

WISCASSET BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SEPTEMBER 29, 2009

(tape recorded meeting)

Present: Chairman Bob Blagden, Bill Curtis, Vice Chairman Phil DiVece, Pam Dunning, Bob Fairfield (arrived during the meeting) and Town Manager Arthur Faucher

1. Call to Order

The chairman called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America

3. Approve minutes of September 22, 2009

Pam Dunning moved to approve the minutes as amended. Vote 4-0-0.

4. Citizen Comment

Dick Grondin asked why the percentages of his tax bill allocated to town and schools differed from previous years. The school percentage had been over 60% in recent years and this year was 48.5%. Jim George explained that last year the tax commitment for schools was \$10 or \$11 million (the school budget); this year Wiscasset's share of the school budget is \$5 million, the municipal budget is \$4.8 million and county tax is \$500,000. The school figure used is the one approved at the second open town meeting for the schools, as recommended by MMA because a exact number had not been approved by the voters.

Sue Varney asked the board to sign a corrected commitment form; an error had been made in the homestead reimbursement figure.

Bob Fairfield joined the meeting.

5. Stacey Benjamin: The Gateway 1 project

Ms. Benjamin provided background of the project, an MDOT-sponsored regional planning entity for the Gateway 1 corridor, which extends on Route 1 from Brunswick to Stockton Springs and includes 20 towns. Route 90 is also included. Don Jones, Anne Leslie, Arthur Faucher and Jeffrey Hinderliter have been participating in meetings on the plan. Demographic and transportation projections for the corridor over the next 25 years had been made and features of the plan address mobility, alternate modes of transportation, jobs and housing balance, rural land development and community character. MDOT funds are available for technical assistance and participation in the project will give towns priority for MDOT funding and an opportunity for input on coalition planning. Benjamin asked for approval of the startup agreement for implementation of the plan by October 31 and that the selectmen appoint a steering committee member who will work on the final agreement. The more formal final inter-jurisdictional agreement will require municipalities to adopt the Gateway 1 Corridor Plan as part of their comprehensive plans.

Phil DiVece asked how the economic development would assist in addressing the 13 empty commercial buildings on Route 1. Benjamin said that the available funding could be used for a study to determine if the location of the buildings on the road or redesign of the entrances might make the buildings more appealing.

George Green asked if other towns in the coalition on Route 1 had the same restrictions on access at the exaggerated cost imposed by the MDOT. Benjamin said that they would be evaluating a more equitable system. Green said the town's representative on the committee

should make sure Wiscasset had the same fees as other towns and commented that with \$200,000 for a driveway, Wiscasset was being unjustly penalized.

Don Jones' concern was that the process would make it harder for development on Route 1. He also was concerned that the coalition would give surrounding communities the ability to stop Wiscasset's development projects. Benjamin said that the review by surrounding communities would be advisory only. Jones said in order for the coalition to be effective, it had to have teeth and if it only had advisory powers, it was not going to work. Jones said that if the intent was to have people live closer to where they work, then in order for it to be effective, decisions have to be made that otherwise would not be made.

In response to Pam Dunning's question, Benjamin said towns could decide not to continue at any time by giving 30 days' notice.

Arthur Faucher said the municipalities in the coalition would set priorities for MDOT-funded transportation projects. He said Wiscasset has several projects ready to go. The coalition would also provide funds for technical assistance that would not have to be paid back and would provide advisory comments.

Steve Mehrl said the coalition should work for infrastructure improvement; there was no logic in trying to create economy so people can live close to their employment. He said businesses were trying to come to Wiscasset but were hindered by MDOT and the high fee for curb cuts, which had held up development of a project on Route 1 for three years.

Don Jones said that there was a small amount of money available for implementing the program, revising ordinances and the comprehensive plan, but not for development projects such as a railway platform or a bus stop. Benjamin said there was \$15 million for projects to be shared by 21 towns. Jones also said Wiscasset had strip developments and was interested in building its tax base, but Gateway 1 discouraged strip developments by reducing curb cuts.

Bob Blagden said the MDOT had been focused on the bypass, had spent obscene amounts of money on studies and was now spending money on studies for Gateway 1, a competing project and philosophy. Benjamin said Gateway 1 assumes the bypass will be built and while other communities may want a bypass, the goal of Gateway 1 is to avoid the need for future bypasses.

Anne Leslie spoke in favor of Gateway 1, which would allow a year for study and debate; the town would have nothing to lose by participating.

Benjamin said that by signing the agreement, the town was committing only to asking the town to vote on the project. By adopting the plan, the town would agree to amend its comprehensive plan to reflect the strategies of Gateway 1 within three to five years. Copies of the plan will be made available at the town office and the library.

6. Board of Selectmen: Expense & Revenue Financial Reports

Expense Summary Report

Administration: Arthur Faucher explained overdrafts in Administration, which will be paid from other departments and overdrafts that were unbudgeted, unexpected expenses. The board discussed allocating expenses to each department to show the true cost of each department or if the cost of this allocation would offset the benefit.

Contingency: Pam Dunning asked why the \$27,825 for the metal building at the airport had come out of contingency, as the selectmen had not voted on this expense. Arthur Faucher said it was a loan, which would be reimbursed by the FAA. Bob Blagden said this amount when reimbursed would have to go back into the general fund, not the contingency account. Phil DiVece read from the minutes of May 19, 2009 on the update on Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) building:

"Erv Deck said preliminary plans had been received and reviewed and he expected blueprints in four to six weeks. He asked that the board approve the use of \$27,825 from the reserve account until partial reimbursement from the FAA is received for the second phase. In response to Bill Curtis' question regarding the update of the master plan, Ken Boudin, chairman of the Airport Committee, said the committee was working on reselection of a consulting firm."

There was no vote. Pam Dunning asked the town manager to check how this had been paid without a vote.

The malpractice insurance will be in the ambulance budget next year, not in the Municipal Insurance budget.

Police Department: Police Lt. John Allen explained that his department was over-budget on books and publications because the books he ordered were more expensive than expected.

Contingencies: Bob Blagden questioned the August Insurances amount of \$422.51 paid from the contingency account paid to MMA.

Public Works: Greg Griffin explained that his department was over-budget because of a \$330 dump fee that had been paid twice but had been returned. He said he was about to start inter-departmental billing.

Airport: The overages in the airport account for FICA, Medicare and Recording Fees will be corrected and moved to the proper account. In explaining other overages, Arthur Faucher said that the last payment of \$198 was made on the mower and the balance was paid off. Bob Blagden said that \$287.02 for gasoline was high and would take care of a lot of mowing. He said he had noticed during the summer that a huge swath had been mowed where mowing had not been done before. Pam Dunning questioned why the airport spent a thousand for the mower, hundreds for fuel plus the salary of the employee doing the mowing when it had not cost that much when the mowing was contracted out. Arthur Faucher will check on these costs.

Waterfront: Phil DiVece questioned the \$4000 budgeted for a part-time employee when the waterfront didn't have a part-time employee. Faucher explained that a weekend when the harbormaster was not in town, the job was offered to a union employee as required. In response to a further question, Faucher said the supplies budget had been spent replacing buoys and pier repair.

Waste Water Treatment Plant: Buck Rines said the over-budget items in the WWTP were due to normal seasonal purchasing.

Impact Fees: Ron Lear explained that the \$1,204.49 was a refund to Heritage Village, which had paid a part of the fee the previous year.

EMS: Bob Blagden moved to assign the overdraft of \$469.75 in municipal insurance to EMS Account No. 4010, Other Insurance. Vote 5-0-0.

Recreation: Todd Souza said that the overages in recording fees, office supplies, office equipment and general supplies were being handled internally. He asked whether the selectmen planned to change from enterprise accounts to gross budgeting and how overdrafts would be handled in the future. He said he had not budgeted for interdepartmental billing.

The chairman said there was a flaw in internal billing when the highway department was not an enterprise account. He said the board needed advice on the decision to change from enterprise

accounts to gross budgeting, and if the board were to change auditors, this advice should be sought from the new auditor. Points brought out in the discussion which followed included:

- RFPs for an auditor have been sent out; the method of accounting will be discussed with applicants as part of the interview process;
- Jim George will be asked what accounting systems Trio supports;
- The board was asked by Steve Mehrl to make a decision on the accounting system by the end of November before the budget season starts;
- A workshop to discuss different methods of accounting will be held on October 6 and the finance manager from Brunswick will be invited to discuss special revenue accounting;
- Many questions on budgeting and accounting directed to selectmen should be directed to the town's chief administrator;
- It is easy to implement a cross-charging system, but it should be discontinued this year until a program is set up;
- The board should continue with the interdepartmental billing and see how it works.

Revenues MDT - All

State Reimbursements: Steve Mehrl said that the selectmen and budget committee agreed that the local road assistance funds (\$29,058) would go into the road account, not the general fund. He said the funds were given to the town to be used for road repair. Arthur Faucher said the funds would be spent on road repairs and reported on the URIP report but still accepted as revenue.

Transfer Station: The MRC dividend was not predicted and not budgeted for.

Several other items were questioned but it appeared the bookkeeping was not up to date.

7. Town Manager: Assessment on the 2003 ambulance

According to a report from Autotronics, which the town manager had received, the doors of the 2003 ambulance can be repaired. Work on the doors plus 13 items of preventive maintenance on the ambulance is estimated to cost \$2,500 to \$3,500 and would take two or three days. Autotronics valued the ambulance at \$25,000 to \$27,000. Although problems with the suspension had been reported by the ambulance director, Autotronics had checked it and found no repairs were needed.

Wendy Williams, representing the ambulance director, asked if Autotronics would guarantee the work on the doors and if it would be safe for patients and employees. Faucher said there would be a warrantee on parts and labor but no guarantee on patient safety. **Bob Blagden moved to have Arthur Faucher authorize Autotronics to do the repairs and anything else that needs to be done.** No dollar limit was set on the repairs, but the town manager was asked to consult with the selectmen if anything came up with which he was uncomfortable. **Vote 5-0-0.** The ambulance service has made fewer than 500 runs this year. If runs exceed 700, a third ambulance will be necessary according to the policy of the state EMS.

8. Other Business

Steve Mehrl suggested cutting down on the workload and increasing efficiency by paying employees every two weeks rather than every week.

9. Adjourn

At 10:10 p.m., **Bob Blagden moved to adjourn the meeting. Vote 5-0-0.**