

**Select Board
Minutes
November 25, 2014**

Leverett Town Hall, 7 pm

Present: Rich, Peter, Julie, Lisa, Margie, David Detmold, Bob Mahler, Margot Lacey, members of the Finance and School Committees, Regional School and Union 28 representatives

All present were invited to a pre-budget meeting to discuss some property tax abatements that will make the budget process tighter and more difficult this year. Additionally it is unknown how Shutesbury will respond to the Regional School assessment method. The Finance Committee was consulted in drafting the budget message that would be given to town department heads and had written three options for addressing shortfalls. Fixed costs were determined and taken out of the equation; leaving three options: 1. reduce expense lines by 3% and give no raises to Town employees, school employees would receive contractual raises; 2. Determine COLA to give employees raises then cut expenses lines by 3.5% to accommodate that raise (school employees would receive contractual raises) the tax rate would go up about \$.51; 3. Keep tax rate at a constant at this year's level and cut expense lines accordingly by 7.5%. Town employees would not receive any raise (school employees would receive contractual raises). Tom Powers outlined the 3 options. Robert Mahler was the first to state that he was uncomfortable with the notion that raises would only be given to school employees. The general consensus of the meeting agreed changing the options to:

1. Determine COLA to give employees raises then cut expenses lines by 3.5% to accommodate that raise (school employees would receive contractual raises) the tax rate would go up about \$.51.
2. Keep tax rate at a constant at this year's level and cut expense lines accordingly by 8%. Town employees would receive COLA. School employees would receive contractual raises.

It was agreed to ask all departments to submit the above 2 budgets. Additionally, a cautionary note will be added to limit spending in this fiscal year in case the decision by the Appellate Board is handed down this fiscal year and funds are needed to pay abatements.

Other suggestions made during the somewhat somber meeting included eliminating or reducing the CPA contributions and considering what assets the town might sell.

Business:

The minutes of November 10 were approved as written.

The board agreed to join the Franklin County Selectman's Association.

Lisa will forward the Town Seal to the HCOG to use in their letter to residents about electricity aggregation.

Neil is resigning from the Transfer Station in May. It was agreed to advertise for the job early enough so that there will be some overlap for the new hire.

The COA requested permission to hire an outreach coordinator with grant money. There was some reluctance to add another "employee" due to concerns about unemployment and worker's comp. as

well as if the grant will pay for these and other expenses. It was suggested that maybe they could be hired as a contractor. Margie will talk to Terry.

Margie will email the FRCOG Tech. Assistance Grant to those who responded initially and ask them to rank their preferences then send on to FRCOG.

Margie reported that the first meeting for the Fire Chief Hiring Committee will be Dec. 5. Once finalists are chosen by the committee the Select Board will hold interviews which will be open to the public.

A request for a Town meeting vote to create access to a house on Cider Mill Ln. was received from Gary Gruber on behalf of some residents. Margie will ask Gary to attend a meeting to clarify the request. Possible Zoning and Planning Board approval may be needed.

Motion: To award the surplus items to the high bidders for each. Vote: 3-0 in favor. (About \$1,000 was made from the sales).

The December meetings were changed to meetings on the 9 and 16 (if necessary). January meeting will be on the 6 and 20 at which time budget hearings will begin.

Motion: To go into executive session to discuss strategy with regard to litigation and not to return to regular session. Brazeau, aye; d'Errico, aye; Shively, aye (8:20 pm).