

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
REGULAR SESSION MEETING MINUTES**

**April 4, 2011**

**Veterans Memorial Building, Room 229  
900 Main Street, Millis, MA 02054**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chm. Vecchi called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The following persons were present: Chairman Charles Vecchi, Vice Chair Andrea Wagner, Clerk Donald Hendon, Administrative Assistant Jennifer Cederberg and Town Administrator Charles Aspinwall.

**OVERRIDE DISCUSSION:** Sel. Vecchi reviewed the details of the proposed override and noted that the average tax payer would pay an additional \$383 per year which is \$1.13/thousand. He explained that the idea of the override is not just to cover the coming fiscal year, but to buffer the impact going forward for the next 5 years. He reminded the audience that the Selectmen, School Committee and Finance Committee are all in favor of this override. He stated that there will be a stabilization fund created as part of this override and the budget numbers continue to be fluid. He noted that the current projected deficit based on State Aid numbers suggested by Rep. Linsky is over \$535,000.

Mr. Aspinwall spoke concerning the purpose of the meeting this evening. He updated the Board on his meetings with Department Heads and preliminary recommendations he has made on what the cuts will be if the override does not pass. He noted that the Town's share of the deficit could range as low as \$47,000 up to \$92,000 depending on the analysis used. He further stated that the number proposed to be responsible on the municipal side would be \$76,000. He stated his recommendations are based on conserving public safety and public works. Mr. Aspinwall stated that the Public Works Department has seen the largest number of reductions over the past years. He went on to review a detailed list of his proposed preliminary cuts which hit hardly the Administrative and Financial areas of the Town.

Mr. Vecchi stated that the work still has to be done regardless of the cuts that will be made and that it is possible that some offices may close in order to be able to keep the office function running. He noted that the numbers for the DPW staff numbers are sobering: that ten years ago the staffing level was at 24 and now the staffing level is at 10. He stated that there are a lot more roads to maintain and that the staff are unable, due to lack of personnel, to do projects that they used to be able to do and that these projects are now being contracted out. He noted that this is not a good position to be in.

Jennifer Cederberg spoke urging the Board to consider other options rather than cutting the part-time position in the office. She requested that the Board consider reducing line items in other areas of the Selectmen/Town Administrator's budget to avoid eliminating the part-time position.

Kathy LaPlant, Finance Director, reviewed her position and the Departments she is responsible for. She reminded the Board that just over 10 years ago, the Town had a lengthy review from the DOR which brought to light a lot of problems with oversight of the finance departments. She noted that in working with the Town Administrator, they were able to make all of the changes in the deficiencies noted by the DOR. She stated that most departments are down to bare bones, working through lunches and working extra hours to make sure that the job gets done. She further reminded the Board that further cuts will slow down the process of things like deposits and submitting reports to have free cash certified. She reviewed specific reporting requirements and unfunded mandates that the Finance Department needs to meet.

Jim McKay from the DPW reviewed a history of staffing levels for the last 5 years. He noted that in this time period, 15 roads have been accepted though staffing levels have decreased. This includes maintenance, catch basin cleaning, etc. He stated that the biggest cost the DPW has is plowing and that there is unused equipment for plowing because there isn't the staff to operate it. He stated that in order to make up for the \$13,000 cut, \$6,000 would come from parks maintenance such as fixing swings, painting basketball courts, etc. He noted that the biggest users of the Town Park are the school children. Mr. McKay stated that the remaining funds would come out of cemetery expenses. This would include elimination of the lawn service and grubbing and fertilization. He stated that the cemetery has been in a state of disrepair and they would not be able to maintain the positive steps forward that have been made. He noted that if further cuts are made and they effect staff, parking lots and sidewalk plowing would not be a priority.

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Town Clerk Lisa Hardin addressed the Board about the proposed cuts in her office. She stated that the impact on the Town Clerk's office would be most noticeable to the Townspeople in the form of having to close the office to get work done. She further suggested that they would have to stop answering the phone for a period of time. She said that any time there is only one person in the office, it is difficult to get work done with the phone ringing and people constantly coming into the office. She noted that she has volunteer help but it really isn't a good idea to let the Town Hall be staffed by volunteers. She said the work will get done but it won't be done in the timeframe that it needs to be done.

Patty Kayo from the COA discussed the type of services they provide and the cuts that have already been made since she took on the position. She noted that there are 1,550 seniors in Town which is significantly up from the last 5 years and the transportation numbers are up as well. She gave some statistics as to the population that the center serves.

Mike Giampietro from the Building Department gave some positive statistics from last year and noted that he only has a 5 hour/week assistant.

Kathy LaPlant stated that things look bleak and she had not touched upon the serious issues facing Data Processing. She noted that this building has been putting band-aids on things for years and Police and Fire are very problematic.

Rick Barrett from the Fire Department stated that he is happy to see there were no proposed reductions in staff for the Police and Fire Departments. He reminded the Board that the Fire Department still has a position that has not been filled. He gave an example of a recent event where Life Flight was called in and janitors had to be used to secure the landing site because on-call Fire personnel were not available. He noted that the \$5,000 in equipment which is cut is problematic. He reminded the Board, as union president, that they have been working for three years without a contract and two years without a raise.

Chris Smith, Chair of the Finance Committee, thanked the Board and Town Administrator for putting together the discussion tonight and noted that he will be meeting with the school tomorrow night. He invited Department Heads to come to the Finance Committee meeting on Wednesday night and speak, where the discussion will focus on the Town/School split of the deficit and whether or not to support the override.

Mr. Aspinwall stated that he would like some direction on the Town/School split.

Mr. John Riordan asked for specifics on what is being proposed for cuts for the school and stated that the municipal side always seems to lose. He asked on where the specifics of the school cuts will be discussed and had some questions about the stimulus money. Mr. Smith gave a history of the receipt of the one-time stimulus monies and what they were used for.

Tricia Perry, Library Director, noted that every department was asked to provide a level funded budget and that the proposed cuts are reductions to this level.

Sel. Wagner asked for an explanation of the split of the deficit between the Town and the School. Mr. Smith gave an explanation of how this split was arrived at during deliberations of the Strategic Budget Planning Subcommittee. He noted that the stimulus funds skewed the normal budgetary split of 65/35. He noted that the School Committee has tentatively agreed to this allocation.

**Motion by Sel. Wagner, seconded by Sel. Hendon, do support the allocation of the budget deficit 86% to the school, 14% to the municipal side. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mr. Aspinwall reiterated that the municipal employees are very committed to their positions. He noted the reductions that municipal departments have undergone in previous years. He thanked and recognized the Department Heads.

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**ADJOURN:** At 9:00 p.m.,

**Motion by Sel. Wagner, seconded by Sel. Hendon, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.**

*Respectfully Submitted,*

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*Jennifer G. Cederberg, Administrative Assistant*