

**Board of Selectmen  
Meeting Minutes  
February 3, 2009**

Selectmen Present were: Rosendel Gerry, Chairman, Richard M. McLaughlin, Cathy Hardy and H. Bob Plausse. Excused: E. Earle Brown

School Committee Present were: Edmund Hartt, Jodi Hanson, Yvonne Walker, Cynthia Gerry and Christine Stevens

Others Present: Deb Stewart, Paul Russo and David Kinney

**1. Call to Order:**

Chairman Gerry called the meeting to order, quorum present.

**2. The 2010 Budget Climate:**

Hartt explained that state school education subsidy for the current fiscal year has been reduced by approximately \$67,000. Cuts have been made here and there to make it up but the School Committee anticipates very little if any carryover to be available in the coming year. In addition they expect a reduction in the State subsidy for the coming year as well as a penalty for not joining the Regional School Unit.

Hartt went on to explain that the first draft of the budget includes a 1.4% increase in spending. Thus far revenues have not been projected. He expects that the School will need more tax dollars next year. He asked if local economy was as bad as national economy.

Gerry asked if the School Committee was aware of a possible additional \$146,000 coming from the State. Russo responded that dollars thus far from the State have all been red.

Hardy inquired if any legal action is being taken regarding consolidation. Hartt stated that smaller schools are voting no. Walker stated that legislation submitted to overturn penalties. Stewart stated that penalty change may be aimed towards those who voted to consolidate but did not due to aggregate vote.

McLaughlin asked if the salary and benefit costs have been negotiated. Hartt responded yes. McLaughlin stated that his belief is that work is scarce particularly for contractors. It would take a lot to keep it at zero. Hartt stated that fuel locked in at \$2.05 per gallon and that will help.

Plausse stated that budgets needed to be gone over with fine tooth comb but School and Town has to be run right. Question where is the line.

**3 & 4. Capital Campaign Fund Discussion and Town Meeting Warrant Article:**

Hartt announced that no proposal would be forthcoming as concerns still exist as to whether or not it would be legal.

Hartt suggested that perhaps funds could be placed into a reserve fund that could only be spent with voter approval. A sample warrant article prepared by Drummond Woodsum was distributed.

Hartt questioned why the Board of Selectmen decided not to pay for items from Capital Campaign. Gerry stated that the town should decide what should happen with remain gin funds. McLaughlin stated that he believed the funds were for buying something versus repairing something. Expense should not be approved for maintenance.

Walker stated that the alarm system not working right ever.

Hartt stated that the heating system has a problem with sediment in the system. Russo stated that it took over a year and one half to identify.

Kinney questioned whether or not School Committee discussed action against architect or project inspector as someone had to have signed off of the installation. Russo stated that it was not worth it for \$2,200. Kinney stated that taking it out of Capital Campaign because it was easy didn't make it right. This act wasn't necessarily what the donors anticipated.

McLaughlin questioned who would have authority to spend reserve fund if set up under the proposed article. Hartt responded the intent was for voters. Kinney stated that his understanding of reserve funds authorized the municipal officers to expend funds in reserve funds provided the funds were expended for intended purpose. Many Boards of Selectmen will seek voter approval but it isn't required. Kinney further explained this principal using the fire truck reserve fund.

Paul Sampson stated that the 5 Town CSD set up a \$50,000 reserve last year that requires voter approval.

Hartt also presented a letter from Drummond Woodsum that stated that the Board of Selectmen may have overstepped their bounds by not approving expenditures approved by the School Committee. Members of the Board of Selectmen questioned this interpretation. Hartt offered to have an opinion sought from the Attorney General's office. Gerry inquired as to what would be asked. Hardy suggested that both groups should agree on questions before sending to the Attorney General. McLaughlin stated that this would be a good approach.

The group discussed cost sharing of lawyer's bills (school and town) to draft letter and review it prior to it being sent.

Paul Sampson stated that this was an issue of trust and the Board of Selectmen should just trust the work of the School Committee. He further suggested that perhaps this was the time for the School to just be separate from the Town.

Kinney stated that as uncomfortable as this situation may be it the Town is very fortunate to have this money as a problem. It was a good thing that the bids came in as low as they did and that people worked very hard not to spend it all.

Cynthia Gerry suggested investing the funds for a better return (at approximately 2% currently).

Walker stated that it was good to have communication and wanted the School Committee's work to be transparent.

**5. Adjourn:**

**Motion** by McLaughlin, second by Hardy to adjourn. **Vote 4-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

David B. Kinney  
Town Clerk