

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, Feb 10, 2010
Town Hall 6:30pm

Chr. Jack O'Reilly called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.

Present: Chairman Jack O'Reilly, Selectmen Jan Stuart and Cosmas Iocovozzi, John & Lee Lamson, Larry & Mary Wahl, Jane Mazeau, Theresa Tomlinson, Cliff Abbott, Al & Sue Smith, Gail Klanchesser, Chris Bellmare and AA Beatrice Marconi.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chr. O'Reilly opened the public hearing at 6:34pm with an explanation as to why we are gathered. "Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 40:13 (known as SB2) to allow official ballot voting on all issues before the Town on the 2nd Tuesday of March" as brought forth by petition by Sue Smith. This public hearing is being held as one of the requirements mandated by RSAs. Chr. O'Reilly went on with an overview of the operations of Town Meeting and Public Hearings as they now stood and reflected the changes if this were to pass.

J. Lamson – Asked (if passed) would this now mean Town Meeting would be replaced primarily by the Deliberative Session. J. O'Reilly answered yes. From amendments made at the Deliberative Session, would be how the questions would appear on the ballot for a vote, in a booth, with no further discussion.

S. Smith – Thinking this over for the last 5 years with medical limitations in addition to considerations like military personnel, kids at college, this is a means of giving them a voice. Those who cannot attend what we hold as a town meeting business portion, cannot vote absentee on the budget and warrant articles. If SB2 passes, they can then vote while away. The Deliberative Session is very similar to our Public Hearing.

J.O'Reilly noted that the school was not incorporated in the petition for this change so the vote would be on the Town end only.

L. Wahl – speaking against the petition spoke of the problems that the Town of Hampton is (and has) experiencing as they are SB2. The proposed budget has not passed in 5 years and has reverted back to the default, which is the previous year's budget. Contractual obligations and debt services are then added in. At that point, the default budget when passed then becomes solely spent under the requests of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Selectmen ONLY. Any or all projects can be cancelled or postponed. Larry went on to say that there were 13 people attending the public hearing and if SB2 was in effect and that was our Deliberative Session, articles could have been eliminated, changed by 7 of the 13. He felt that those 13 people were not a good representation of the town. Hampton is very unhappy. Being on the Budget Committee and working year after year on the town's needs, if the default budget is voted in annually, I personally would think that serving is a waste of time. Although nice to expand the voting ability, but there are just too many negatives.

Al Smith – Stated that the changes Mr Wahl referred to could happen at either town method of government. It is just that SB2 give the largest amount of people the greatest opportunity to vote. Our soldiers are being denied the very freedoms in which they are defending by not having the right to vote. Regarding reverting to the default budget in Hampton's case where there have been no raises for 5 years, he points out that no raises were budgeted for here for 2010.

J Lamson – Concerned about exercising the booth vote by ballot, you have 2 choices – to vote to support or vote to fail it. In addition to that, the budget number is set at the deliberative session by very few people.

A group could stack the deck with amendments to benefit that particular group, and in the booth you answer yes or no with no background.

G. Klanchesser questioned if the deliberative session is held on a weeknight or a Saturday. L Wahl answered that it can be any time within the window set by the RSAs.

L. Wahl went on to say that the Deliberative Session is late January – the Vote is March. With such a lapse in time, is easy to forget issues. He supports the Town Meeting form of government – a chance to interact with neighbors. G Klanchesser agreed by adding that it keeps us together as a community.

S. Smith noted that the time span is basically the same as it is now and that the Deliberative Session takes the place of our public hearing. As far as people not knowing the issues on amendments made, minutes are available and recordings are available too. By converting to SB2, there is very little change.

C Bellmare – Can those who are not present for the deliberative session have input at what is discussed or have the ability to participate in amending warrant articles that day?

J. Lamson – stated that one can vote in the booth by absenteeism, however, unless present at the deliberative session, then no.

L. Wahl stated that for this article to pass, it must have 60% of the vote (3/5)

Selectman Iocovozzi noted that there were good points made this evening. He recalled his first town meeting – very different than what he was used to. He was so impressed at the feel of the room – with each item coming up – the debate and discussions brought out both pros and cons. He went on to say that he liked hearing the various thoughts from neighbors and friends – the Town Meeting is the purest form of government. It's a chance to be joined as a community on issues of importance to the town.

A Smith says if Town Meeting stayed in force after this vote, he would like to see the business portion called right after the ballot count. Originally, the reasons Saturdays came to being as the second half is because when conducted all in one evening, people were there til 2:00 or 3:00am. Some smaller towns still do this. Demographics have changed.

C Bellmare – He hoped that if passed that the Deliberative Session would not interfere with school vacations. S. Smith stated that they are happening now.

L Wahl noted that if SB2 goes through, the budget season for the Budget Committee will begin in October to coincide with the mandates of time frames.

The last great act of democracy is the Town Meeting. With that, Chr. O'Reilly closed the public hearing at 7:16pm.

Stipends

Chr. O'Reilly stated that after speaking to the school system regarding when they pay their stipends, he recommends that Town stipends be paid in late Feb/early March with 2nd half 6 months after election. If someone leaves before their term is up or they leave other than at mid-term and have collected their stipend, there could be a problem with over payment. He recommended that stipends be paid in March (prior to the election) then 6 months later. We are currently paying late May and November for cash flow reasons. Therefore he recommends we get on the same cycle as the school as it will be easier to prorate. Selectman Iocovozzi felt that made sense if he understands it to be prorated after their first half service. ie: if you are elected in March, then leave in June, you can be prorated for time served in the 2nd payment which would probably be in Sept.

Salary & Benefit 2009 Payout Request

The Newington Neighbor has requested this info for their next issue but stated that the name was not important. Position/Title, salary, Over Time, Outside Detail, etc breakout. As far as benefits, list the different plan costs, and whether they be 1 per, 2 per or family and list how many of our employees (a count) are part of which plans. Mr. Smith asked the Board to mention that outside detail is funded by the user at no cost to our tax payers.

ADA – Sue Smith

Asked where are we now as far as compliance. The handicapped signs blow over in the parking lot, however that issue will be solved with the new layout whereas those signs will not be necessary. She asked about the thresholds and door openers. Chr. O'Reilly stated that those items were in the 2010 budget request as well as a portable ramp being purchased for access to the Old Parsonage and Meeting House. Also scheduled in 2010 is the Town addressing the grade of the walkway to the Tennis Courts. She asked about a handicapped parking spot being designated at the Town Beach. Selectman Stuart noted that this item had come up in conversation, however was not acted on as no record has been located designating this as an official town beach. There is a sign there presently.

Hearing no further business coming before the Board, Selectman Iocovozzi moved to adjourn with Selectman Stuart seconding. Motion passed 3-0.

Respectively,

Beatrice Marconi
Administrative Assistant