

**TOWN OF SOMERS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 2, 2008 – 7:00 P.M.
Town Hall Auditorium**

1. Location of Emergency Exits
2. Call to Order – First Selectman David Pinney called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.
3. Members Present – Kathleen Devlin and David Pinney. Joe Tolisano was unable to attend. Also present was Marcia Mitchell, Exec. Asst./Ops. Mgr. as recording secretary, and a number of interested citizens.
4. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Pinney recognized that a number of citizens were present for the conversation regarding local tax abatement expansion for town farmers. Ms. Devlin moved that item 8.1 be handled at this point in the meeting; Mr. Pinney seconded and the motion unanimously carried.

8.1 A general conversation took place regarding expanding town's farm tax abatement program to add local options provided for within the state's statutes. Jeff Lipton, representing the farmers as a spokesperson, went over the research the group had done with the Town Assessor as to the effect on the town's revenues. The expected financial impact given the current farm ownership base is \$15,000 per year of lost tax revenue. Lorraine Wetherall cited a study that concluded that each dollar of farm tax revenue costs the town \$.50, while each dollar of regular homeowners tax revenue costs the town \$1.50 to \$1.75. Mr. Pinney commented that the town supports local agriculture and had applied for and received two agricultural viability grants totaling \$73,500. Mr. Pinney said that the Selectmen would review the research presented, apprise the Board of Finance and expect to include this item for decision on the agenda for their June 30th regular meeting. Mr. Pinney said that a Town Meeting would likely be convened sometime in mid to late July, for the Selectmen to recommend adoption of the farm tax abatement program that would reflect state statutes.

5. Correspondence

5.1 Little League proposal regarding field irrigation. Bill McCloskey Sr. spoke on behalf of the Little League, saying that they had applied for grant funding for the purpose of installing irrigation and new sod on the baseball fields behind Town Hall. While they have received indications that their grant request will be viewed favorably, the Little League wanted the town to know that they wish to install the irrigation whether they receive the grant funding or not. What they are asking for is whether the town will be willing to pay for the water usage in irrigating the fields, which is estimated to be approximately \$340 per average season. The Selectmen thanked Mr. McCloskey and told him that they would give favorable consideration to the Little League's request.

5.2 State Rep Penny Bacchiocchi e-mail supporting the Town's engagement in expanding the Town's farm tax abatement program – see discussion under item 8.1.

5.3 Citizen complaint and request for an ordinance requiring people to clean up after their dogs – Mr. Pinney stated that the Field Road park property currently is posted that people must clean up after their pets, and he recommended that we post the Sokol Road property the same way. Ms.

Devlin stated that the difficulty in adopting this type of ordinance is the enforcement of the ordinance and monitoring of it. Mr. Pinney said that the request for the ordinance expected that

there be some sort of fine instituted as a deterrent. A citizen mentioned that Field Road park was quite littered with dog leavings; another citizen asked if this type of litter fell under an existing ordinance against littering or garbage dumping. The question of whether or not the town has a leash law also was mentioned. Ms. Devlin said that she would take on the task of talking with neighboring towns to determine how they handle this issue and report back to the Board.

5.4 Letter requesting consideration to adopt the state statute regarding town farm tax abatement – see discussion under item 8.1 above.

5.5 Letter recommending the appointment of an individual to the Somers Housing Authority – Mr. Pinney said that he will contact the individual for a personal meeting to discuss their interest and the Authority's needs.

6. Citizen Comments - none

7. Old Business

7.1. Review status of FY 08 budget and freeze on spending – Mr. Pinney said that there was not much to present. With one month of operations remaining, he is confident that we have the funds to complete the year, and maybe a small surplus that could be put towards several items that had been postponed as a result of the freeze.

7.2. Review process for implementing FY 09 budget – Mr. Pinney said that the spending freeze would be lifted as of 7/1/08; however, some of the approval processes would be left in place, specifically, approval by the director of all expenses for their respective areas. One major change, in preparation for the installation of the new financial software, would be that an advance purchase order would be required for all purchases, from first dollar spent. He explained that, while this would be somewhat cumbersome until the new financial software was installed, after installation, the purchase order process would be entirely electronic, with the routing of each purchase order done automatically to each approver.

7.3. Other – Ms. Devlin asked for an update on the Mill. Mr. Pinney responded that he had recently met with CRCOG representatives regarding the EPA-funded program on brownfields environmental assessment. Mill was one of the properties they discussed. He left it with the CRCOG representatives that he would discuss the process with the current owner of the mill. Mr. Pinney said that the other properties they discussed were the Springfield Road and Field Road sites.

8. New Business

8.1. Consider prospects of expanding local tax abatement for farmers in town – see section 8.1 above.

8.2. Consider request for town ordinance regarding requiring owners to pick up after their dogs – see section 8.2 above.

8.3. Consider public hearing and adoption process for ordinance establishing tax abatement for Woodcrest. Mr. Pinney recommended that the selectmen consider adopting an ordinance that would allow for tax abatement for property dedicated for low- and middle-income tenants in

exchange for a contract assuring that the abated funds will be used for the benefit of the property and the tenants in the continued upkeep and support of the property. He presented a draft ordinance to the Selectmen, and said that the state has a program that would allow the town to apply for reimbursement of the abated taxes. Mr. Pinney said he would be presenting this information to the Board of Finance at their meeting on June 23. Mr. Pinney asked that the

Selectmen schedule a public hearing for this ordinance perhaps before their June 16th regular meeting. The Selectmen asked that the language be revised so that the ordinance would be limited to multi-unit low- and moderate-income housing. Mr. Pinney said that he would revisit the state statute to determine how the language could be modified. ***Ms. Devlin moved that the Selectmen call a Public Hearing to review an ordinance establishing tax abatement for owners of property dedicated for low-and middle-income tenants on Monday, June 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Auditorium; Mr. Pinney seconded, and the motion unanimously carried.***

8.4. Other - none

9. Authorization of Scheduled Payments – ***Ms. Devlin moved that the scheduled payments totaling \$171,731.33 be approved; Mr. Pinney seconded and the motion unanimously carried.***

10. Appropriations/Transfers

10.1. Tax refunds – 6 tax refunds ranging from \$3.15 to \$238.16, with an average refund of \$128.85 were approved as part of the payments approved in item 9.

11. Approval of Minutes

11.1. Regular meeting of May 19, 2008 – Ms. Devlin moved that the minutes be approved as written; Mr. Pinney seconded and the motion unanimously carried.

12. Board of Selectmen Remarks - none

13. Citizen Comments - none

14. Adjournment – Ms. Devlin moved that the meeting be adjourned at 8:34 p.m.; Mr. Pinney seconded and the motion unanimously carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcia L. Mitchell
Exec. Asst./Ops. Mgr.
Recording Secretary