



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: Monday, October 22, 2014
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall, Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chair Pepe, Vice Chair Fritze, Clerk G. Woodbury, Members Stevens & C. Woodbury and Administrator Gaudette.

At 6:03 p.m. Chairman Pepe called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

6:00 Public Hearing: Informational Session on the Proposition 2 ½ Override Question

Chairman Pepe opened the hearing at 6:04 pm.

Administrator Gaudette explained the purpose of the hearing is to present facts to citizens of Spencer relative to Question #5 on the November 4th State Election Ballot, which asks for a Proposition 2 ½ Override to restore Municipal Services that were cut on July 1, 2014. He then gave a presentation (attached as part of this record), outlining what led to the need for a \$484,000 Override at this time, which included details on the following:

- Recent Fiscal History
- How Overrides were Avoided
- Recent SEBRSD Budget History
- FY2015 Town Budget Summary
- FY2015 General Government Budget Summary
- FY2015 Service Reduction as a Result of Failed Override in May
- Proposition 2 ½ Override (What is it?)
- Election Information
- Impact of Override Approval

At 6:34 pm the hearing was opened for public comment.

Donna Chase, 68 Temple St. asked why the Ballot Question has items combined and not separated by department. Mr. Gaudette explained the Board made the decision to keep the same format as presented on the May Election Ballot.

Mr. Pepe asked about timing and effect on budgets. Mr. Gaudette said preliminary tax bills have been sent and if override passes, the increase will appear in the actual tax bill that gets sent in December.

Utilities & Facilities Superintendent Steve Tyler pointed out this Override requests is to restore only a portion of reductions previously made.

Mr. Stevens noted since the fiscal year is underway, any remaining funds become free cash.

Treasurer/Collector Susan Lacaire explained her office is overwhelmed trying to accomplish four days of work in three days, to the point where they have had to put in hours without compensation. She urged voters to restore services.

Principal Assessor Mary Williams said her office is feeling the impact resulting in delays in assessing properties after inspections and improvements. She urged citizens to support their Town by voting to restore services.

Council on Aging Director Pam Woodbury said she cannot obtain certain services for seniors without having a building designated specifically as its own Senior Center. Spencer is the only Senior Center in the surrounding area that doesn't have a building or a staff. With 3,000 senior citizens in Town, she urged residents to vote for the Override, noting this is the most economical way to serve the seniors.

Building Inspector Bill Klansek spoke on behalf of the Inspectional Services Department. He said they are all overloaded and working under stress. His workload averages one inspection for every hour he works and that's not taking into account any other tasks that need to get done.

Library Director Mary Baker-Wood pointed out the loss in personnel has resulted in potential safety issues and concern over decertification. This means the Town is not able to support the Library at the most basic level. She urged citizens to vote for the Override for their community, whether or not they use every service.

Parks & Rec Chair Bill Shemeth said the Town was not able to offer a swimming program or access to the beach for first time in their history. The Commission is being forced to maintain seven facilities on a \$5,000 budget. He asked residents to invest in Spencer by voting yes on Question 5.

Mr. Tyler noted some of effects of the loss of services, including the impact to the Senior Center, which offers critical life services; having a part-time Building Inspector impacts neighborhoods and several departments in Town Hall; Assessor's ability to manage property values; Library, Parks & Rec, & Public Safety are all vital services; roadways & bridges are assets not unlike buildings, and if not properly maintained, create a safety hazard.

Highway Foreman Eben Butler said the Highway Department is continually falling behind. They've been unable to paint or do regulars maintenance, and spend a great deal of time filling potholes. Work is being unnecessarily delayed and with so much time spent trying to catch up with basic projects, they are unable to forward with more beneficial ones.

Mr. G. Woodbury brought up the impact of a loss in revenue if Assessors do not have time to perform reassessment inspections, and complaints over delays in inspections has resulted in work being done without permits. In addition, if employees leave to pursue full time employment elsewhere, it will result in falling further behind with the need to hire and train a new employee.

Mr. Stevens agreed with Mr. Woodbury and noted the Town has done a great job avoiding Overrides in the past. He acknowledged that some may be bothered by the Ballot Question remaining in the same format; nevertheless, he asked them to reconsider and vote to restore services and the perception of Spencer.

Mr. Pepe noted the Board has not taken this issue lightly and has performed due diligence; the Town is at a point where the Highway, Fire, and other departments are being unduly stressed.

At 7:37 pm Chairman Pepe closed the hearing. All were in favor.

Discussion: Special Town Meeting and Special Election Update

The Administrator provided final revisions to the previously approved FY15 budget. Adjusted revenue from increases in local aid and receipts will be used to pay for unexpected expenses, resulting in a balanced budget.

Chief Parsons provided multiple quotes on a new vehicle and sent Engine 2 out for a second opinion on repairs. Preliminary estimates show both the pump and rails are no longer operable. Mr. Gaudette noted the current recommended option is to spread payments over time within the budget. Any lease agreement will allow for the option to purchase outright. Mr. G. Woodbury said this option is the best way to move forward at this time, noting that DOT could take the truck off the road due to safety concerns. He will work with the manufacturer, Daimler Chrysler, to recover as much as possible. The Board agreed the best way to move forward at this time is with the recommended lease option. This is a front line vehicle, therefore the need is critical.

The Administrator reviewed the final STM Warrant, including transfer requests for the Town Hall Boiler and Sugden Block. Selectmen Stevens asked about the funding for the electric vehicle & charging station. Mr. Gaudette explained the State provided a grant and the Town was required to provide a portion of the cost, amounting to \$27,500. The total value will amount to \$50,000.

Action Item: Close November 13, 2014 Special Town Meeting Warrant

A motion to close the November 13, 2014 Special Town Meeting Warrant (G. Woodbury/C. Woodbury passed 5/0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Administrative Assistant

Referenced Documents
Administrator's Override Presentation
STM Warrant
FY15 Budget Revisions
Memo for Chief Parsons on Engine 2