

Budget/Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 20, 2004

Budget Committee: Rolf Olsen, Chairman Budget/Finance Committee; Dennis Cole; Jean Carter; Louise Murray; Ralph Bartholomew; and Suzanne Brockelbank.

Selectmen: Mike Reynolds

Staff: Don Willard, Town Manager; Sandra Caldwell, Superintendent of Schools; Amanda Simpson, Assessors' Agent

Others: John Balantine, Lake Region Suburban News

1. Call to order. Rolf Olsen opened the meeting at 7:05 pm at the Town Office.

2. Review and approve minutes from last meeting.

MOTION: Suzanne Brockelbank motioned to approve the minutes from June 23, 2004. Seconded by Louise Murray.

VOTE: Unanimous.

3. Discussion and make recommendation on Digital Studio warrant article for special town meeting.

DISCUSSION: Mike Reynolds explained that the document provided is a collection of past information over the last few years regarding the digital broadcasting studio. Ada Brown was quoted as saying that this discussion began in 1996 and has been ongoing since then. He noted that the Selectmen's meetings are video taped and then on delayed viewing through the access channel in Casco which requires that our video tape be delivered to Casco and the meeting isn't viewed until the Tuesday of the next week after the meeting. This scenario is difficult for people to keep up with in order to see the meetings. Mr. Reynolds said that Time Warner is holding \$48,000 for us from our contract negotiations as well as two access channels, one for the town and one for the school. At that time the town elected not to have an entirely public access channel because of the problem of reviewing what would be programmed. Time Warner will also provide in kind services for our hookup. The goal is for a digital studio in the modular classroom, which has been upgraded and is in compliance except for a ramp into the building. The modular has the same population rating as the town office meeting space by our Fire Department. The room would have installed cameras as well as a mobile unit for tapeing. The town would also have the ability to broadcast from Jordan-Small Middle School cafeteria and gymnasium. It is felt through the experience of other towns that with live broadcasting it will inspire people to attend meetings if they want to participate. Mrs. Caldwell added that this is very advantageous to the schools for the School Committee meetings and other functions at the schools. It was discussed that the past and present video tape from the analogue camera could be used on this system as well. Mr. Reynolds said that there was a possibility that

there could be a drop to the town office for using it there as well. He discussed that the system will be able to be programmed for 200 hours of straight broadcasting where it wouldn't have to be manned. He felt that school entertainments and sporting events could be televised through this system. Mr. Willard explained that originally Casco got the broadcasting ability and Raymond the videotaping with the intent that the equipment could be shared which hasn't been accomplished other than our tapes being delivered to Casco for broadcasting. He added that it appears that Casco isn't interested in this ability to broadcast. Mrs. Brockelbank asked about the towns around us and what they have for broadcasting. Mr. Willard wasn't sure about the other towns. Mr. Reynolds asked Mr. Balentine what Windham was doing. Mr. Balentine replied that they have an analogue system for live and delayed tape broadcasting. Mrs. Brockelbank asked about ongoing expenses. Mr. Willard said that he has asked Mr. Woodbrey to try to put that budget together. Mrs. Brockelbank asked about manpower. Mr. Willard replied that depended upon on how many meetings the public wanted to have broadcasted and the number of volunteers who might do the taping. Mr. Reynolds said that there is the intent that the middle school children will be trained to use the equipment for their endeavors. Mrs. Caldwell said that they have received a grant which will help pay for the school's participation/training. She felt that possibly high school students might get involved as well. Mr. Willard felt that the cost of \$25 per meeting could be renegotiated because that price includes taking the tape to Casco. Mr. Bartholomew asked if Mr. Woodbrey has enough hours to accomplish this. Mr. Willard said that Mr. Woodbrey assured him that it would be done and since Mr. Woodbrey has given volunteer time in the past, he believed that Mr. Woodbrey would support it fully. Mr. Olsen noted that there wouldn't be much editing because the meetings would be televised in their entirety. Mr. Willard felt that editing would only come in with other events which might need some down time edited out etc. Mr. Reynolds added that the editing programs are very easy to learn and use if they are needed. Mr. Bartholomew felt that the use of the system would come over time beginning with some of the meetings i.e. Selectmen, Budget/Finance, and School Committee. Mr. Willard reiterated that Mr. Woodbrey and his expertise would allow Raymond to have this system. Mr. Bartholomew said that once this is started it will have to be carried forward. Mrs. Carter had concern with what would happen if we lose Mr. Woodbrey. She said that she appreciated having the meetings broadcast but didn't want to incur further expense with the Technology Department budget and the Roadrunner already available for news. She had concern about the modular being a "temporary" facility and what would it cost to have a permanent facility. Mr. Olsen felt that the modular is a permanent building. Mr. Reynolds said that his interest in running for Selectmen was to increase and improve communications in Raymond. Mr. Willard felt that Raymond was behind many other towns of its size in having broadcasting, however, the Roadrunner is quite unique. Mr. Reynolds noted that the information given the Board was not updated from as far back as 2001 and there have been many changes made which this information doesn't reflect. Mr. Reynolds added that the modular now has the ability for an executive session away from the meeting room which the town office no longer has. Mrs. Brockelbank asked if the

school would ever need the space in the modular. Mrs. Caldwell replied no, there doesn't seem to be a need in the foreseeable future. Mr. Willard felt that the \$58,000 would be of value in allowing the people who can't come out to meetings the ability to see them in real time. Mr. Olsen felt that this will help to bring Raymond's people together and inform them. The Roadrunner is an attribute but it can only give information monthly. Mrs. Carter agreed that the Roadrunner was good but didn't feel that it should be a fancy paper with color pictures. She felt that anything the private sector can do should not be done by the public, and we have weekly papers in the area. She asked if this was an emergency issue and did it have to be done now. Mr. Olsen said that the special town meeting was already called for the Comprehensive Plan and it makes sense to use the opportunity for this issue. He added that he was not an advocate of special town meetings. Mr. Bartholomew concurred that he didn't see this as a "need" which we must decide now. Mr. Willard said that he, over the last four years, has never seen a "best" time to bring this issue up. Mr. Reynolds noted that the Selectmen had the same discussion about the timing of this issue. He felt that the surplus revenue was available because of collecting more funds than expected last year, plus the advent of having the special town meeting already scheduled, this was a good time to go ahead because the new school and town budgets will be able to look forward with this as included. Mr. Reynolds didn't believe that surplus revenue should be used to offset the mil rate but should be used for emergency or necessary expenses. Mrs. Brockelbank asked about the initiating time for use if this passes in October. Mr. Willard wasn't sure but felt it would be available for the May town meeting and probably before. Mrs. Caldwell felt this was a critical need so that miscommunication stops and people can hear for themselves what is going on. MOTION: Dennis Cole motioned to recommend this article. Seconded by Suzanne Brockelbank.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Bartholomew didn't feel that the timing is right for this town meeting. Mrs. Carter also felt that it should be included in the whole budget at the Annual Town Meeting. Mrs. Brockelbank said that although the initial cost is a lot she felt that the maintenance expense wouldn't be that much and it would be very beneficial to the town. Mrs. Carter didn't think that the K-8 schools would get as much out of it as if high school students would be using it. Mrs. Caldwell said that the new grant funds would support this endeavor and be of benefit to the schools. VOTE: 4 in favor (Cole, Murray, Brockelbank, Olsen) 2 opposed (Bartholomew, Carter).

NOTE: Mr. Olsen declared that because this vote needed a majority of 5 by the directive of the Budget/Finance Committee Bylaws, it could not be considered a positive vote. He asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to not recommend. He said that if this vote stands alone or if the motion to not recommend also gets less than a 5-member majority, the result is that the warrant will show the Budget/Finance Committee without a recommendation.

4. Board of Assessment Review.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Willard explained that the Selectmen would be looking at the October special town meeting to form a Board of Assessment Review which would allow a committee of Raymond people to decide on appeals regarding taxation instead of using the Cumberland County Commissioners as we have done in the past. The Selectmen feel that the timing is right because of the new revaluation discussions which are sure to be entertained. He added that Mr. Olsen felt the Budget/Finance Committee would be an advisory vote for the Selectmen. Mr. Olsen said that at this point there is no money attached to it, but it might in the future. Mr. Willard said that Amanda Simpson had discussed this with him, but he didn't get it on the last town meeting warrant and thought it could be done at this special town meeting. The Selectmen will make their recommendation tomorrow evening at their meeting but felt that since the Budget Committee was meeting tonight they might want to discuss the idea. Mrs. Carter asked how many people would be on it. Ms. Simpson replied probably five. Mrs. Carter felt that since Ms. Simpson is new in this profession it might be advisable to have people involved in this work who have more experience. Mr. Willard felt that Ms. Simpson has great skill and education in this field and that local people have more knowledge of the town to make these decisions than the County Commissioners. Ms. Simpson explained that the state statute covers the way this work is done and by having a local board they will have detailed knowledge of how the town has set its values. She added that Vision Appraisal, the company doing our revaluation, would have a series of meetings to describe how the valuation was done from which this board of assessment review could be informed. She didn't believe there would be any expenditure except some secretarial time. Mr. Willard would like to add in the article under "Maine law Title 30A".

MOTION: Jean Carter motioned to recommend this article. Seconded by Louise Murray.

5 in favor (Carter, Murray, Brockelbank, Bartholomew, Olsen) 1 opposed (Cole).

5. Review report regarding financial impact of tax cap initiative should it be approved by vote in November.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Willard explained and passed out a document outlining the impacts to be expected if the Palesky referendum passes. There will be a revenue loss. Ms. Palesky's referendum is based on California's proposition 13. He said that the value from 1996-1997 will most likely be found to be unconstitutional which Palesky calls for. This does not make any changes in the County budget or taxation so that they are not compelled to reduce it. There would be a change in the town office by not handling any licensing etc that we don't have to do by law i.e. hunting and fishing licenses, car registrations and therefore the possibility of a reduction in office staff. There will be a reduction in snow plowing, public works, recycling and free trash pickup. There probably will be a pay per bag system which will sustain itself. There is no local override provision in this referendum. Once this is in place there is no local way to get rid of it. Taxpayer equity is also an issue. For those with second homes this will be a great advantage, however for those with new homes and especially the starting homeowners, this will be very difficult. Mr. Olsen noted that looking at the current budget what is not negotiable

like County tax, special education etc will take the full amount of the 10-mil amount of taxation without leaving funds for running the town or school. Mr. Willard noted that if this passes it will cause a radical change. It will force Raymond to go to a user paying system. Mrs. Caldwell introduced the information from the Maine School Management Association group and how this will influence our schools. She indicated that because we tuition our high school students we won't be able to adjust that cost, and what will happen if our tuition schools can't take our students because of cuts they had to make. Mr. Willard said that MMA feels that 80% of this bill is unconstitutional which would probably cause court cases concerning this and some time before it will be enacted. Ms. Simpson said that if the referendum passes it will become law in 30 days which will cause the change by April 1st of the following year or 2005. She added that this will not be stayed by cause of an appeal. She also said that she would need direction from our attorneys how this will be accomplished because it's different from current assessing practices. She said she would be asking the Selectmen if they wish her to run some numbers before the election. Mr. Willard felt there would be time, if it passes, to make this judgment on the budget rather than do it beforehand. Mrs. Caldwell concurred saying that she and the School Committee do not want to attach names and faces to any possible cuts. Mrs. Caldwell said that they were thinking about a change in the October edition of the Roadrunner in order to get information out before the election. She added that if this passes than everyone in Raymond should be involved in how we will deal with this. Ms. Simpson said as a citizen she sees three things: 1) we lose local control, 2) this won't be legislated away, and 3) assessment will be very unequal.

6. Update on "One Raymond" meetings.

DISCUSSION: Mrs. Brockelbank introduced the community forum which will be moderated by Susan Gendron. A varied group of citizens from Raymond will be invited to participate and discuss some issues which Raymond is facing. We hope to get the committee working in the next couple of weeks and plan the future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Rolf Olsen adjourned the meeting at 9:16 pm.

Louise H. Lester
Town Clerk