

Town of Lincoln

Budget Board Meeting

April 1, 2015

Present:

**Carl Brunetti Rhonda Lacombe Felix Fernandes Bill McManus
Chris Weggeland Paul Deutsch Mike O'Connell Richard Foster
Bill DiBiasio Bob Turner**

Absent:

Mike Babbitt

Call to Order

The meeting began at 7:32 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard, to defer the Approval of Minutes and Correspondence.

The Town Administrator and Public Works Director were present to answer questions of the Budget Board.

In response to the Budget Board's request for more information regarding the Privatization of Recycling, the Town Administrator noted that the additional \$75,000 added with the cost of the program currently will be the total estimate to privatize.

The next step would be to come up with a plan and a start time to line

up the budget and begin the new program.

They are also working on figuring out how many laborers will be need for all of the other duties that the Public Works Department performs year round so that t they do not end up understaffed as a lot of the crew is interchangeable labor.

There are a couple retirements and a Workmen's Compensation claim that will line up so that the Department will not have to lay off any employees when proceeding with the outsourcing of the new program.

Bi-weekly collection is also being discussed as an option.

Regarding the Thibaueau Barn project, the Town Administrator noted that the Town will ensure that it is safe, and the municipality still has to meet all of the same building codes as everyone else and are not immune to that.

It will be strictly storage and workspace, and Thibaudeau Barn was chosen because the Town does already own it and it will be cheaper than building a new structure.

The Town Administrator does believe the \$50,000 will be enough for what will be done to the building this year.

He did note that the Town may do more with the building later on as it does need more work.

Mike Gagnon, Public Works Director, noted that the Public Works staff will run conduit so that all the Electrician will have to do is run the actual wiring.

The plan is to encapsulate and heat only that one area of the building.

The Dugout project is only for Saylesville, and Lime Acres was only used as a comparison because they will be the same as the ones installed there.

Besides answering questions, the Town Administrator noted that he did want to discuss the purchase of the Jergensen Property with the Budget Board to ask them to reconsider their vote not to include it in their recommendation.

He noted that the assessed value is not the actual value of the property, and that while he cannot discuss the appraisal as the Town is in negotiations, it has come in and it is well above the assessed value and in line with his proposal.

It should be available in about a week or so.

The Town won't know until the negotiations are complete, but the request will not be for more than \$200,000 from Gaming Revenues.

He believes this land is the best of land available to purchase with the open space funds, and that the Town is overbuilt and needs more large open space for the preservation of land.

Open space also increases the value of properties in the Town.

The Town has been looking at this land that is abutting Handy Pond for about 15 years, and in fact it was listed as a possible site for the new Middle School when it was being built.

The Town Administrator gave information comparing the condition and cost of the Jergensen Property with other properties that the

Town has purchased including Camp Meehan and the Middle School lot

The \$1 million total proposed is an estimate based on a preliminary appraisal, owner appraisal and DEM appraisal.

The Town Administrator discussed the probability that the lot would be built if the Town did not purchase it and preserve it, as there have been plans submitted for a cluster of private residences as well as affordable housing, and the cost to the Town that would create in additional police/fire/rescue, etc. as well.

It was noted that this is the first time a proposal for the purchase of open space has actually been brought before the Budget Board, and he feels the Town would be passing up a great opportunity if this piece of property were not purchased.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to open the meeting to Public Comment.

Public Comment

Jared Bethel, Chairman of the Conservation Commission noted that he thinks is important to take the opportunity to purchase pieces of land as open space when the Town has the chance.

He noted that the Conservation Commission voted in favor unanimously that the Town should purchase the Jergensen Property.

Jim Fredrikson, also of the Conservation Commission, noted that the

piece of land is desirable because it abuts an already significant 300 acre piece of open space.

He also noted that it may hurt the Town in getting grants in the future if the Town does not use a grant they have been given.

Keith Macksoud, Town Council President, noted that he has been speaking with the Town Administrator for a long time about this, and they feel it should go before the voters of the Financial Town Meeting so the Town Council will put a resolution in if it is not included in the Budget Board's recommendation.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Felix Fernandes, to resume the regular order of the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of March 31st were distributed for review.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Rhonda Lacombe, to accept the minutes.

The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Correspondence

The Budget Board sent questions to the Town Administrator which he attended the meeting to answer.

The Budget Board also received a response from the Superintendent regarding questions sent about the Education Budget.

They noted that they are aware that they will need to begin reducing their costs, will fine tune their plan and forward it to the Budget Board once it is complete.

They sent information in response to a question about the differences in FTE's which still did not clarify it.

There were 4 retirements in 2014, and 14 staff left for other reasons other than retirement.

The Budget Board had also asked about estimated costs per student, how those numbers were used to arrive at the charter school tuitions and how many seats were available at those charters, etc. to which the response did not really clarify or answer their question.

The Budget Board will contact the Superintendent to see if they can get more information on those answers that either did not answer the Budget Board's questions or needed more clarification.

The Budget Board discussed that the Superintendent's Proposal, the School Committee's Recommendation and the Final Adopted Budgets are always different.

Business

Municipal Budget

Recycling

The Budget Board discussed that if they do decide to support the recycling privatization project and it is passed, they would expect the Town to start thinking about a plan to be put into place as soon the

funds are available on July 1st.

The proposed \$75,000 would allow the conversion to the privatized system by April of next year.

They also noted that it should be shown in the Recycling Budget or in a resolution, not in operating capital improvements or in Public Works, Central Services.

Paul Deutsch made a motion, seconded by Mike O'Connell, to take \$75,000 out of Department 4400 – Public Works, Central Services.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to add a line for Recycling Privatization with a footnote to Department 5000 – Recycling.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

In operating capital, the cost of recycling bins would be \$70,000 per year for the next 5 years.

They would be received all at once but the payments spread out that way.

The Budget Board discussed that they will make the public aware that they will be committed to that expense for the next 4 years as well once they have voted to approve this item.

Richard Foster made a motion, seconded by Bill DiBiasio, that total Capital Improvement Projects be recommended at \$1,189,390.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Municipal Resolutions

Saylesville Dugouts

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike O'Connell, that the Saylesville Dugout project be recommended for \$175,000.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Thibaudeau Barn

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, that the project be recommended for \$50,000.

The Budget Board discussed that the building will need more repairs that will cost more in the future than just this initial work, but that since it is a Town owned building it would have to be worked on regardless of use anyways.

The roof was redone and is fairly new.

The Budget Board believes there should be more information and a detailed plan going forward of what will be done with the property, maybe even in phases, and plan to note that in the Budget Message that will be included with their budget recommendations at the Financial Town Meeting.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Jergensen Property

The Budget Board discussed that the Town Administrator has asked them to reconsider their vote on the purchase of the Jergensen

Property, and whether passing up a matching grant would hurt the Town's chances of being awarded other grants in the future.

The Town Administrator has seen several plans for the property including an additional 40 units on top of the approved use of a 15 house cluster

If \$400,000 were taken out of Open Space funds as proposed, the balance left would be \$23,592.

The total left for all of the Capital Reserve Accounts if the total of \$600,000 were used for the project would be about \$600,000.

The Budget Board discussed that the Town Council can put a resolution in if the Budget Board does not vote to include the property as part of their recommendation.

Bill McManus made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner for discussion purposes, to reconsider the Budget Board's vote upon the purchase of the Jergensen Property.

The Budget Board discussed that purchasing the property would prevent it from being built upon, and while the Town could use more open space there have been other properties that were not purchased when the Town had the opportunity.

Additionally, there may be other properties that may be more beneficial to the Town that become available in coming years, and the purchase of this property would deplete the open space funds and make it so that the Town may not purchase any other properties.

The motion failed by a vote of 1-8 with Bill McManus voting for the

motion and Bill DiBiasio abstaining.

Library Parking Lot and Roof

Carl Brunetti made a motion, seconded by Bill DiBiasio, that the Parking Lot project be increased from \$15,000 to \$16,000 with an additional grant of \$99,000 for a total of \$115,000.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Carl Brunetti made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner, to reduce the Library Roof project from \$140,000 to \$139,000.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Education Budget

The Budget Board has not yet received all of the information that they requested from the School Department.

Carl Brunetti made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner, to reduce salaries by \$4,733 as a correction to the original proposal.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Carl Brunetti made a motion, seconded by Bob Turner, to reduce Benefits by \$1,306 as a correction to the original proposal.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The Budget Board discussed Breakage, and in particular the health care portion of it.

It was noted that any new employees were being put in at the B1 Level, and presumed to have the family plan for health care and dental, but many of the teachers at that step choose to opt out of receiving the Schools' health care.

The savings that could be realized by changing those at that step to opt out instead of family plan would be \$37,826.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Richard Foster, to adjust the Health Care line by \$37,826.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The Budget Board discussed that after reviewing Utilities, it seems very likely that the schools will have a \$100,000 - \$150,000 surplus this year.

If this is the case, the recommendation for Utilities for next year can probably be adjusted by \$30,000, but they will hold off on that vote pending further analysis.

It was noted that the surplus in utilities would probably be used to offset the unanticipated overexpenditure in health care, which is estimated to be as much as \$300,000.

The Budget Board discussed the High School Reform Consultant position.

The School Committee has previously been in favor of getting rid of this position.

The salary of the position is \$36,000, and there is also 1 FTE in Reform Facilitators for \$86,683.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion to reduce Personnel by \$115,000.

The motion was withdrawn for lack of a second.

Bill DiBiasio made a motion, seconded by Mike O'Connell, to reduce Personnel by \$36,000.

The motion passed by unanimous vote.

Public Comment

There were no public comments or questions at the time.

Adjourn

Richard Foster made a motion, seconded by Chris Weggeland, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.