

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 10, 2009**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: Deb Billado, George Tyler, Peter Gustafson, John Lajza.
(Larry Yandow was absent.)

ADMINISTRATION: Dave Crawford, Village Manager.

I. CALL TO ORDER and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MOTION by John Lajza, **SECOND** by Peter Gustafson, to appoint Deb Billado to assume the duties of chairman in the absence of Village President, Larry Yandow.
VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

Trustee Billado called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

The Board advanced the meeting with the Brownell Library Trustees to precede the public hearing on the FY10 budget.

III. GUESTS/PRESENTATIONS

1. Comments from Public on Items not on Agenda
None.

2. Review of Brownell Library Budget with Library Trustees

Trustee George Tyler stated the \$60,000 increase in the library budget may not be palatable to the voters in these economic times. The Library Trustees are urged to justify every expense and identify any expenditure that can be suspended for a year. Peter Gustafson added the Village Trustees are asking all departments to do the same prior to Annual Meeting. Christine Packard, Chairwoman of the Brownell Library Trustees, felt there was a lack of communication between the boards which resulted in the Library Trustees not being informed of the budget parameters when the budget was drafted. Some items were included in the budget because it was indicated they would be covered in another manner, stated Ms. Packard, but the items can easily be backed out of the budget. The Library Trustees want to do their share.

Penny Pillsbury, Brownell Library Director, calculated to do a 7% increase overall means a cut in computer expenses, training, electrical services, and heating. Painting the building trim can remain because federal funding will cover the work. Trustee Deb Billado pointed out the percentage increase directly ties to the dollar amount of the budget, and with the library budget the dollar figure with a 7% increase is significant. If the same is continued within four years the library budget will be over \$1 million. Every citizen is paying \$62.60 for the village and town library budgets. The library is important to the community, acknowledged Ms. Billado, but it is not a critical service, such as street and fire. Elaine Sopchak, Library Trustee, noted that retirement, health benefits, and

salaries which make up 70% of the budget are out of the board's control. Ms. Billado noted there will be increases in other budgets in these areas as well.

Penny Pillsbury clarified the record to state the library has never spent \$75,000 on magazines; the budgeted funds support the adult and youth collections. Ms. Pillsbury submitted a list of budget options, including cuts in Computer Expenses (\$325 for Clean State privacy software), Technology Access (\$2,000 due to the elimination of non-downloadable books), Adult Programs (\$500), Children's Programs (\$1,500), Computer Replacement (\$1,800 for a Mac station and \$1,100 for a laptop), and Capital Outlay (\$4,125 for painting trim on building).

Trustee John Lajza pointed out it is not up to the Village Trustees to garner support for services provided to other communities by the library. The Brownell Library Trustees should handle this endeavor. There are 8,500 village citizens supporting the library. The past significant amount of taxes paid by IBM to the village is no longer available. The library needs to look for backing elsewhere to support the services provided, such as contacting the Essex Selectboard or Williston Selectboard and other towns to request a pro-rated contribution. Mr. Lajza asked about paring down the adult and youth collection amount of \$75,000 that is shown in the budget. Penny Pillsbury noted the line item has been level funded since 2005. The library has seen a 23% increase in circulation over last year and a 50% increase in circulation of adult magazines since last month. More people are using the library. Also, the cost of books has increased so the library has been buying fewer books. Books that are downloadable are not purchased in hardcopy.

George Tyler asked if there is flexibility to move funds around. Ms. Pillsbury confirmed this, adding she has been trying to find as many free programs, materials and books as possible. The collection needs to be up to date and what people want to use. Trustee Tyler expressed concern about the upkeep of the building. Ms. Pillsbury stated the lead paint abatement and painting the primer will be done the first year followed by the finish painting in the next year. A state historic preservation grant will be sought for the painting work. Peter Gustafson suggested using some money from the book collection line item (\$75,000) to pay for the painting so the work is complete at once.

Deb Billado asked about the Building and Grounds Maintenance line item (\$13,000). Ms. Pillsbury explained there is always some maintenance or repair that is unanticipated (broken toilet, flooding, and such). The budget figure is based on historical data. Trustee Billado suggested trimming the line item amount to \$10,000 which will free up \$3,000 and not impact the function of the library. Dave Crawford noted each Department Head was sent a directive to realistically budget which was done. The library is an older building. Repairs typically cost more than a more modern building. The amount in the budget is approximately what has been spent in the past. Lauren Morrisseau calculated the average expenditure has been about \$9,000.

Following further discussion of proposed cuts in the library budget, there was agreement to add the painting work, one computer and one printer purchase back into the budget.

The net result is a decrease in the library budget of \$9,425 for a total budget of \$630,869 (7.8% increase).

3. Channel 17 Update

Lauren-Glenn Davitian, CCTV, mentioned the upcoming CCTV 25th anniversary celebration. Channel 17 has been in operation for the past 18 years. On April 30, 2009 there will be a screening of programming. The celebratory party is to be held on June 13, 2009. All are invited. CCTV is currently negotiating its contract with Comcast, stated Ms. Davitian. Comcast is looking closely at capital costs. CCTV is looking at community impact and meeting the needs and interests of the community, and connecting that to capital investments and the CCTV budget. Towns need to communicate what they want covered. On the website there is now the clickable meeting function. Ms. Davitian suggested the marquee for the clickable meeting be shown on the front page of each website to increase use of the function. Statistics are compiled on the number of visits to the website and the location of the users. The Channel 17 website had 5,000 visits per month to the site. There were 1,500 visits on election night alone. People accessing the Channel 17 website are seeking information. The focus is the local community. There is benefit to promote the service, stated Ms. Davitian.

Dave Crawford mentioned the need to archive meetings and inform the public on how easy it is to access a meeting for viewing. George Tyler suggested there be a summary of the meeting that is covered by Channel 17. The summary could simply be a series of bullets or headlines. Ms. Davitian said her staff has been discussing various ideas to trigger more people to watch, such as news bullets on the Channel 17 site or doing short previews for the week. Deb Billado noted the audio for some of the meetings fades in and out. Ms. Davitian said staff is always trying to improve on this, but it is difficult if a proper microphone system is not in place when the meeting is taped.

Ms. Davitian stated in the fall municipalities will be asked to provide a letter of support outlining how the service has benefited the citizenry and if more events or meetings should be covered. Channel 17 needs to ascertain if demand is greater than what can be provided in service. Dave Crawford mentioned the Village Trustees have been having many special meetings, especially with the current economic times. Lauren-Glenn Davitian suggested the critical meetings be covered gavel-to-gavel, and an update from the Village Manager be shown on less critical meetings. Channel 17 will be decreasing the schedule from four showings to three showings of a meeting (the afternoon showing will be eliminated). Feedback on the schedule change is requested.

John Lajza observed having the Channel 17 website frees up other channels for Comcast or Comcast could provide additional channels. Ms. Davitian commented if the website cannot be accessed or a viewer does not have cable, the meeting can be viewed at the Channel 17 studio or a DVD can be made. Ms. Davitian urged continued funding of the clickable agenda function to show the cable company there are multiple ways the programming is being supported by communities.

4. Public Hearing: FY10 Budgets and Capital Programs

Dave Crawford reviewed the presentation on the FY10 budget to be shown at the Annual Meeting. The presentation includes information on significant increases to the budget, the IBM subsidy, revenues and expenditures, projected grand list growth, tax rates, water/sewer rates, and impact on the average household. It was noted \$604 in village taxes buys the services received in the village, and this amount is less by more than half of average condominium fees. George Tyler suggested a pie chart of the total property tax on a house in the village showing the dollar amounts for school, recreation, town, and village taxes (i.e. a snapshot of the total tax bill and how the money is spent). Dave Crawford stated this can be shown for the current tax year.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Adopt FY10 Budgets and Capital Programs

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by Peter Gustafson, to adopt the FY10 Budgets and Capital Programs as proposed including the decrease in the Library Budget of \$9,425 (revised Library Budget of \$630,869) for a General Fund Budget of \$3,061,037.

DISCUSSION: Dave Crawford noted the Department Heads have carefully reviewed their budgets. The percent of increase in the budget is upwards to 9%, but that is actually covering two years time so the real increase is closer to 4.5%. The budget as proposed keeps the services provided at the base level which was the objective of the Trustees. There are on-going negotiations with the Employees Association with possible budget implications that need discussion in Executive Session.

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

VI. VILLAGE MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Meeting Schedule

February 24 at 6:30 PM ó Regular Trustees Meeting

March 2 at 7:30 PM ó Annual Town Meeting

March 3 from 7 AM to 7 PM ó Voting by Australian Ballot (Town of Essex)

March 10 at 6:30 PM ó Regular Trustees Meeting

March 24 at 6:30 PM ó Regular Trustees Meeting

April 1 at 7:00 PM ó Annual Village Meeting

April 14 from 7 AM to 7 PM ó Voting by Australian Ballot (Essex Junction)

April 14 at 6:30 PM ó Regular Trustees Meeting

April 28 at 6:30 PM ó Regular Trustees Meeting

2. Stimulus Package Preparations

Work continues on projects for the anticipated stimulus package.

3. Community Rail Connector

Dave Crawford reported a presentation on the community rail connector as part of the Pearl Street Improvement Project was given the Vermont Rail Council. George Tyler

suggested information be sent to the *Essex Reporter* and *Burlington Free Press*. Dave Crawford agreed, adding the goal is to get the first phase of funding to rebuild the roadbed and multi-use path.

4. Expenditures

Expenditures totaling \$22,000 in the Fire Department budget cannot not be made up at this point in time. There will be an over expenditure in the General Fund of \$30,000 which will be covered by using reserve funds, but these funds are also targeted for the FY10 budget. Expenditures to operate the WWTF will exceed \$200,000 due to erosion of water use (revenues are decreasing) which was not anticipated when the budget was developed. Businesses are using less water plus Williston and Essex have upgraded their metering to more accurately capture water use. Also, there are cost increases in electricity, chemicals, maintenance, and part-time staff at the WWTF. Utility budgets are reviewed later in the year when rate adjustments are made.

5. Local Options Tax

Public meetings were held on the local options tax. The process that was followed is correct and legal. There is a contractual agreement authorized by both boards and signed by both managers, stated Dave Crawford. The local options tax will help cover many capital projects that have been deferred as part of the conservative approach to the budget. At some point the projects must be done. The proposed fire truck is not negotiable if the Village wants to maintain its fire rating. The Village and Town are working together on the fire truck issue.

6. CVE Noise & Financial Agreements

Proceedings are as transparent as possible, but negotiation of contract issues is confidential and held in Executive Session.

7. Tree Farm/Soccer Field Transfer

Details as to what the village will receive are still being worked out before any money will be invested.

8. VLCT Local Government Day ó 2/18/09

Dave Crawford and Trustees are invited to attend.

VII. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS

1. Board Member Comments/Concerns

Deb Billado stated there were three public hearings held on the local options tax. The first meeting was with businesses and the next two were with the general public. There will be a voice vote on the local options tax on March 2, 2009 at the Essex Town Annual Meeting that is held at the high school. The citizenry is urged to attend the meeting to cast their voice vote. The local options tax is investment in the community by all the residents as well as visitors. Peter Gustafson pointed out the subsidy paid by IBM is decreasing by \$60,000 each year and will cease in FY14. The Trustees have been successful in getting a financial contribution from CVE which along with the local options tax will help make up the loss of the IBM subsidy. It is estimated the local

options tax will generate about \$450,000 for the village (and the same amount for the town). The funds will be used to decrease the tax rate or be used for capital expenditures. The money will not be used for new services.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by John Lajza, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

- 1. Approval of Minutes (1/13/09 & 1/27/09)**
- 2. Approval of Warrants**
- 3. Planning Commission Minutes of 1/15/09**
- 4. Amendment of Motor Vehicle Ordinance for New Stop Signs**
- 5. Sign Certificate of Highway Mileage**
- 6. Sign Resolution on Health Care Incentive Program**
- 7. Annual Report Dedication and Employee Acknowledgement**
- 8. Reading list acceptance (letters/communications)**
 - Letter from Champlain Water District re: FY10 Water Rate**
 - Response from Rep. Peter Welch re: Economic Stimulus**
 - Invitation to Grange Legislative Night on 3/13/09**
 - Letter to Congressional Delegation re: Rail Connector Proposal**

VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board signed the highway mileage certificate and resolution on the health care incentive program.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by Peter Gustafson, that the Board of Trustees go into Executive Session to consider pending contract negotiations and personnel matters, and charter and potential budget changes related to personnel issues where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the Village at a substantial disadvantage, and to permit staff to be present for this session. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The Board entered Executive Session at 9 p.m.

MOTION by Peter Gustafson, SECOND by George Tyler, to adjourn Executive Session. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

Executive Session was adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

X. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by John Lajza, SECOND by George Tyler, to adjourn the meeting. VOTING: 4 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

RScty: M.E.Riordan