

**Town of Brookfield  
Selectmen/Department Head Meeting  
Town Hall, Banquet Room  
Tuesday, May 17, 2011 - 9:00 am**

Chairman Peter O'Connell called the meeting to order at 9:09 am. Other members present: Stephen J. Comtois II, Rudy Heller.

**Camera Operator:** There was no camera operator

**Press:** There was no press

**Public:** Brenda McElroy, Michael Blanchard, Bruce Clarke, Peter Martell, Herbert Chaffee, Donna Wentzell, Donna Lafleur, Philip Peirce, Ronald Couture, Kathleen Wild, Lucinda Thompson, Michael Seery, Donna Neylon

The purpose of this meeting was to review the proposed fiscal year 2012 budget and the articles for the June 10, 2011 Annual and Special Town Meeting.

Mr. O'Connell began the meeting with welcoming the following to their first Department Head meeting in their new capacity:

Michael Blanchard, Police Chief

Brenda McElroy, Tax Collector

Stephen J. Comtois II, Selectman

**Treasurer Search:**

Mr. O'Connell gave an update on the search for the new Treasurer. He said that there had been 13 applicants of which the Screening Committee had interviewed five and recommended two to the Board to be interviewed. Those two were current Holland Tax Collector Nancy Talbot, and Brookfield's former Treasurer's Assistant Sheila Frangiamore. The Board conducted its interviews in open session last night and expected to make their appointment at tonight's meeting. The Screening also did a Treasurer Salary Survey and it was discovered that there was some room for some possible savings in the forms of the Treasurer's salary and/or staff.

**Solar Project Update:**

Bruce Clarke and Rudy Heller gave a brief update of the progress that their Solar Committee was making and each gave fellow member Tim Roughan credit for helping to make a very complicated process easier. The committee is reviewing proposals and believes this project will bring revenue and/or cost savings to the Town. It seems that, although other towns are now discussing a solar project for their landfill areas, Brookfield is among the very first to reach the proposal stage. We are "treading new ground".

**Fiscal Year 2011:**

A memo had been sent out to Department Heads to determine how much they plan on turning back from the current fiscal year. The budget needs to capture about \$20,000 to

be used to reduce the Snow & Ice deficit so that free cash won't have to be used as well as Medicare and Health Insurance over runs totaling about \$17,000.

Chairman O'Connell explained that debt reductions are coming as big projects are being paid off, we need to hold the budgets and tax rate steady. Mike Seery wanted to see money used to reduce the tax rate; Herb Chaffee reminded everyone that the Highway Department is using equipment that is over 30 years old and the Town should be putting money aside for future purchases.

The Selectmen, Tax Collector and Treasurer's offices are working toward collecting all back taxes. Currently the former Lakeside Campgrounds owe about ½ million dollars in back taxes and fees. It is expected that within a month, ownership will be transferred to the Town. The prior owners will then have up to a year to pay all back taxes in order to retain their ownership. The Tax Collector and Treasurer are now pro-active in initiating earlier payments plans.

The Selectmen told the department heads that they appreciated their budget management in this 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row of level-funding. Bruce Clarke indicated that the receipt of grants has been a big help; there were many projects that could not have been achieved without the use of grant funding. He stressed that there should be money in the future budget for a grant writer, planner, project administrator position.

#### Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

- Highway Operator: The Board has endorsed additional funding for a second full-time operator for the Highway Department. Herb Chaffee explained that he would give up his one part-time person for a full-time. He expected that the \$14/hour for the additional 20 hours a week would cost the town about \$10,000 over what has already been allocated. This person could also be an operator for the Water Department. The State's rule-of-thumb is that there should be one operator for every 10 miles of roads. Brookfield has over 40 miles of roads and two full-time employees.
- Town Hall Employee back-up: Rudy Heller said that the problem of back up for the Town Hall employees needed to be addressed. Peter Martell said that, years ago clerks in the Town Hall were moved from department to department as needed; now they need to be more specialized.
- Transfer Station Savings: The new contract that the Selectmen and Boards of Health of Brookfield and North Brookfield have entered into jointly is saving a substantial amount of transfer station costs.
- Chapter 90 Equipment Purchases: At this time, some Chapter 90 equipment purchases will come before the voters. Herb Chaffee explained the process of spending the Chapter 90 money. The Superintendent decides where to spend the money, the Selectmen must vote to agree, and then the State must approve. The department heads present were not in favor of putting these articles on the Warrant; they felt the decisions should be left to the department head, the Selectmen and the State. Mr. Chaffee explained that articles on the warrant every

year accepting Chapter 90 funding was not necessary as the Town has signed a 10-year contract for this.

- Possible Special Account creation: Bruce Clarke suggested setting up a special account so that (example) if the Police Department needed a new cruiser, they wouldn't have to wait for the Annual Town Meeting. Peter O'Connell stated that he appreciated the Highway Departments extensive planning and research which allowed them to be able to have money available for the purchase of used equipment when it became available.
- Wagon Wheel's request for loan assistance: The Selectmen explained the request of Wagon Wheel Mobile Home Co-op's request for the Town to sponsor them in a \$1.5 million loan/grant with USDA. A two thirds vote will be necessary. The Selectmen would vote for this as long as certain conditions were met on the part of Wagon Wheel; one such condition would be to add a 2% charge to the interest rate payable to the Town. Nanatomqua had asked for similar assistance in the amount of \$125,000 but has since decided to withdraw.
- Trench box: Bruce Clarke and Herb Chaffee had requested the Town to purchase a trench box for safety in road and water projects. Mr. Clarke said that he had found a box that was aluminum (about \$5,600) instead of steel (\$17,000) which reduced the price considerably. The box would be 6 ft x 8 ft with 2 ft legs and end plates. He proposed to present an option to the Water Commissioners but wanted to know if the Selectmen would go along with it. The option was that the Commissioners would pay the full cost of the aluminum box but that the Town vote to use money received from scrap sales, etc. to reimburse the Water Department for 50% of the total cost. If approved, the box could be delivered in time for use on the STRAP grant project (Town Farm, Rice Corner & Gay Roads).

#### Energy Audit:

Peter Martell reminded everyone that we should have an energy audit conducted every five years.

#### Banister Common & Mall Committee:

Kathleen Wild reminded everyone that her committee has a video that is airing on the local cable channel. The video is their presentation as made to the Selectmen about three weeks ago. They have an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant and will be conducting an informational meeting at 7:00 pm on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Banquet Room.

#### Bridge (Fiskdale Road/Route 148) Reconstruction:

Rudy Heller told of an e-mail that he received indicating that MassDOT has the "river bridge" on the fast track to be fixed/replaced during 2014. The project is at the 25% design stage currently.

#### Bridge (Shore Drive, East Brookfield) Reconstruction:

Peter Martell announced that there will be a public hearing on June 8<sup>th</sup> regarding this bridge and it is expected that this bridge will be closed for two years.

FY 2012 Pay Raise:

The Selectmen have recommended a 1 ½ % pay raise in the FY 2012 budget.

Motions:

It was agreed that the motions would all be made by the Selectmen but if there were specific questions, they would be answered by the relevant department head.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Chairman O'Connell thanked everyone for their attendance and participation in this meeting.

Mr. Comtois moved to adjourn at 10:36 pm; Mr. Heller seconded; so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Neylon, Administrative Assistant

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_