

BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
TOWN OF CONWAY, MA  
MINUTES - DRAFT  
October 19, 2009

**Meeting Open: 7:00PM**

**Present:** Maureen Chase, Jack Lochhead, Chuck Trombley, Tom Spiro

**Others Present:** Elizabeth Braccia, Jan Warner

**Appointments**

**7:30-8:30 Interviews for Town Accountant**

1) Nancy Riebschlaeger was interviewed. She lives in Wendell. She used to work in municipal accounting and would like to begin working in that capacity again. Maureen noted that Conway's accountant works directly with the Treasurer/Tax Collector's office. Elizabeth spoke about the requirements including the need to complete weekly warrants, and DOR mandates. The Board asked how responsive she would be in terms of being contacted, and she replied that she would always be available and have answers within a reasonable amount of time. Maureen asked her if she had any questions but she said that most had already been answered. Jack gave a small history of past problems. Nancy noted that she represented LBA software. She asked if she could use this software and if the Town would buy a license to use it. It was noted that the Board would not approve this expense. Nancy said she would distribute a monthly expense report for each department at the end of each month.

Nancy left and there was some discussion about her qualifications. Elizabeth mentioned that her request to use LBA Software was worrisome and the Board agreed.

2) Amy Lane was interviewed. She noted that she would be able to work on Mondays or Thursdays if needed. She currently works as accountant in the Towns of Egremont, Cummington, Alford. Jan asked Amy if she would be available during busy times of the year. She replied that she would be available. Chuck mentioned that Conway's Town Meeting was early in the budget season so it was essential that all paperwork for the DOR so the warrant could be prepared in a timely fashion. She said she could customize and complete any reports or forms as needed. Elizabeth gave some background concerning past accountants and auditors. There was more discussion about communication skills and what was expected in terms of availability and public hours. It was noted that the Finance Committee may want to meet with her as well as other departments so she may have an evening meeting now and then. She stated she would be able to do that now and then. Concerns were voiced on commitment to the position. Amy said that if hired, she would make a commitment to stay in this position. Tom asked how she would handle questions in all instances that might test her patience. She said she was able to provide good customer service. She was asked if there was ever a time she lost patience and she said the only thing that she might have a problem with was someone asking the same information multiple times.

Amy left and the Board discussed both candidates with Elizabeth and Jan. Maureen noted that she wanted to ask for references although she said she was impressed with Amy. Chuck felt that Amy was the clear choice between the two. Elizabeth noted that Amy was a teacher at the Mass Municipal Accounting Association. Jack said he liked Amy but suggested that references could be consulted. There was more discussion and the Board unanimously agreed to hire Amy as Town Accountant to replace Chris Martin. There would be an attempt to get her and Chris to coordinate a transition. It was noted that if both people were to work during the following week for training and transition that it would be an extra expense of \$250.00 which Elizabeth said was not budgeted for. Jack suggested that the Community Preservation Fund Administration budget could pay for an additional cost, as the training had to do with filing a CPA form due in to DOR by end of October. There was consideration whether to use this funding source to pay for this work performed every year. Elizabeth read the law with regard to this expense and found that this would not be a good practice. The Board agreed that this would not be done, and the extra expense would be taken from the Accountant's salary line item.

**8:30 Town Treasurer discussion – Elizabeth Braccia**

Chuck noted that he had spoken to Elizabeth about her email regarding the Bridge Dinner. It was explained that there were some differences of opinion with regard to what was asked and what her response had been. Chuck noted that the request for information regarding aspects of the dinner was

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not meant as an affront to her event. Elizabeth explained that they were in the process of creating a 501 (c) 3, as well as organizing details regarding the new scholarship program and how the dinner came about. Ultimately the conversation focused on the level of communication between her and the Board.

Chuck also requested that Elizabeth bring any perceived problems to the Board first as a courtesy. His example was her concern over spending decisions and her response to go to the Finance Committee before bringing her concerns to the Board. Elizabeth also expressed concern that the Contingency Fund and Capital Expenditures accounts should be reviewed for the next fiscal cycle. Jack noted that there should be money available to handle unforeseen expenses. Liz said that most of the monies in those accounts have not been spent in the past but she was worried about over spending due to projections of heavily reduced state funding and declining local receipts. She also noted that the Contingency Fund has paid for the special review by Melanson, and that the DOR expressed concerns that the Capital Expenditures account should be done away with. Jack noted that the Selectboard was the most important entity to contact with regard to budgetary issues. Elizabeth said that the Finance Committee administered the Reserve Account. Liz also spoke about the spreadsheet Joe Strzegowski maintained annually. The Finance Committee had suggested that the spreadsheet be turned over to the Finance Committee. Elizabeth felt that the Board should maintain the spreadsheet because the Board used it for budgeting reviews. Liz said she would look for a newer, more updated version of the excel software to create an updated version of the spreadsheet. Sharing the information with the Finance Committee was mentioned.

Tom described an issue regarding office keys and disbursement of building permits. Elizabeth said she didn't want to have a signature stamp as there should be an original signature on each document. She claimed she felt responsible for anything she signs, and therefore had taken the stamp and cabinet keys home. She added that she planned to spend some time in the future on consolidating sensitive documents. She said that Tom should not use the Tax Collector's stamp anymore. There was another issue about keys in Tom's office, and a discussion about how his files and building permits would be handled. Tom was asked to arrange with the other staff members involved as to what procedure will be followed with regard to building permits in the future. Tom would be absolved of any problems that arise due to mistakes by others if it is decided that others will have access to the permits. Jack asked that any policies decided upon should be made known to the Board.

**meeting items**

- Meeting minutes for 10/13/09 were not reviewed.
- Maureen mentioned that there was a problem filling the position held by the Finance Committee on the Capital Improvements Planning Committee (CIPC). She said that Jim Bosman had agreed to be on the committee with the provision that he would need to send a substitute periodically. Chuck asked if this would be effective, as any substitute would not be able to follow the proceedings from week to week. He felt this would not be possible or prudent. Maureen reviewed the scheduling of committee meetings and member attendance. It was suggested that the CIP ask to meet with the Finance Committee and the Board to resolve this issue. This was agreed to.
- Chuck noted that most of the Planning Board members did not want to move forward with Whitty Sanford's suggestions as quickly as she wanted. There was agreement that she would be told that they wanted the Planning Board to focus on the house numbering system, and a fire/community safety center. Chuck commented that most of her re-organizational suggestions should be tabled at this time.
- It was agreed that the Board will review and consider adoption of the Community Development Strategy next week as a courtesy to the Planning Board.
- Tom noted that there was a grant opportunity from the FRCOG Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) program. He said that they called for any economic development project that met their criteria. Chuck will review a list of projects previously submitted as possible ARRA funded projects to see if any would be put forward for this program.

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- It was decided that the computer previously used for the Planning Board would be given to the Town garage as an upgrade.
- The Board approved Maureen to sign the MEGA insurance settlement authorization form to allow a settlement agreement regarding the Sumner Worker's Compensation case.
- The Board approved Maureen to sign the HCOG electric contract for streetlights.
- Chuck asked about set hours for trick or treating. There was no request made to the Board to make a public declaration of when this event would take place. It was determined that the Board would not be involved in setting any hours for trick or treating.
- Jack noted there was a new proposal aimed at satisfying concerns of the Bardwells Ferry Road slope abutters. He suggested that the Board should ask them for their approval of any new designs before money is spent on new plans. Jack explained how Bob Baker had suggested there be an under-road water collection and drainage system but the Conservation Commission and the DEP did not require this for the project. Eliminating this part of the construction plans would reduce costs and possibly bring the abutters to the table sooner. There was more discussion regarding acceptance by the abutters and when to meet with them. Jack will once more approach the abutters about possible changes in the plans. Tom will ask the Tannys in for next Monday.
- Maureen's updated personnel policy will be reviewed and brought to another meeting to decide what will be included in an updated policy handbook.

**Mail and Other Items**

- other mail items as per agenda

**10:50 PM**

Motion to adjourn by Maureen, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Jack, all in favor.