

TOWN OF CHEBEAGUE ISLAND
JOINT MEETING
BOARD OF SELECTMEN & SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Present: Mark Dyer (chair), Donna Damon, Leon Hamilton, Chris Rich, Herb Maine (absent), School committee: Jen Belesca, Beverly Johnson, Ken Pelton, and Carol White, and Gerry Wiles. Also present were Ron Grenier (Town Administrator) and Alton Hadley (School Superintendent)

Meeting called to order by Mark Dyer at 6:40 PM.

1. Tax rate goal for the 2008-2009 budget development process.

Dyer said selectmen set a goal for FY09 to be a flat rate \$20.49 per thousand or less. Johnson asked the administrator and superintendent if this was possible. Grenier stated the town has a debt service of approximately \$500,000 to pay per year for several years. He feels that the town could keep the budget within those goals. Hadley said there is a cost of living allowance of 4.6% that will affect the salary negotiations of his staff. The state is looking at schools to reduce their expenditures by 50% in the System Admin cost, 5% in Special Education and in transportation. Hadley does not see Special Education or Transportation budgets getting cut here on the island because of our unique situation of being an island. Hadley said that if there is no major problem, that he sees the mil rate goal attainable. White asked if our evaluation for property is the same as last year. Grenier stated that the town assessor has not been hired yet. Damon stated that the evaluation for April 1, 2007 will stay in effect until April 1, 2008. The assessor will need to complete a new assessment prior to April 1, 2008. John Martin asked Hadley about the 4.6% cost of living allowance. Hadley said it was for contracted employees. He stated that the salary negotiations have not been settled as of this date. John Martin asked Grenier about \$100,000 surplus on the Municipal side. He asked what accounts were running lower than the transition committee expected. Grenier stated that it was all across the board. Grenier said expenditures were at 42% and Revenues were at 67% to date. Damon stated that there is added income in accounts that the transition committee didn't think of such as agent fees. Grenier stated that the town received a \$17,000 grant for Urban Renewal Initiative Program. Grenier stated the Town Clerk, Susan Campbell, has been diligent in recovering back taxes owed to the town not collected by Cumberland.

2. Concerns and/or challenges in achieving the goal.

Dyer said the adjustment in the debt service is a great concern. He wants to meet the needs of the people of the town without increasing the budget. Wiles asked if there were any major projects projected for FY 09 for the town. Grenier stated that the Great Chebeague Golf Course and the town will try to improve the wharf road parking near the Stone Pier. Grenier said that project will not be a great amount of money since we have the equipment here on the island. Grenier stated that a ramp connecting the CTC float will be replaced.

Also, changes to the bridge on the John Small Road will be made. Johnson asked if the town could think about widening some areas of the Roy Hill road. When FEMA repaired it the road was made narrower. She also asked if the ramp at the CTC float on Chebeague could have another railing added to it so it could be similar to that on Cousin's Island. White said her concerns were the cost for the debt service. Grenier said it will be under \$200,000 which is an 8% increase from FY08. White asked if state revenues are reduced will that affect the municipal side. Grenier said yes that the revenue sharing is about \$9,000 less than anticipated.

3. Anticipated capital improvement needs or priorities.

School Concerns: Hadley said the superintendent budget will be broken up so that there will be less in the system department budget. Hadley said he has two potential capital budget items. One is the front entry way to the school and the others are the windows. These are the two major items that need to be looked at. Hadley also said another concern is if we have an out-of-district- placement child. This would be a child who has special needs that our school system could not provide. We would have to pay tuition to a school that could meet their needs. At this time, we do not have a child in that category.

Grenier said the town and school plan to make the first year for capital improvements just a year to identify projects. The municipal side is looking at a new roof for the public safety building. Estimate for this project is \$25,000 and part of the project will be funded by the fire department.

Johnson talked of the Cumberland County Community Grant. She asks that the town join this program. Grenier said that Thea Youngs, the island fellow, is researching this program.

Dave Hill asked if the school can carry a surplus. Hadley said it can carry 3% of the budget as surplus.

Wiles stated that he was concerned about the hard economic times. He stated that we could have a tough time collecting taxes if unemployment hit our citizens. He asked if the selectmen had addresses this possible problem. Grenier said he hasn't seen anything in the way of taxes not being paid so far. But that the town should look at what they can do if this does happen to us.

4. Respective budget review meeting schedules.

Grenier said the selectmen will be meeting every Thursday in February at the Island Hall at 6 pm to work on the budget.

Hadley said the school board will meet every Tuesday in February at the school at 6 pm. The meetings on the 5th and 19th is strictly for budget review. The meetings on the 12th and 26th will have a business meeting first then budget meeting afterwards. It was asked that both the school and municipal meetings be posted on the same posting around the island.

John Martin asked if the final budget review hearing could be done on a weekend day so that more people can attend and give their input. He would like written drafts given to the people to look at during the meeting. Both school board and the selectmen agreed to hold the meeting in March.

5. Annual Town Meeting.

Grenier stated the Annual Town Meeting is tentatively set for Saturday, June 7th at 9 am. Damon asked if the meeting could be held on Sunday because some will not attend on Saturday due to religious observances. Belesca stated that many people were upset that the town meeting was held on a Sunday. The town meeting will be discussed again in a future meeting.

6. Possible dates for next joint meeting.

White asked that it be in March. She asked for the Superintendent and Town Administrator to come up with a date.

7. Possible impact of changes to School Consolidation Law.

Hadley said he is preparing the school budget 2 ways, one for the annual town meeting and the other for the referendum validation process. He said the state legislation is undecided on the school issues at this time.

No further issues were brought up. Dyer thanked the public for coming. He thanked the school board, Superintendent Hadley, and Town Administrator Grenier for all their efforts in the upcoming budget process.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Karen Hamilton, Deputy Town Clerk.