

TOWN OF GILL

MASSACHUSETTS



www.gillmass.org

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 16, 2010

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. The meeting was videotaped.

Present: John Ward, Randy Crochier, and Ann Banash, Selectboard members; Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant

Others Present: Patricia Crosby, Nancy Griswold, Rick James

Approval of Minutes: Ann made a motion, seconded by Randy, to approve the minutes of 8/2. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Roof at Public Safety Complex: Ray reported that it is taking longer than originally anticipated to get estimates for the roof repair/replacement at the Public Safety Complex. He recommended the Board rescind their debt exclusion ballot question vote from August 2nd, and that we should work toward placing a similar question on the November ballot, when more information should be known. John reported that he had received a phone call from a resident suggesting that the roof replacement should include steel trusses, and that their installation could be done with volunteer labor. Randy made a motion, seconded by Ann, to rescind the Board's vote of 8/2 which placed a debt exclusion question on the September 14th ballot. The vote was unanimous to rescind.

Siemens/ESPC: Ray gave the Board an update on the Energy Savings Performance Contract with Siemens, and noted that the Energy Commission will be meeting on August 19th to discuss the project further. An almost-final cost spreadsheet has been received from Siemens via Beth Greenblatt, the Town's technical advisor for the project. The figures have the total project cost below what was authorized by Town Meeting, and there is a positive cash flow in all but the first year. The underlying data and assumptions (past utility usage and future building occupancy) needs to be validated, and Beth and Ray are working on that. We are still waiting for Siemens to provide a detailed scope of work for each of the performance improvements. Donna MacNicol, Gill's Town Counsel, is also Counsel for the Town of Orange, and she is in the process of reviewing their contract with Siemens. This means that most of the nitty-gritty details should already be ironed out when it comes time for Gill to contract with Siemens.

Four Winds School: Steve Hussey, principal of the Four Winds School, met with the Board to explain the School's plans for the 2010-11 school year. They are severely under enrolled (only 5 students, with 3 others as maybes), and did not receive the grant from the NMEF. They have cut every expense that can be cut, and will only be operating 4 days per week. The rent for the Riverside Municipal Building, at \$850/month, is their largest expense, and at that rate they cannot afford to stay in the building. Steve asked if \$500/month would be acceptable to the Town.

Steve explained that this is the school's 11th year in operation, and their 9th year located at the RMB. The school is geared toward 6th-8th grade students, but instruction is at a self-guided pace in every subject for every student.

Ann made a motion, seconded by Randy, to decrease the rent for the Four Winds School to \$500 per month for this year. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. It was suggested that perhaps energy costs could be further reduced by installing 7-day programmable thermostats. Ray was also asked to check with Siemens to see if there is any energy-savings work needed at the RMB that Siemens is not doing, but that perhaps the Town could undertake.

CDBG Survey/Riverside Sewer: Ray reported that enough income verification surveys have been returned, and that the pump replacement project at the Riverside Sewer Pump Station is now qualified as a CDBG-eligible project. The Housing Redevelopment Authority is recommending the use of up to \$55,000 (of roughly \$90,000 total) in housing rehabilitation loan repayment funds that they have available for Gill. Ray has contacted Tighe & Bond to get a quote from them to conduct a needs assessment of the pump station.

The Board had several questions about the loan repayment funds: Where did the money come from, specifically, how much of the repayments came from rehab loans to Riverside-area homes? How can the money be spent? Who decides how it gets spent? Ray will get answers from Bruce Hunter at the HRA.

Highway Dept. Debris Blower: The Highway Superintendent decided not to purchase the debris blower that was approved on 8/2. During a demonstration of the blower he noticed the output shaft was bent, and felt the purchase would not have been a good deal for the Town.

G-M Bridge Issues: The Board and members of the audience discussed ongoing traffic flow problems at the Gill-Montague Bridge construction project. It was noted that in spite of the flashing signals, when the Turners Falls Fire Department responded to a 3 AM mutual aid call and crossed the bridge, their truck met a car on the bridge. It was suggested that Mass Highway or the contractor should improve the signs warning motorists that "If the light is flashing, do NOT cross the bridge!"

It was also mentioned that many drivers seem hesitant when turning onto the bridge. Clearer signage was again suggested – "Lane shift on bridge entry," or one-way arrows painted on the bridge driving lane. The Board asked Ray to contact Frank Abbondanzio in Montague, and see if there is interest in the two towns holding a bridge project status meeting in September.

Bleacher Project: Ray requested the Board grant him authority to waive any building permit fees that might be associated with the Eagle Scout project to repair/refurbish the bleachers at the Gill Elementary School. Ann made a motion, seconded by Randy, to allow Ray to waive those fees. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative.

Early Retirement Initiative: Included in the Municipal Relief Act of 2010 is an Early Retirement Initiative that is available to municipal employees with at least 20 years of eligible service. Gill has three such employees. The initiative places limits on what a town can spend to hire replacements for positions that retire – 30% of retirees' salaries in FY11, 45% in FY12, and 60% in FY13. The town would have to make extra contributions to the Retirement Program for 10 years (to offset the extra benefit received by each retiree), and would still pay the town's share of health insurance for the retirees and their replacements. The Board agreed that this Initiative might have merit for larger cities and towns, but does not work for Gill. Gill will not participate in the ERI.

CORI Checks: Ray reported that he has applied to the Criminal History Systems Board to reactivate Gill's certification to conduct CORI checks on volunteers and employees in the Rec. programs. He will attend a 2-hour training session in Chelsea on August 26th in order to become authorized to submit requests and review CORI results. Also, CORI laws were recently updated, and employers may no longer ask about criminal records on job applications. Gill's application form has been updated.

MMA Essay Contest: The Board gave its approval to sign up for the Mass. Municipal Association's 6th Grade Essay Contest. Joanne Flagg, the 6th grade teacher at Gill Elementary, has again expressed interest in the contest.

Fire Dept. Purchase Order: The Board approved a purchase order to Firematic Supply in the amount of \$20,076.90 for retrofits and upgrades to the Fire Department's air packs. This purchase was approved by voters at the Annual Town Meeting, and will give our firefighters buddy-breathing capabilities and the equipment necessary to operate a Rapid Intervention Team at fire scenes.

Rep. to Franklin Regional Planning Board: The Franklin Regional Planning Board has requested the Selectboard name a representative to the FRPB. It was suggested that Ray check with Gill's Planning Board to see if any of their members are interested.

Mass. Broadband Institute: The Mass. Broadband Institute has requested that Gill name a community representative to act as a contact person during all phases of construction of a new regional fiber optic network. The Board suggested Ray check with Linda Dunleavy at the FRCOG, as she might already be performing this role for Gill.

City of Lowell – Home Rule Petition: The Board discussed a request from the City of Lowell for towns to join Lowell in submitting home rule petitions to their legislators in order to obtain greater flexibility in designing health insurance plans for municipal employees. Currently, unions must approve any changes to health insurance programs offered by municipalities. As Gill has no unions, the Board decided no further action was warranted.


United Nations Day: In response to a request from the United Nations Association of Greater Boston, Randy made a motion, seconded by Ann, to proclaim October 24th as United Nations Day in Gill. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative. Ray will prepare a proclamation that can be signed.

Mariamante Land: In response to a question from the Board, Ray reported that he is still drafting a scope of work for mowing the field and cutting downed trees at the Mariamante property. He will have Mick LaClaire and/or Ernie Hastings (Asst. Tree Warden and Tree Warden, respectively) look at which trees need to be cut. It was requested that Ray contact previous potential buyers for the property and check if there is continued interest. He will also contact Doria Kutubes and try to arrange a September presentation of the results of the ground penetrating radar study.

Warrants: The Board reviewed and signed FY11 Warrant #4.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Ray Purington, Administrative Assistant.



Randy Crochier, Selectboard Clerk

Bernard F. Lynch
City Manager

July 30, 2010

Dear Fellow Local Official:

Once again the efforts of cities and towns to gain some control over budget busting health insurance costs have hit a roadblock on Beacon Hill. This has occurred despite good faith efforts by municipal officials and the Massachusetts Municipal Association to reach some compromise with the major unions that represent local government employees. The loser in these efforts are the taxpayers in each one of our communities that face further cutbacks in services or increased levels of taxes to meet the rising costs.

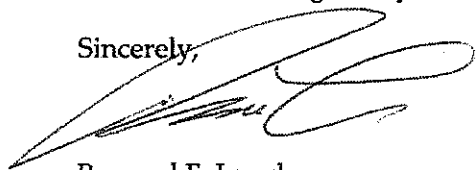
As municipal officials we have sought the same authority of the state government to design health insurance plans for employees that retain quality coverage but with appropriate parameters of offerings and cost sharing. Where most of our citizens receive managed care products and co-pays of \$15-\$25, local governments still offer outdated and expensive indemnity plans or managed care products with \$5 co-pays. To make modifications to our health insurance programs we face the task of obtaining the near impossible to reach levels of buy-in across our employees groups. In nearly every community across the Commonwealth the explosion of the costs associated with health insurance outstrips the tax growth allowed under Proposition 2 ½.

Unfortunately, the legislation that has been filed for all of the state's municipalities has made little progress on Beacon Hill. This failure comes in spite of widespread support for change by cities and towns, business groups, taxpayer organizations and editorial pages of the state's largest newspapers.

While efforts to re-file statewide legislation move forward, and planning occurs for a 2012 ballot question, the City of Lowell has taken the additional step of filing a home rule petition that will enable the City to act on behalf of its taxpayers in instituting plan design changes or join the Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission plan. I have attached a copy of the Lowell petition for your review.

I urge each community to file a similar home rule petition in order to obtain this needed authority. At a minimum these acts will retain the momentum that has been gained over the last several months and bring further attention and aid to this important issue. Thank you in advance for your support. I look forward to working with you on this effort.

Sincerely,



Bernard F. Lynch
City Manager

Attachments

Home Rule Petition – Voted on by Lowell City Council on July 13, 2010

AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF LOWELL

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

SECTION 1

Notwithstanding the provisions of chapter 32B and chapter 150E of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, the City of Lowell is authorized to negotiate and purchase group insurance policies for Employees, Retirees and Dependents without being subject to collective bargaining as defined in chapter 150E of the general laws.

SECTION 2

Further, the City of Lowell is also authorized to alter current and future plan design features, and that such action not be subject to collective bargaining as defined in chapter 150E of the general laws.

SECTION 3

Further, the City of Lowell is also authorized, but not mandated to participate in, and/or join the Group Insurance Commission ("GIC") pursuant to G.L. c 32A, and such action shall not be subject to collective bargaining as defined in chapter 150E of the general laws.

SECTION 4

The provisions of this act shall not affect obligation under any collective bargaining agreement(s), while such agreements are in effect.

SECTION 5

This action shall take effect upon its passage.