

**FINAL**

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING**

**January 7, 2008**

**7:30 P.M. – MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING – HANOVER NH**

The meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Brian Walsh. Present were: Brian Walsh, Chairman; Katherine Connolly, Vice Chairman; Peter Christie, Selectman; Bill Baschnagel, Selectman; Athos Rassias, Selectman and Julia Griffin, Town Manager.

**1. PUBLIC COMMENT.**

Chairman Walsh asked for any comments from the public. There were no comments from the public.

**2. PRESENTATION BY THE HANOVER CLIMATE PROTECTION COMMITTEE (CPC) AND STAFF UPDATE.**

Chairman Walsh invited members of the Hanover Climate Protection Committee to come speak before the Board.

Miriam Osofsky, Chair of the Hanover Climate Protection Campaign, spoke to the Board about the initiatives of the Hanover Climate Protection Committee. Ms. Osofsky noted that they have a deadline in which to stabilize global emissions in order to prevent cataclysmic change. With increases in oil prices and the more efficient the Town becomes the more taxpayers can be insulated from the impact of driving oil costs.

Ms. Osofsky pointed out that some changes don't require much for an initial investment. Other initiatives do require some investment, such as installing LED traffic lights, but there is a quick payback period. They are happy that the CPC was able to identify potential auditors for heat loss in Town buildings and that audit will begin in a couple of weeks. The CPC is asking the Board to put a placeholder in the budget in the amount of \$100,000 to start the mediation of Town buildings and then for a bond in May, 2009 in order to follow the auditor's recommendations. The CPC is looking forward to working with the Select Board in upcoming discussions.

Chairman Walsh asked Ms. Osofsky to introduce the other members of the Climate Protection Committee. Ms. Osofsky introduced Audrey and Bob McCollum, Dennis Rydjeski (VT Chapter Sierra Club), Roger Lohr, John Trummel (Co-Chair of CPC), Doug Deaett, Carol Weingeist, Bob Norman and David Montgomery. Chairman Walsh thanked the members of the CPC for their hard work.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked how the funds would be spent. She noted that streetlights have been a problem because there is room for reducing wattage and lowering use by other means and perhaps the power companies could help the Town with this initiative.

Ms. Osofsky noted that the immediate changes would be to remediate heat loss in Town buildings. Another initiative is to ensure that for new construction, buildings are being constructed to be as efficient as possible.

Chairman Walsh would like a perspective of all of the Town's activities to find out, for example, how many tons of carbon dioxide are being emitted and how many barrels of oil are being used. Ms. Osofsky noted that some of this information may be available through the Sustainable Energy Research Group and Bob Walker who could be a source of information for the Town.

Roger Lohr stated that Charlie Sullivan did a study on this and could put that information together. Selectman Baschnagel felt that there needed to be a feel for savings in trucks, cars, buildings, and where should they invest the money to get the biggest savings and return for their dollar.

Chairman Walsh would like an easy to read report showing how the Town can save and would like to see 'dollars to make a difference' as an item that can help the Board decide where to put the efforts. Chairman Walsh felt that by providing detailed information to Town Meeting they will be more likely to gain their support.

Audrey McCollum would like to put in a request to come back to the Board on January 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss the questions that the Board is raising tonight. Ms. Griffin felt that there was room in the agenda on January 28<sup>th</sup> to add this item.

Vice Chairman Connolly noted that if there was additional information regarding renovating the buildings, she would like the Board to encourage the group to present it to the Board.

Selectman Rassias noted that there appear to be two efforts taking place; Town education and public education and asked what the group's direction was for individual education.

Ms. Osofsky noted that a lot of time has been spent informing the public through the media and outreach within the community at public events. Her feeling is that by having these initiatives, it provides a public awareness.

Roger Lohr advised that he has been working on the Idling Awareness Campaign and would like the Town to spearhead this initiative as an example to the residents within the Town to provide awareness.

Dennis Rydjeski noted that one of the things they have done was to give away over 3,000 fluorescent light bulbs to lower income families and they have worked closely with the College to reduce their carbon emissions.

Selectman Christie noted that as the Presidential Campaigns continue, this problem needs to be addressed because if this problem isn't solved, we aren't going to be here to deal with any of the other issues. He felt that the Board is going to be supportive of this initiative.

Ms. Osofsky reported that the energy efficiency experts advise that the money that is invested in remediation of heat loss will actually be recovered within 5 years or less.

Chairman Walsh noted that part of the problem with the payback analysis is that it needs to be looked at in terms of dollars versus CO2 and dollars versus tons of oil.

Chairman Walsh thanked the members for coming before the Board.

**3. DISCUSSION OF REQUEST TO CONSIDER INCREASING THE VETERAN'S EXEMPTION.**

Ms. Griffin noted that the Town received a letter from Dick Birnie asking to consider raising the Veteran's Exemption. Ms. Griffin noted that at the 2004 Town Meeting, they voted to increase the optional tax credit for service connected to total disabilities and the tax credit for surviving spouse but they didn't recommend raising the Veteran's tax credit. Under State Law they have the authority to go up to \$500.00 for the Veteran's Tax Credit.

Ms. Griffin reported that the number of veterans eligible is down to 201 qualified veterans but to change the amount from \$50 to \$500 would impact the General Fund by \$100,500. The information provided with regard to the other towns and their handling of this tax credit indicates that many are not going up to \$500.00 but somewhere in between \$50 and \$250. Ms. Griffin also noted that the Board could get public input through a public hearing.

Selectman Christie remembered looking at this in the past and felt that \$50.00 is a nice token but he does not believe that Veterans have an economic need for a higher credit amount. He would be in favor of leaving the credit where it is and noted that he is a veteran and would benefit from the change.

Ms. Griffin noted that the Board did not have to make a decision on this and it could be decided by vote at Town Meeting.

Chairman Walsh noted that there are different groups looking for tax breaks for different reasons. The tax burden falls back on the residents that don't fall into a certain category. Selectman Baschnagel noted that he would also be a beneficiary of this but feels that it should remain at \$50.00.

Chairman Walsh asked Ms. Griffin to reach out to Mr. Birnie and express the wishes of the Board.

**4. UPDATE ON COUNTY JAIL PROJECT.**

Ms. Griffin reported that she continues to be concerned about the proposed project because of the increase in annual operating expense. The current plan is that the delegation will be looking to vote on this in February. She would like to invite the Town's Representatives to attend the

January 28<sup>th</sup> Board of Selectmen's meeting so that the Board could advise them of the Town's wishes with regard to this issue.

Selectman Baschnagel attended a briefing in Lebanon and noted that he was surprised that the County was proceeding with the request for a bond without specifics being carried through such as validating costs and looking at alternatives. He recognizes that the current facility is 100 years old that is housing a significant prison population and although he doesn't question the need for another facility, the new facility is significantly improved and will have its own laundry facility, its own kitchen, etc. Currently over one-third of the space is going to be spent on rehabilitation for people who are not housed there for significant periods of time. Although it's nice and desirable, it's unclear whether it is affordable or necessary. Selectman Baschnagel didn't feel that alternatives had been explored and expressed concern that the project is being built based on a projected 20 years out population.

Vice Chairman Connolly noted that the funding is unclear for the water system. She also expressed concerns over making the building more energy efficient over what is being proposed.

Chairman Walsh noted that the proposal has gone down from \$52 million to \$40 million. He has concerns over designing a building for a population 20 years from now. The change from 39 employees to 79 employees which would indicate that the operating budget would be doubled and he does not think that this was a well thought out plan.

Ms. Griffin noted that there has been a lot of emotional reaction from the towns that are going to be financially affected by this but there haven't been meaningful constructive discussions to resolve some of the concerns. There are no numbers available for the use of the current jail although it is referenced in the proposal. Ms. Griffin would suggest moving at a slower pace and looking closely at the issues.

Chairman Walsh stated that he believes in prevention with regard to the correctional system but he is not sure that this money should come from property taxes instead of the State.

Ms. Griffin noted that the County Jail is now holding people for a longer period of time than the jail was originally designed for. Selectman Baschnagel would like to see some population information with regard to the inmates and what the median stay is. He also felt that information about the difference between the State Jail and the County Jail would be useful.

Chairman Walsh stated that there are five areas that have increased in the State budget; Medicaid, Aid to Education Capital, Special Education, Retirement System and Corrections. Chairman Walsh advised that he is not confident in going forward with spending \$40 million for a new jail and this makes Corrections a bigger part of the County budget. He would like to express the concerns to the State representatives.

Selectman Christie felt that there needs to be a process in place for a review group to look at the request. Is \$40 million the right number or could it be \$30 million, etc.? He feels that there needs to be some kind of expert group that can advise in this area.

Ms. Griffin asked if they should invite their delegation at the next meeting. Ms. Griffin advised that they could urge the County Commissioners (with a copy to the delegation) to put together an independent review committee and ask that they slow this project down and that it is way too soon to vote for this. Selectman Christie noted that the proposal went from \$50 million to \$40 million which indicates that this was not well thought out.

Chairman Walsh felt that the County Commissioners should be invited to the next meeting.

Ms. Griffin noted that she and Betsy McClain have tried to work with some numbers to try to determine the tax impact based on the County tax with this proposal but they don't currently have accurate numbers to work with.

Chairman Walsh noted that everything that increased by long-term care is going to affect property tax and everything that is not going to be increased will sit in the State budget but these items are going to grow in parallel and should be looked at.

## **5. DISCUSSION REGARDING STATE RETIREMENT SYSTEM.**

Ms. Griffin stated that the Board received a large report regarding the NH State Retirement System. This information is important for the Board to understand for future labor and fiscal impacts. The Legislature will begin to deal with these recommendations this session. She encouraged the Board to continue to look at the report and noted that she was impressed with the amount of data provided by the report.

Ms. Griffin noted that the recommendations reflected the position of the entire commission and due to the conflicts within the commission there are minority reports included. Ms. Griffin noted that she received this report via e-mail from Dennis Logue who served on the Commission and it is now posted on the LGC website. The Legislature is receiving briefings on the commission reports this week.

Vice Chairman Connolly asked if a Legislative action would address the issue that the fund has not been professionally run or handled in the way that it should have. Ms. Griffin noted that the Legislature is going to have to deal with the make-up of the Retirement System Board, subcommittees that were created, and it highlights the issue that the Board members need to recognize their fiduciary responsibility versus loyalty to their interest groups.

Selectman Baschnagel felt that the report is well written and would encourage Mr. Logue to come in to give the Board the highlights of the recommendations. The members of the retirement system need to take some grass roots action to require appropriate fiduciary responsibility by the trustees. The problem has many causes but mostly that the employee's money has not been well monitored or managed.

Ms. Griffin felt that the recommendation that the Retirement Board meet with the Legislative leaders and the Governor twice a year is so critical. There have been a number of employees watching this and people are concerned about their retirement. Employers and employees are all

in this together and it is everyone's goal to make sure everything is adequately funded and how to restructure benefits going forward.

Selectman Baschnagel noted that the legislature has done things that are not fiscally responsible. Ms. Griffin noted that the state of the NH Retirement System is for the most part the norm. There are other retirement systems in other States that have been redeemed, so there is hope for system in the future.

Ms. Griffin feels that this will be a key issue in the next run for Governor. She feels that this is the most significant funding issue other than education that the State is dealing with.

Ms. Griffin stated that with preparing the budget, rate increases are in for July 1, 2009. The Board will want to educate the residents as to what the issue with the retirement system is for the Town's employees.

Chairman Walsh noted that Town and municipal employees should be thankful that they have not been wiped out as those who are in the private sector.

**6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**  
- December 17, 2007

**Vice Chairman Connolly MOVED to approve the Minutes of December 17, 2007. Selectman Baschnagel SECONDED the motion.**

**THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2007.**

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS.**

Ms. Griffin reported that they are all set up for the Primary vote tomorrow at the Hanover High School gym. She noted that the Checklist is up considerably and the Town Clerk's office has been very busy with people registering to vote.

Chairman Walsh noted that the last election saw about 6,200 people and now the Checklist is over 8,000. Ms. Griffin noted that the State provided the Town with 3,500 democratic ballots which she was concerned would not be enough. There are now 5,000 democratic ballots and 3,000 republican ballots. Parking has been shifted to assist with voting for tomorrow. She is expecting a large turnout.

Ms. Griffin noted that the final General Fund bottom line should be in by the end of the week. Ms. Griffin noted that their legal budget has now hit \$100,000 and they are 6 months into the fiscal year and they have gone through most of their sand/salt budget. They will be looking at other areas of the Town in which to pull funds from.

**8. SELECTMEN'S REPORTS.**

**Peter Christie**

Selectman Christie had nothing new to report.

**Kate Connolly**

Vice Chairman Connolly attended a Planning Board meeting where the discussions continued regarding proposed zoning amendments, specifically the preliminary report from the Rural Study Group. There will be a public meeting on Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at Trumbull Hall regarding the amendments and will probably affect at least 70% of property owners in the rural area.

**Bill Baschnagel**

Selectman Baschnagel had nothing new to report.

**Athos Rassias**

Selectman Rassias had nothing new to report.

**Brian Walsh**

Chairman Walsh announced that the Chamber of Commerce annual meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 15<sup>th</sup> at the Hood.

Chairman Walsh reported that the Parks and Recreation Board met and discussed the Pond Party which will be held on the Feb 9<sup>th</sup>. Howl at the Moon is scheduled for February 23<sup>rd</sup> and is run by the Dartmouth Outing Club.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS.**

There was no Other Business.

**10. ADJOURNMENT.**

**Vice Chairman Connolly MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Baschnagel SECONDED the motion.**

**THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 9 P.M.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Athos Rassias, Secretary

**SUMMARY**

- 1. Vice Chairman Connolly MOVED to approve the Minutes of December 17, 2007. Selectman Baschnagel SECONDED the motion.**

**THE BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2007.**

- 2. Vice Chairman Connolly MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Baschnagel SECONDED the motion.**

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Minutes transcribed by Elizabeth S. Rathburn.