

SPECIAL MEETING NORTH SMITHFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

JUNE 29, 2015

KENDALL-DEAN SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

7:00 P.M.

The meeting began at 7:00 P.M. with the prayer and the pledge to the flag. Council members present were Ms. Alves, Mrs. Nadeau, Mr. Zwolenski and Mr. Boucher. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Hamilton and Town Solicitor Iglizzi.

LOMBARDI REPORT RE: ABATEMENTS/TAX ASSESSOR'S OFFICE MOTION by Mr. Boucher, seconded by Mrs. Nadeau, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to move this item up first on the agenda.

Mr. James Lombardi reviewed highlights of his report in which he attempted to answer questions he expected would be raised by the Town Council and taxpayers regarding the high amount of recent abatements. He noted there was a lack of records, no internal controls, the Board of Assessment Review did not meet legally, there were \$1 million worth of abatements that had not been approved by the Town Council, receivables from 2013 could not be accurately confirmed, the certified tax rolls were not locked down in 2012, 2013 or 2014, and there was sharing of passwords among employees; however, he did not find any nefarious acts. Mr. Lombardi feels standard review practices should have caught many of the errors but they were not followed.

Mr. Lombardi made several recommendations: use of a fireproof filing cabinet in the assessor's office for the Board of Assessor's Review to store all tax abatements and backup documents for a minimum period as required by law, implement a form of recordkeeping system for the
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Board of Assessment Review similar to the Town Clerk's office, review by the town of the record control schedule in the Tax Assessor's office and townwide for all public records which are regulated by the Secretary of State, have an intern or part-time employee review tax stabilizations, tax freezes and exemptions to determine if taxpayers are paying the proper amount of tax, place all tax abatements on the town website for public inspection, upgrade technology in the Tax Assessor's office, complete a comparison analysis of senior level employees to determine if they are paid competitively, plan better for handling tangible property taxes that depreciate over time and consider adding a Council auditor position appointed by the Town Council.

Mr. Lombardi's report shows that there was an approximate shortfall of approximately \$1 million from the 2013 levy. There was much discussion about the \$1 million.

In response to a question, Mr. Lombardi believed that things have turned around in the assessor's office and he would be extremely

shocked if abatements come anywhere near the level they were at.

Despite Mr. Lombardi's statement that he did not find any nefarious acts, Mr. Paul Vadenais recommended calling in the state police for a forensic audit.

Mr. Lombardi noted that he would have gone to the Attorney General or the Police Chief had he found any such activity.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to enter into executive session at 8:23 P.M. pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(A)(1) Any discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons provided that such person or persons affected shall have been notified in advance in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at an open meeting.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to come out of executive session at 9:57 P.M. and to seal the minutes. No motions were made and no votes were taken.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Ms. Alves, and voted unanimously on an aye vote to take a five-minute recess at 9:57 P.M.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted

unanimously on an aye vote to return to the meeting at 10:06 P.M.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote at 10:06 P.M. to extend the meeting to 11:00 P.M.

WATER BUDGET 2015/2016

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to accept the Water Department budget of \$571,838.70 which represents an increase of \$10,474.70.

SEWER BUDGET 2015/2016

Mr. Parmelee noted that 12 percent of the cost increase is for the City of Woonsocket bond repayment for the wastewater treatment facility.

MOTION by Mr. Boucher, seconded by Mrs. Nadeau, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to accept the Sewer Department budget in the amount of \$2,489,794.19 which includes \$1,751,659.19 for operating expenses and \$738,135.00 for debt service. This equates to a rate of \$423.00 per unit.

PURCHASE OF SNOW PLOW EQUIPMENT

MOTION by Mr. Boucher and seconded by Mr. Zwolenski to move this item up on the agenda.

MOTION by Mr. Boucher and seconded by Mr. Zwolenski to approve the purchase of a snow plow truck with a sander in an amount not to

exceed \$55,000.

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Budget Committee member Michael Rapko stated that Public Works Director Pendergast was satisfied with the committee's recommendations for the Public Works department and that did not include a plow truck with sander. There has been no documentation provided for such a purchase.

Roll call: Ms. Alves - no; Mrs. Nadeau - no; Mr. Zwolenski - yes; and Mr. Boucher - yes. The motion failed 2 to 2.

PURCHASE OF POLICE VEHICLES

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski and seconded by Ms. Alves, with discussion, to appropriate \$33,500 to replace one police cruiser to come out of the capital budget.

Roll call: Ms. Alves - no; Mrs. Nadeau - no; Mr. Zwolenski - yes; and Mr. Boucher - yes. The motion failed 2 to 2.

LIGHTING AT THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. Hamilton stated the building is in desperate need for lighting. Energy Resource did an analysis. A grant was received from National Grid for \$7,500. However, there is a leak in the roof; water is coming in through the ballast and onto the floor and Ms. Hamilton will not get any new lights until repairs are made. She is in the process of getting

quotes to have the roof either replaced or patched.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote at 11:00 P.M. to continue the meeting to 11:05 P.M.

TOWN COUNCIL APPOINTEES TO THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS COMMISSION

Mrs. Nadeau noted that there has been no School Committee meeting yet since the Council forwarded their recommendations.

Mr. Iglizzi confirmed that RIDE regulations require that the Section 108 Committee needs to be created by the School Committee.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote at 11:10 P.M. to continue the meeting to 11:20 P.M.

MOTION by Mrs. Nadeau and seconded by Mr. Boucher to have the Council president send a letter to the School Committee Chairman and the School Committee members requesting that the Town Council appointees become the new RIDE Section 108 Committee for the continuing submission of Stage II documentation approval and school construction and to consider a special meeting to expedite this.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mrs. Nadeau, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote to allow the Town Solicitor to review this and

upon his findings craft and send a letter to the School Committee Chairperson and the School Committee members reflecting the wishes of this Council.

MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski, seconded by Mr. Boucher, and voted unanimously on an aye vote to adjourn at 11:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra A. Todd, Town Clerk