

BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES –July 20, 2009

SUNDERLAND TOWN OFFICES

Present: Mr. Bergeron, Mr. Fydenkevez and Mr. Wissemann

Others: Margaret Nartowicz

Behind the Camera: Richie Wheeler

- Call to order at 7:03 p.m.
- Special Election Overview-Mr. Bergeron-Thanks to all people who worked the election and participated. Mr. Fydenkevez-Town Administrator doesn't make \$79,000/yr and Town Clerk doesn't make \$50,000/yr. Appreciates conduct of voters on Election Day. Doesn't condone irresponsible behavior prior to election. Mr. Wissemann-Clearly there were many NO votes. As hard as the Board tried, couldn't engage many people in the process. Town has given a clear directive. Mr. Bergeron gave an overview of the agenda. Budget must be balanced in order to set tax rate. No available Free Cash. Stabilization is available. Remainder is either raise and appropriate or reduce.
- Special Town Meeting-Special Town Meeting to be called. Earliest date would be Monday, August 17th. Risk in postponing is not having a tax rate set. Two biggest pieces of budget are by assessment. General Government and Elementary School (SES) must take reductions. Original reduction request to SES in March was for approximately \$275,000 based on revenues at the time. As spring went on, further State Aid reductions were made, so further municipal and elementary school reductions. John Sackrey-very unfair for SES to take brunt of this hit. Why can't other school assessments take some of the hit? Dr. Nash-Regional agreement states that if 3 of 4 towns agree to Frontier budget, the budget is accepted. Discussion regarding unfair burden on elementary school. DOE has imposed a \$159,000 adjustment on the town toward education. Can a deferral be requested or partial payment? Mr. Bergeron-DOE has been communicated with ad-nauseum regarding adjustments. Mr. DUBY-Prioritized cuts should be developed. Mr. Fydenkevez-Board has said over and over that Town can't support the increases year-on-year. Residents wanted opportunity to speak at override. The time to have the opportunity to be heard was at Frontier budget meetings. It's late now. Has heard that COLA at school was a factor in how people voted. Also heard town doesn't need a Fire Chief. Need to address these concerns. Mark Zinan-Spoke up at Frontier meeting about personnel increases. If hand isn't forced with Frontier Regional Agreement, nothing will change. Mr. Bergeron – will allow fifteen minutes for attendees to speak about what they've heard. Shana Deane-Majority of people would not have approved a number that large. Things heard were, "wish it was menu style", "school didn't take enough of the hurt", "loaded overstocked Police department for such a small town", "problems with management of officers' time", deep seeded anger about not rebuilding school with brick. Upset about fancy library. People are fearful during recession. John Sackrey-Didn't have much discourse with NO voters. Heard feed back regarding menu style override. Lorin Starr-Magnitude of cuts was misinterpreted to be result of revenue shortfall. Bruce Bennett-Number was very large. Moving forward, a menu override has never done well in this town. In the middle of recession now. Enrollment at SES is down now. What we have to do, is identify revenue stream leaving out State Aid. Opportunity to put Town on financially stable ground, including SES. Lynn Cook-Can't charge more than State directs for school choice incoming. Basic education is suffering. David Pierce-What about GIC offering? What about meals tax? Mr. Fydenkevez-Local option meals tax is something town is considering for acceptance. Discussion regarding GIC option vs. Hampshire Group. Teresa Jones-People said they don't like taxes. Feels that people have the most power locally. Kristy Paciorek-Need to consider that people may just not have the money. They may not want to speak up. There's real need out there. Those people are on the defensive to protect the little food shelter, etc. they have. Their NO vote may be out of self-preservation. Ms. Dean-If this town doesn't bring itself up to weather the recession, front-line services will suffer, i.e. at SES. Is there a middle ground regarding lowering the override number? Is there a mechanism between now and September 15th to bring a lower number forward? Mr. Fydenkevez-Agree with everything Lynn cook said about basic school programs (art, music, phys. ed.). Need to find out what people are thinking. Don't want to see Town go back to a point we can't recover from. Agree with Bruce Bennett. Menu overrides pit one group against another. That's one reason Board chose single question. Charlie Hepburn-Reminisce regarding size of classrooms, aides. Has concerns regarding number of staff. Mr. Bennett-Need to start

from baseline again. Doesn't think lower number will fly. Mr. Pierce-Question regarding low income exemptions. Herb Sanderson-None to his knowledge. Ms. Starr-Need to look at maintaining property value by retaining services comparable to neighboring communities. If other schools are offering services we don't have, we will suffer consequences. Mr. Wissemann-wishes these concerns had come forward before this process. Renters are also concerned about rate increases. Mr. Fydenkevez-Would like John Sackrey to expand on portion taken out of SES and not impact regional schools. Mr. Sackrey - didn't have ability to negotiate wages this year as he understands it. Would like regional schools to share in some of this reduction. Ms. Paciorek-Boards in other towns supported re-negotiation; school committee chose not to bring it forward. Dr. Nash-This years Frontier budget is down from last year. Enrollment is a factor in town assessments, up slightly for Sunderland. There is also the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) district. Board of Selectmen-Set date for STM. Mr. Fydenkevez-Need to meet with FinCom and School Committee. Discussion regarding joint meeting. Dr. Nash-Doesn't think there's any more to be discussed - just make more cuts. Discussion regarding new State Aid numbers. Ms. Deane-Need town to meet on revenue options, master plan, economic development, etc. Mr. Zinan-People in town are pretty well educated. Need fiscal control over school budgets (Frontier), can't get out of regional agreement. Mr. Bergeron-1999 town meeting budget has same levels as this year. Discussion regarding control of school budgets. Ms. Starr-Library won't meet requirements for certification. Library will apply for a waiver to avoid losing services for a time. Will not be meeting certification guidelines. Mr. Pierce-Appeal to residents to participate. Need more people involved. Nora Zinan-Agree that people need to show up more. Would like editorial comments to be eliminated from discussion. Ms. Starr- need mechanism for information to get out. Mr. Fydenkevez-Need private hauler information for residents. Trash elimination has to be on the table. Discussion regarding trash costs, revenues, etc. Mr. Bennett- Talk with Franklin County Solid Waste District (FCSWD) regarding regionalized transfer station. Discussion regarding trash disposal. Mr. Bergeron-staff reductions for 4 days/week. Discussion regarding middle ground override number to present. Dan VanDalsen-Doesn't think another override is the answer. Mr. Bergeron-Election takes a significant amount of energy. Voters have said "NO". Ms. Cook-Voters have said no to very specific large number. Wendy Houle-The expense budget with the large number was approved by 300 voters at a town meeting. Hard to ignore that voters said NO. Discussion regarding school non-union COLAS, and size of override. Ms. Jones-Lots of people will be paying attention now. Francis Mozea-People must pay attention and live with consequences in a democracy. Liz Thompson-There is a structural budget deficit. Cannot continue to plus up our budget at the rate it's been going. Ms. Zinan-Consequences will be ultimate teaching moment. Mr. Bennett-Need to use this opportunity to restructure. Mr. Fydenkevez-Hard work has been done by FinCom to reduce use of Free Cash. Town was taking in larger amount of Free Cash. That has reduced. Discussion regarding restructuring the way we do business; sources of funds for operating; one-time revenue sources for recurring expenses. Ms. Starr-Restructuring suggests "fat" in the budget. Library has had very restricted increases. Ms. Jones-It costs more money to do business now. Mr. Fydenkevez-Need to make reductions now.

- Curbside Pickup-Motion to remove trash/recycling collection by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Motion to withdraw by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Motion to discontinue curbside trash/recycling pick up effective September 2nd by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Staff Reductions-Mr. Bergeron-closing Town Office building on Fridays. Discussion regarding staff cuts. Motion to reduce staff to 4-day work week as shown on spreadsheet by Mr. Wissemann, 2nd by Mr. Fydenkevez. Vote 3-0. Mr. Fydenkevez-Proud of Police Department. Ms. Nartowicz to convey to Chief and union to try to stay with reductions. Ms. Nartowicz-Honor employees who took 0% then reductions.
- Animal Control-Motion to reduce Animal control by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Fire Department-Motion to reduce Fire Dept. by Mr. Wissemann, 2nd for discussion by Mr. Fydenkevez-shortsighted. Motion to withdraw by Mr. Wissemann, 2nd by Mr. Fydenkevez. Hold to next meeting.

- Highway Department-Motion to reduce Highway Department by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd Mr. Wissemann. Mr. Fydenkevez-discussion regarding Highway Superintendent search. Need to talk about what Highway Superintendent does. Discussion regarding Highway Superintendent duties, reorganizing, etc. Motion on Highway reduction by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Riverside Cemetery, 40B and Lawn Mowing-Discussion regarding Riverside Cemetery and lawn mowing. Hold to next meeting. Discussion regarding 40B (not included in Town Counsel line).
- Expense Freeze-Expense freezes to be directed to continue Wednesday at department meeting. Discussion regarding contracts. Board of Selectmen expense lines – Hold to next meeting.
- Treasurer/Collector budget-Motion to reduce by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Town Clerk budget-Hold to next meeting.
- Assessors budget-Motion to reduce by Mr. Wissemann, 2nd by Mr. Fydenkevez. Vote 3-0.
- FRCOG Accountant-Motion to pass by Mr. Fydenkevez. Hold to next meeting
- Board of Health Expense-Motion to reduce by Mr. Wissemann, 2nd by Mr. Fydenkevez for discussion. Six-seven years ago there weren't health services. Ms. Paciorek-State rules and regs. Have required professional services. Discussion regarding health agent services. Vote 3-0.
- Building Inspector budget-Motion to reduce by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Recreation budget-Mr. Wissemann-Would like more information. Ms. Deane-Would like to reconsider reductions. Hold.
- Conservation Commission-discussion regarding jeopardizing town services per override outcome. Hold.
- Boards and Committees-Hold.
- Street Lights-Discussion regarding reduction. Send notices to residents regarding paying for their own. Discussion regarding presenting recommended budget reductions. Further reductions to be made at Board's next meeting.
- Special Town Meeting-(STM)-Earliest possible date August 17th. Motion to set town meeting date for August 17th, 7:00pm at the SES by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- STM Warrant-Motion to open STM warrant to be closed July 27th at 12 noon by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Local Options Meals Tax-Mr. Bergeron-Discussion should include businesses. Discussion regarding meals tax at .75% and local options rooms tax up to 6%. Correspondence to all businesses affected by proposed tax. Motion by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0.
- Rental Property Assessments-Discussion regarding assessing rental properties on commercial land at a commercial rate. Mr. Fydenkevez-If you look at statute, the land may be assessed as commercial but probably can't tax it as commercial.
- Gunn APR-Notice of potential purchase read by Clerk, Mr. Wissemann.
- Hold minutes to next meeting.
- Brush Pile-Brush pile open during regular highway hours until policy is set.
- Warrant by signature

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Fydenkevez, 2nd by Mr. Wissemann. Vote 3-0. Meeting adjourned at 10:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Z. Nartowicz
Town Administrator