

Submitted by:

TOWN OF PHIPPSBURG
SELECTMEN'S MEETING

Approved by Selectmen:

John M. Young
Administrator

MINUTES
January 6, 2010

Meeting convened at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall with Selectmen Perkins and Pye in attendance.

I. Meetings and Hearings:

1. Meet with RSU#1 Superintendent William Shuttleworth concerning education budget issues.

Superintendent Shuttleworth explained that there would be tough times over then next several years due to a decrease in state school subsidies. RSU #1 will be cut \$594,000 for the current year, 1.5 million in 2010-2011 (which is equivalent to the salaries of 26 teachers or ed techs - a bigger picture then just cutting field trips), 2.4 million in 2011-2012, and 2.6 million in 2012 - 2013. At that point the subsidy will have decreased from 7.5 million to less then 1 million which equates to 1/3 of the school budget. He added that if the economy doesn't show steady improvement it could be even worse. He stated that Phippsburg's increase in state valuation is a detriment because the state subsidy formula is based on property values of all the towns in the RSU and that Bath actually decreased by 4.7%.

Mr. Shuttleworth reported that he has met with his administrators to get recommendations. He also wants the citizens of Phippsburg to know that neither he nor the RSU Board have ever recommended closing the Phippsburg school and as long as he and the board are in their positions it will never be a recommendation. He does not consider it a viable option even though the school currently has 126 students, which is 36 less then when he took his position. He discussed the new school being built in Woolwich and expects families to move there to take advantage of it. With school choice he also expects some student increase in the Phippsburg school because it is also a high performing school.

Ashley Thayer, Budget Committee, asked if money could be saved by closing the Phippsburg school. Mr. Shuttleworth replied that anytime a school closes it saves money, but it also has a detrimental affect on the community.

Paul Gamache, Budget Committee, asked about the timeline of subsidy cuts which Mr. Shuttleworth answered.

Selectman Pye asked if anything had come out of his meetings with local legislatures. Mr. Shuttleworth replied that the Governor is committed to no new taxes. He added that California dropped from being #1 in education to #49 because they did not infuse dollars into their schools. We have good schools and he wants to keep it that way.

Kim Albertson, Budget Committee, asked if Mr. Shuttleworth had been

in contact with other superintendents. He replied that he had. He added that Phippsburg leads in Pre-K education and that the RSU actually makes money back on the program because, like the vocational center, they receive full reimbursement. All other education is only subsidized at 33%. He also stated that the way we educate our children will be changing, including perhaps larger classrooms.

Paul Gamache asked if all school districts were being hit with the same percent deduction. Mr. Shuttleworth answered that it was about the same.

Jim Totman, Budget Committee, questioned the teacher's salaries and benefits. Mr. Shuttleworth stated that they have negotiated contracts and the teachers would have to be willing to take cuts. He added that he has frozen his salary for the last two years hoping that other administrators would do the same. Mr. Totman replied that it was time that the teachers paid for some of their benefits. Mr. Shuttleworth stated that they were currently negotiating contracts.

Merry Chapin stated that a lot of the long time teachers are retiring and we will be saving money through attrition. Twenty teachers in the RSU retired last year and this year 5 will be retiring, 3 of which are from Phippsburg.

Julie Rice, RSU Board, stated that this would be a tough budget season and we will have a tricky road ahead.

Administrator Young stated that between the Town having no more carry forward left in the education account (used the last \$135,000 this year) and the expected decrease in school subsidy in 2011 the Town will need to raise an additional \$500,000+ which is more than 1/3 of the entire \$1,482,400 municipal budget raise.

Mr. Shuttleworth stated that 72% of the RSU families do not have children in the school system and those folks on social security will actually be losing money over the next several years.

Selectman Pye asked about the coalition being formed to look into recommendations and requested that the Town be put on the e-mail list. Mr. Shuttleworth replied that the coalition will be made up of citizens and officials from each community. He added that people need to put energy into new ways to ignite the economy and employment.

Kim Albertson recommended that a member of the Phippsburg school advisory group be part of this coalition.

Mr. Shuttleworth asked that if anyone has any ideas they can e-mail him.

Selectman Pye stated that he would check with Selectman Douglass to see if he would support the Town sending an e-mail to our representatives and senators. Maybe an increase in sales tax may help.

Ms. Chapin added that the best time to catch the RSU Superintendent is 7:00 in the morning.

2. Meet with Merry Chapin to discuss creating a Town Committee called the "Basin Educational Initiative Committee" to include members who are currently meeting as private individuals to discuss such initiatives.

Merry Chapin explained that the current committee, which is not sponsored by the Town at this point, is made up of representatives from various sections of town and the YMCA. They are also hoping to include the Bath Recreation Dept. She added that Becky Halbrook and Sam Jones had written a proposal (see attached). Other people involved with the Committee are Lynn Kay, Ronnie Kamphausen (Conservation Commission), Betsy Varian and Francis Tolan (RSU Board), RSU Superintendent William Shuttleworth, Robert Cummings (Land Trust), Frank Roberts, Selectman Pye, Nancy Sferra (The Nature Conservancy), and several Phippsburg teachers. The Committee has met six to eight times to come up with a proposal for the town. They started by visualizing what would be the most amazing scenario they could come up with and then became more practical of what could be done over the next 3 to 5 years on the 60 acres. They feel certain they are going in right direction. They also considered funding sources to run programs on the property. Ms. Chapin gave the Selectmen the proposal which described the committee's vision.

Administrator Young explained that this was the first he had heard of the group going in this direction. His understanding from prior Selectmen meetings concerning the Basin property was that the Town Lands Management Committee was taking the lead and was soliciting for input. They would then bring their recommendations to the Selectmen. He added that his understanding was that this process would not happen until after The Nature Conservancy completed their inventory and decided what section(s) of the Basin would be available for transfer to the Town. He also questioned why the Town Lands Management Committee was not listed as a participant on the handout.

Selectmen Perkins stated that he was concerned that there was no one from the Town Lands Management Committee present for the discussion. Selectman Pye replied that they could probably be brought aboard later.

Ms. Chapin replied that Anna Varian, Town Lands Management Chair, had participated but they accidentally left the committee off the proposal listing. *Note: Anna Varian did arrive later on in the meeting.*

Bob Cummings stated that he could represent the Town Lands Management Committee tonight as well as the Land Trust because he is a member of both.

Marie Varian stated that everyone knows the town will be getting 60 acres of the Basin property and she considers the proposed plan a very narrow view for the whole community. Selectman Pye replied that he also wanted everyone's ideas out there for consideration.

Jim Totman asked where the 60 acres were that the Town might get. Because, if the property is located along the Basin Road then the town will have to keep the road open during the winter which will be a major cost. The Road Committee has got some major road projects coming up including

the replacement of 50 culverts. Selectman Pye replied that the 60 acres has not been chosen yet which is one of the reasons that the Basin Educational Initiative Committee had been formed.

Frank Roberts stated that the committee was considering property close to school, but access to the site had not been decided. They are focusing on land east of the school, not the Green Piece.

Tom Totman stated that he knew Mr. Hatch's wish was for land to be set aside for the Town and that Mr. Hatch was thinking that it would be a piece to be used for a school and library.

Ashley Thayer asked if it is legal to receive income from a piece of town owned land the Basin. Selectman Pye replied that it is allowed as long as voters at a Town Meeting approve the usage of the property and it is acceptable to The Nature Conservancy.

Ronnie Kamphausen felt that property near the school would allow for education and conservation usage.

Marie Varian stated that it would help if The Nature Conservancy would tell us what we cannot have. Bob Cummings replied that this has already been done and that The Nature Conservancy is not willing to consider Denny Reed Point. He added that at their last meeting the Town Lands Management Committee voted not to make a decision on what land to recommend obtaining until it was established what the town wanted the land for. The proposal from the Basin Educational Initiative Committee strikes him as a good one and the Town Lands Management Committee has not been silent on the issue

Selectman Perkins and Pye decided that there would be no formal action at this time to establish the Basin Educational Initiative Committee as a town committee. They recommended that there be a workshop held to discuss the Basin property and the establishment of an official committee. If a town committee is established then they would consider appointment applications from not only those on the current Basin Educational Initiative Committee but others in town that might be interested in serving on the town committee. They added that the townspeople would have to approve any transfer of property at a Town Meeting.

Ms. Chapin stated that they should wait to schedule a workshop until after Nancy Sferra from The Nature Conservancy is able to attend because she was having back surgery.

The Selectmen asked Administrator Young to work with Ms. Chapin to schedule a workshop that was convenient for everyone.

II. New Business

1. Consider accepting the following donations to the Goodwill Account:
 - A. \$1,000.00 from Richard Collins
 - B. \$500.00 from Anonymous Donor

Selectmen voted (2-0) to accept the donations. The donors were thanked.

III. Correspondence

1. Thank you letter from Gloria and David Barnes.
2. Comcast notification of adjusted one-time charges.

Reviewed. No further action taken.

IV. Selectmen/Administrator Comments and Announcements

1. Administrator Young

Administrator Young announced upcoming meetings and events.

2. Selectman Pye

Selectman Pye thanked the Budget Committee members for attending the meeting.

V. Public Forum

1. James Totman

Mr. Totman stated that these were tough financial times for everyone and that departments needed to hold their budgets with no increases. Salaries should be frozen. The Selectmen need to consider the number of elderly people in town living on a fixed income. He is going to work hard to keep expenses down. Some projects may need to be put aside.

Selectman Pye replied that it was an easy budget season last year and the Selectmen had decreased the mil rate. The Town will not be that fortunate this year.

VI. Review and Sign:

1. Accounts payable and payroll warrants.
2. Selectmen's Meeting Minutes.

Selectmen voted (2-0) to approve and sign all the above.

VII. Adjournment - Selectmen voted (2-0) to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.