

New Shoreham Town Council Meeting/Work Session
Town Hall, Old Town Road
Wednesday, April 4, 2012
7:00 p.m.

Present: First Warden Kimberley H. Gaffett, Second Warden Raymond J. Torrey, Council members Richard P. Martin, Peter B. Baute and Kenneth C. Lacoste. Also present were Town Manager Nancy Dodge, Finance Director Amy Land and for the recording of minutes Deputy Town Clerk Millicent McGinnes.

First Warden Gaffett called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

**Act on recommendations from Town Manager pursuant to TNS General Ordinances
Section 9-203(3) re: Sun Farm Oyster CRMC application**

Applicant Chris Warfel of Sun Farm Oysters was present.

Town Manager Dodge explained that general ordinances 9-200 require that any party interested in conducting activities in the Great Salt Pond must make request to the Town for approval of the activity, such as authorizing the Town to sign as co-applicant on any additional permit or license application. As part of the process, the request is sent to the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Harbors Committee, Shellfish Commission and Harbormaster for review.

Ms. Dodge noted that Sun Farm Oysters is making application to CRMC for an aquaculture lease for a quarter acre section in the Recreation Area of the Great Salt Pond. She explained that the Planning Board, the Shellfish Commission and the Harbormaster were opposed to the application, while the Conservation Commission supported it. She further noted that Dennis Erkan, Principal Marine Biologist of the RI Department of Environmental Management sent an email noting that he was not opposed to the aquaculture lease, just opposed to the location of lease. Additionally, Ms. Dodge stated that the Town's aquaculture area, which will be open for leasing, was just approved by CRMC.

Applicant Chris Warfel of Sun Farm Oysters stated that the area would be used for low impact bottom culture farming and would be marked off with only four corner markers. He further stated that he did not see his request as increasing the risks in the area or conflicting with activities in the area. He noted that the area would only be worked for a few hours at a time a couple of days per week. Additionally, he stated that the board members that reviewed the application are not experts and had little time for fact finding.

Dr. Baute asked whether he had considered another area of the pond, east of Cormorant Cove. Mr. Warfel stated that it would not be preferred, as it is shallow, has visibility issues and the application process would take at least 6 months. Later in the discussion, Dr. Baute stated that he would not object to a trial period lease, as the aquaculture bags are on the bottom and are less likely to cause interference.

Mr. Lacoste spoke in opposition to the application stating the following:

- There is a conflict supporting a commercial use in the Recreation Area of the pond.
- The Harbor Management Plan restricts areas for specific uses and this application is not in compliance.
- The Comprehensive Plan strives to expand public areas and the application would be restricting public areas.
- Most advisories from the Town Boards were opposed to the application.
- There are other areas for aquaculture, such as the approved Town area.
- Granting private use over public waters in the Recreation Area is not an appropriate precedence to set.

Mr. Martin concurred, highlighting the importance of respecting the opinions of the reviewing boards.

Second Warden Torrey stated that he was a proponent of the application and felt the incursions in the area would be minor and not detrimental. He noted that it was in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and could be limited by the Council.

First Warden Gaffett stated that the use conflict was not insurmountable and the Town should change its point of view to make aquaculture viable. She further stated that, as it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the application should be supported.

Mr. Torrey made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to sign the Sun Farm Oyster CRMC application as co-applicant, with the approval to be on a one year trial basis in the location proposed and if it is shown to be detrimental, the approval can be reconsidered at a future date. Ms. Gaffett seconded the motion and it carried.

3 Ayes (Gaffett, Torrey, Baute) 2 Nays (Lacoste, Martin)

Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Work Session

Finance Director Land stated that there were some savings and some additions made to the previously presented budget which amount to a net zero change. She listed the items as follows: Savings totaling \$80,000:

- Health insurance line reduced from a 12.8% increase over last year to an 8% increase, amounting to a \$17,500 savings for the Town and a \$13,116 savings for the school. The Council thanked Town Manager Dodge and School Superintendent Hicks for their hard work on the reduction.
- Phone line reduced by \$2,000.
- Highways staffing line reduced by \$13,368.
- Highways benefits down \$10,000.
- Debt service on the Thomas Property down \$22,140.
- Highways refuse removal down by \$5,000.
- \$10,000 was removed from the Capital Budget for dredging which can be covered by balances in the Old Harbor Dock construction fund (\$3,300) and the Town Hall construction fund (\$46,000).

Additions totaling \$79,000:

- \$79,000 added to the Revaluation line. This balance was initially thought to be covered by state reimbursements, though the state is only reimbursing for statistical reveals.

Ms. Land noted that there is a \$20,000 savings from the last meeting that has not yet been allocated.

Discussion ensued regarding the Sewer Commission paying the Town for the billing service they provide. It was noted that the Sewer Commission's five year financial plan calls for a \$20,000 payment for the service this year.

First Warden Gaffett made a motion to add \$20,000 of income to the budget for Sewer Commission billing services. The motion was seconded by Second Warden Torrey and carried.

5 Ayes (Gaffett, Torrey, Baute, Lacoste, Martin) 0 Nays

Discussion ensued regarding funding a coordinator for senior services, requested by the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee. Mr. Lacoste stated that he was in favor of such a position as a demonstration project. Ms. Gaffett noted that the services suggested were already being handled by volunteers. Following a lengthy discussion, Mr. Martin made a motion to fund the budget with \$5,000 for a senior coordinator. Mr. Lacoste seconded the motion and it carried.

3 Ayes (Lacoste, Martin, Torrey) 2 Nays (Gaffett, Baute)

Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the school budget. Members of the School Committee noted that the school needed \$75,000 in additional funding to secure their recently negotiated teachers contract, cover an unanticipated increase in health benefits and cover a part-time (one year only) math support position.

Sue Black, Executive Director of the Block Island Early Learning Center spoke requesting an additional \$7,000 of support. She stated the funds would assist with the following:

- Aiding the accreditation planning process by funding janitorial service (which would allow the teachers to use their time for planning instead of janitorial work);
- Covering an increase in rent;
- Covering a temporary reduction in income.

First Warden Gaffett suggested increasing the property tax income line by \$60,000, and using that, plus the \$40,000 of unallocated income, to fund the following:

- \$5,000 for a senior coordinator
- \$14,000 to contingency
- \$70,000 to the school
- \$5,000 to the Early Learning Center
- \$6,000 to the underfunded police dispatcher line

The Council concurred and the changes will be reflected in the next draft budget.

Discussion ensued regarding needed building maintenance on the fire/dispatch building. The Fire Department will provide a list of prioritized needs and estimates at the next meeting.

Meetings were set for:

- Wednesday, April 11, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. – Budget work session
- Monday, April 16, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. – Budget public hearing

With no further business to discuss, Dr. Baute made a motion to adjourn at 9:38 p.m. The motion was seconded by Ms. Gaffett and carried.

Millicent McGinnes
Deputy Town Clerk

Approved: April 18, 2012