who explained that the State had provided the Town a lease on the District Court space in the Town hall covering a 2-year period with a 3% increase in the rent. He went on to note the discussion of a year ago with the State indicating that the Board would be looking for a considerable increase in rent for 2003/2004. He suggested that the Board accept the 3% increase for 2003/2004 and to negotiate another lease next year to cover 2004/2005. **So moved by Mr. Ingram to enter in to a one-year lease on the District Court space in the Town Hall. Second by Mr. Pace. SO VOTED.**

8. Creation of Open Space Committee

Chairman Binette asked Mr. Olson to address this issue. Mr. Olson noted that with the passage of Warrant Article 12, it was appropriate that the Board create an Open Space Committee to advise the Board on open space purchases. He noted that he had worked with Don Clement, Chairman of the Conservation Commission, to come up with some language. The language had been provided to the Board for action this evening. Mr. Eastman suggested that the Committee be made up of a Planning Board member, a member of the Conservation Commission and 5 citizens at large. He opposed a Board made up of a majority of Conservation Commission members. Mr. Clement was invited to the mic and asked what he thought of Mr. Eastman's suggestion. Mr. Clement indicated that it was the Board's decision as to make up and noted that of the names recommended by the Conservation Commission contained the names of only two Commission members.

Mr. Eastman went on to recommend that the Board review the criteria for land acquisition established by the Committee. Mr. Pace indicated that the Committee being discussed was not a sub-committee of the Conservation Commission and suggested that it would be in the best interest of the new Committee to run its criteria past the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Campbell suggested that the specific make up of the Committee not be made a part of the Committee's charge. Mr. Clement stressed the need for the members of the new committee to be willing to establish a formal, professional process to determine what land should be acquired and that the members will need to maintain confidentiality.

Mr. Ingram suggested that the charge be amended to replace the word "direction" with the word "recommendation". This was agreed to. Mr. Pace noted that the more sensitive the Committee is to the Board's wishes, the more successful it will be.

It was moved by Mr. Ingram, second by Mr. Campbell, to create an Open Space Committee and to charge it as follows:

"A 7-person committee created for the purpose of establishing acquisition criteria, identifying parcels of land, and submitting recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in carrying out the provisions of Warrant Article 12, Town Meeting of 2003. The Committee will provide recommendations to the Board of Selectmen in accordance with the goals of the Conservation Commission and in line with the goals and priorities of the Open Space Chapter of the Town Master Plan."

SO VOTED.

9. American Independence By-way and Historic Downtown Restoration Project – Sylvia von Aulock.

Chairman Binette invited Ms. von Aulock to the mic where she described the details of the By-way. She shared a copy of the 1999 study of the By-way with the Board. She described the route of the By-way running from Exeter to the Beach and back. She went on to note the 6 months effort to raise funds and to promote the By-way. She showed the Board the sign that will be used to denote the By-way and that she will be back later in the year for permission to put the signs up in 4 locations in Exeter. Mr. Ingram asked if the existence of the By-way was related to the Hampton Rd. shoulder widening. Ms. von Aulock reported that it was coincidental but certainly supportive of the goals of

the By-way program. Mr. Eastman asked if the existence of the By-way would be helpful in securing outside funding for the downtown project. Ms. von Aulock opined that it would not hurt fund raising efforts.

Ms. von Aulock invited Rubin Hill the lead consultant on the Historic Downtown Restoration Project to the mic. Mr. Hill went over the details of the effort and the team that had been assembled. He noted the importance of the 3 public hearings to be held on April 9, May 14 and June 18. The three sessions will be used to secure public input on all phases of the project. The end result will be a plan along with costs and a proposed schedule for implementation. Issues to be looked at include putting overhead utilities underground, traffic circulation, parking, access, streetscape and crosswalks.

Chairman Binette thanked Ms. von Aulock and Mr. Hill for their presentation.

10. Permits

The following permits were approved:

On request of Gary Hinz, that the Exeter United Methodist Church and other Exeter Churches be allowed to use the right of way from noon until 1:30 PM on April 18th for a Lenten walk based on the stations of the cross.

On request of Susan Stagnone, Secretary of the Exeter Farms Homeowner's Association, to use the Nowak Room on April 30, from 6:30PM until 10 for the purposes of holding the annual meeting of the homeowner's association.

On request of Maureen Barrows, representing the David Barrows Adventure Fund, to be allowed to hold a bike race on May 31, from 4:00PM until 7, utilizing the Town roads, with the understanding that she would be in contact with Tracy McGrail of the Exeter Chamber re the impact on downtown merchants.

On request of Stan Wentzell, on behalf of the Exeter Kiwanis Club, to hold the Club's annual road race on July 19th from 8:00AM until 11.

11. Town Manager's items

Chairman Binette asked Mr. Olson to address his items. Mr. Olson requested that those interested in serving on a Town Board or Committee to come forward as it was the time of the year when new members were appointed. He also reported that the Park St. Bridge will be closed for repairs for a 3 month period starting in mid-April; that Spring clean-up week was next week April 7 thru 11; pleaded for patience on the part of residents during the week when the Town's new phone system is being installed; and read from a press release from the Assessing office informing residents of the May start of interior and exterior property inspections that will effect a third of the property owners.

12. Selectmen's Committee Reports

Mr. Pace, while not offering a committee report, did remind residents that after a difficult winter it was opening day for major league baseball.

Mr. Ingram noted a recent meeting of the Council on Aging and reiterated the need for volunteers to come forward to fill 2 vacancies.

Mr. Eastman reported on a meeting of the Planning Board's Capital Improvement Program/Impact Fee Committee at which the details of the school impact fees were reported. A final report from the consultant is expected by the end of the month. The Board will act on implementation of the fee. Mr. Eastman also reported on the conditional approval of a 5-lot subdivision off Birch Rd. and the fact that only 1 of the lots is in Exeter and only a small portion of the cul de sac is in Exeter. There are issues associated with maintaining the cul de sac that will have to be worked out.

13. Public Comment

There being none, **it was moved by Mr. Pace, second by Mr. Ingram, to adjourn. SO VOTED.**
Time: 8:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Olson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

George N. Olson
Town Manager