

TOWN OF LAKEVILLE
Joint Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2011 -7:00 PM

On April 28, 2011, the Board of Selectmen held a meeting at 7:00 PM at the Town Office Building in Lakeville. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Olivier at 7:04 PM. Selectmen present were: Selectman Olivier, Selectman Maksy and Selectman Belliveau. Also present were: Rita Garbitt, Town Administrator, Tracie Craig, Executive Assistant and Christine Weston, Recording Secretary, Cynthia McRae, Town Accountant, Janet Black and Paul Meleedy from the Board of Assessors, Aaron Burke, Town Moderator, and John Olivieri, member of the Lakeville School Committee. Cindy Dow was present and recording for the Middleborough Gazette.

The Lakeville Finance Committee called their meeting to order at 7:04 PM. Members present included Michael Petruzzo, Norman Orrall, and Donna Winters

Meet with Fire Chief to discuss Ambulance Fees

Daniel Hopkins, Fire Chief, was present for the discussion. Ms. Garbitt gave a brief overview of the Fire Department budget. Mr. Hopkins stated that last year, 558 trips were made to a hospital. The base rate for Medicare is \$367.54 per trip. Chief Hopkins has contacted other towns to see what their rates were. The range is approximately 50%-75% over Medicaid reimbursement. The Town of Dighton is 100% above Medicare. Basically every ambulance company goes above and beyond the base. The Town of Sharon goes above the fee 40%. Norfolk County charges the Medicare rate plus 200%. Lakeville's rate is 50% over the base rate, so \$551.31 per trip. Selectman Belliveau asked what the drop off rate was for collecting overdue invoices. Chief Hopkins said we are collecting approximately 86% of what we bill out, which is very good. With Blue Cross, last year \$56,033.49 was collected or 19% of the total; Medicaid was \$9,038.08 or 3%; and Medicare was \$87,926.00 or 29%. For "other", \$129,706.00 was collected or 44%. With respect to patient amounts, \$10,977.99 was collected or 3.74%. Total payments were \$293,682.25. Selectman Maksy said that the Selectmen are analyzing the Ambulance Fees since the Town is in need of revenue, and is trying to come up to similar rates that other towns are charging. Chief Hopkins gave further explanation on how the Ambulance side of the Fire Department breaks down the services that are performed, and then invoices the client. Last year, the Town was 25% over the base rate. As of January 1, 2011, the Town increased its base rate to 50%. It was explained that the Ambulance side has been very busy all year. If the amount above the base is increased too much, then more hardships will be seen, and the amount of revenue that is collected will go down.

Ms. Garbitt then discussed what else is taking place with respect to new growth, the tax levy and other sources of revenue for the Town. The "Cash for Clunkers" Program is over, and it did generate an increase in motor vehicle excise taxes. This year there is money included in the budget for the FEMA reimbursement. The Fire Department should develop a policy to increase the ambulance fees, and then the Selectman can review it each year and set the rates. The Board also needs to decide what Chief Hopkins is to carry for uncollectables. This will be placed on the agenda for May 9th. Selectman Maksy stated that he would like to see a trigger mechanism in place for the uncollectables. A motion was made by Selectman Maksy for the Selectmen to review the ambulance rates every year and to come up with a procedure to set the rate. This motion was not seconded and further discussion took place. Mr. Hopkins stated that the Fire Department has to set

the rates in December to send them to Comstar for the rate to be effective in January. This can be done immediately if the Board would like to increase the rate, effective July 1, 2011.

Upon a motion made by Selectman Maksy; seconded by Selectman Belliveau it was:

VOTED: To change the ambulance rates to be 150% over Medicare's rate effective July 1, 2011. The rates/fees will be reviewed by the Selectmen each year to be set for the following January.
Unanimous in favor.

Meet with Board of Assessors to discuss vacant Assessment Administrator position and other personnel matters

Janet Black and Paul Meleedy were present for the discussion. Ms. Black took the floor and explained that the Assessors Office lost its Office Manager in February. The Office Manager resigned to take a position in Fall River as a Field Clerk at same rate that they were making as Office Manager in Lakeville. The Assessors have advertised twice over the past few months for the position and have also placed the vacancy on Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers, which is the industry website, along with the Town's website. There is no point in advertising in the newspaper since the position is specific for the field. There are a lot of new requirements from the Department of Revenue (DOR) that were not required before. Ms. Black said there seems to be a huge discrepancy over what the pay should be for the position. She explained that she has brought in emergency temporary personnel for the time being.

Ms. Black explained the reason that the Town was granted an extension from the DOR. Every three (3) years there has to be a complete re-evaluation of all the properties within the Town. The DOR had this set up in such a way that they had more than half of the re-evaluations to take place in one (1) year. The State chose to reassess the re-evaluations, so the Town was extended to a four (4) year re-evaluation schedule so that the amounts could be evened out. This is something that has also taken place in other towns, so Lakeville is not alone. Every property, commercial and residential, has to be inspected every nine (9) years. That is to make sure that the Town is accurate and that the data is correct. The Assessors Office tries to get 1/9 of the assessments completed each year. This involves visiting the property, measuring, inspecting the property from basement to attic, taking pictures, etc. This is what the Field Clerk does. Lakeville is about 40% done right now, and we cannot fall behind. The figures are done by Vision using Mass Appraisal. It is the responsibility of the Assessors to make sure that it is done. The property receives a neighborhood rating. It should then carry a certain value per foot. However, a lot in some neighborhoods can be valued at one amount, and in another neighborhood it would be valued differently. The DOR is trying to convince the Assessors to minimize the number of categories. However, Main Street is very odd with its properties. There are office buildings, houses converted to office buildings; there is Lakeville Hospital, the upcoming CVS, Walgreens, etc. It makes for an interesting comparison. The Assessors' Office can override Vision's figures, if necessary, to accommodate these types of areas and the circumstances. In Bourne, about 15% of the properties are overridden. The Assessors try to have this done prior to the owner bringing their concerns to abatement. There is little time before the bill goes out to make sure that the appraisal is correct.

Chairman Olivier asked what drives the changes. Ms. Black responded that it is DOR and the market. The trend has been commercial properties to be on the down side. Lately, the Field Clerk has to work inside the office since there is no one in the office to help the public. Ms. Black then

showed an appraisal of one (1) property. She stated that a professional is needed to read the document. A professional also needs to remain in the office to keep track of staff and payroll. At this time, there is no one in the office to watch what is going on. Selectman Maksy asked about the possibility of making the Assessors Office a Town Department since it sounds like it needs to be pulled into the Town's side so that resources can be shared. Ms. Black responded that she felt it might be worth studying. The State is trying to do less and put more on the cities and towns. There is no reason that this position should be paid any less than what someone is paid in the Collector's Office or in any other office. The Assessors need to bring in the revenue for the Town. The position was advertised for approximately \$40,000 and Ms. Black stated that she felt it should be advertised for \$60,000. The problem is the title and the job description. Ms. Black said her job at the Bourne Assessors' Office requires a certified general license. The Town has an appraiser who gathers the data, but does not do the values. The Field Clerk makes sure that the correct data is on the card, the measurements are correct, the correct number of porches are taken into account and any other information regarding a home. The building permits are also reviewed for verification. If someone did not pull a permit for the changes that have been made to a property, they are reported to the Building Department. A licensed appraiser would be beneficial for the Assessors' Office; however, someone with experience is needed. The candidate needs to know a lot of statistics, they need to be organized, have management background, and be ready to answer any question that comes in the door about excise tax and personal property.

Selectman Maksy stated that there are 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. The Assessors have not advertised in a newspaper that goes to all those municipalities. The advertisement should have been advertised in more venues, and possibly the position opened up a bit more so that people would apply. The Assessors' Office needs a manager. Selectman Maksy asked if she is looking at going to Grade C with this position, it is at Grade D right now. Ms. Black responded that she was. There are some time issues right now, and there might be yet another vacancy in the office. The position would require someone having experience in an Assessors Office for at least three (3) years in order to understand what it entails. Selectman Maksy stated that he felt that the advertisement was deceiving. Discussion then ensued regarding the position and the correct salary range. Selectman Maksy suggested to have Ms. Craig gather job descriptions from surrounding towns that Lakeville has typically compared itself with. Then, discussion needs to take place with the Wage & Personnel Board. Ms. Garbitt stated that the Wage and Personnel Board does not have the authority to approve a higher salary range if it is not in the budget.

Review FY11 Budget Deficits

Ms. Garbitt explained that right now the accounts that are in deficit are: Snow and Ice account by \$200,000, the Special Needs Out of District account with respect to tuition and transportation in the amount of \$142,533 and Vocational Education Tuition and Transportation in the amount of \$54,486. This is a total of \$337,019.

Review FY12 Revenue and Expense Budget Summary

Chairman Olivier explained that some changes have been made with the Revenue and Expense Budget Summary. The last time that the summary was viewed, there was \$100,000 coming out of the Water Enterprise Fund and \$11,000 coming out of the Stabilization Fund to balance the budget. Since then, money has been added to the Region based off of a memorandum from the Superintendent with the amount of \$131,000. That has now changed as of last night, and it pretty

much goes back to where it originally started. The Town is \$708,946 over Net School Spending (NSS). At the Region, the bid for transportation came in \$200,000 less than what was budgeted. They also went back to MIAA, since they were trying to increase the health insurance by 14.5%. MIAA was not looking at the complete picture, so when they went back and looked at the claims history, the rate was reduced by 3%. The new rate is an 11.6% increase. The bad news is that the transportation calculation from the State was incorrect. They had a full year's calculation included, and it was to be for a six (6) month term, so that is a \$100,000 reduction. Mr. McCarthy will explain this at the upcoming Regional School Committee Meeting. The total the Superintendent estimated, as of last night, was \$185,000 in savings. That is not reflected in his budget worksheet. \$33.6 million is his budget, and that is lower than the \$34 million. Chairman Olivier felt that the Town can put back its original two (2) numbers. On May 5th the Selectmen will meet with the Freetown Selectmen and Finance Committee to make sure that both Towns are on the same page.

Ms. Garbitt stated that she and Ms. McRae are concerned about the revolving accounts, which will no longer be revolving accounts. The School Department is still not showing revenues for full day kindergarten, pre-kindergarten and the LEAPS program. Chairman Olivier explained that Mr. McCarthy answered that question last night. All the revolving accounts are in a separate subsidiary schedule, and it offsets itself to come out to zero. Ms. McRae stated that all of that should be part of the operating fund and budgeted in their operating budget. The Town pays all the overhead through the Regional Budget. Revolving funds are limited to school lunch, athletic programs and other night time programs. Massachusetts General Laws are very specific on this. Grants are separate. Chairman Olivier stated that he will speak with Mr. McCarthy about that. Perhaps the Superintendent was not aware of that. Ms. McRae added that both towns should be looking at another \$300,000-400,000.

Chairman Olivier summarized what would be taking place. The original amount over NSS will be put back in, the \$160,000 of transportation will be put in it and \$100,000 will be put back into the Water Enterprise fund and \$11,000 back into Stabilization. There will be a deficit of \$100,000. There still might be more relief coming at the Region's level. Ms. Garbitt noted that the Selectmen and the Finance Committee have not voted yet on the budget, and the Department Heads need to know about the reductions. Ms. Garbitt suggested another joint meeting next week for the budget to be voted on.

Old Business – Discuss City of Taunton Water Connection Water Application for Vital Med

Ms. Garbitt said that Vital Med has requested approval of the Water Connection Application for Taunton Water.

Upon a motion made by Selectman Maksy; seconded by Selectman Belliveau it was:

VOTED: To approve the Water Connection Application for Vital Med.
Unanimous in favor.

New Business – Vote to authorize a Water Commissioner to sign Requisitions for SRF Loan

Ms. Garbitt explained that Selectman Yeatts had been previously authorized to sign the requisitions for payment that were to be submitted to DEP for the SRF Loan. The Town Accountant needs an official vote for another Selectman to sign the requisitions.

Upon a motion made by Selectman Maksy with Chairman Olivier stepping down to second and stepping back up to vote it was:

VOTED: That Selectman Belliveau is the Water Liaison for the Town of Lakeville and is authorized to sign the requisitions for the SRF loan.
Unanimous in favor.

Update regarding 40S Reimbursement

Ms. Garbitt stated that the Towns Legislators are working very hard to get the FY12 40S Reimbursement through. If it makes it through the Senate, the \$87,000 will be put on the Cherry Sheet. It is not clear if this will be the final amount for the 40S money. It will depend if in July, the Town has additional students. The Building Commissioner, the Superintendent and the Town Accountant have to fill out and submit a lot of paperwork to receive the 40S reimbursement. It is not known if the Town will ever receive FY11's reimbursement.

Executive Session

At 9:08 PM, upon a motion made by Selectman Maksy and seconded by Selectman Belliveau, the Board unanimously:

VOTED: To enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Board and not to return to Open Session.
Polled vote: Selectman Maksy –aye, Selectman Olivier – aye, and Selectman Belliveau – aye.

At 9:08 PM, upon a motion made by Mr. Orrall; seconded by Ms. Winters, the Finance Committee unanimously:

VOTED: To enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and not return to Open Session.
Polled vote: Mr. Orrall – aye, Ms. Winters – aye and Mr. Petruzzo – aye.

At 9:09 PM, upon a vote made by Mr. Meleedy with Ms. Black stepping down to second and stepping back up to vote, on a unanimous roll call vote, the Board of Assessors

VOTED: To enter into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation because an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the Town and not return to Open Session
Polled vote: Mr. Meleedy – aye and Ms. Black – aye.