

**Danby Town Board
Minutes of Budget and Regular Meeting
October 3, 2011**

Present:

Supervisor: Ric Dietrich
Councilpersons: Leslie Connors, Kathy Halton, Dan Klein, Dylan Race

Others Present:

Town Clerk Pamela Goddard
Code Office Sue Beeners
Bookkeeper Laura Shawley
Public Ronda Roaring, Frank Kruppa, Kaylee Bennett, Thomas Cornelius, Shaina Joffe, Desean Hues

Budget Review - 6:35pm

Shawley gave an overview of the Town budget in relation to the 2% tax cap. \$33,782 is the maximum amount which could be added to the tax levy, if the Town stays within the tax cap. The goal is to use this maximum amount and see where the budget stands with the tax rate. [The Fire District has its own budget and 2% tax cap.] Current assessment numbers imply that the tax rate increase would be 1.34%. This is similar to last year.

Shawley presented a preliminary budget, showing where money might be shifted so as to not cut programming. The Highway Department was shown as an example of how money from the highway reserve fund and/or Fund Balance could be used to cover rising health insurance costs. Shawley answered questions about reserve accounts and the Fund Balance. Some of the increased amount raised by the tax levy will be used to fund increased pension and salary costs. The remainder is suggested for the attorney line. Discussion of this strategy will continue over the next meetings.

There was a discussion about the food pantry and rising rent costs at the host location. Halton suggested that the Food Pantry may need a new location. This discussion included the option for using youth employment funds to help cover food pantry setup and research needs.

The Meeting of the Danby Town Board was opened at 7:03pm.

Conservation Advisory Council Files

Klein made a request, on behalf of the Conservation Advisory Council, asking whether non-sensitive files could be stored in one or more file drawers in a file cabinet located in the Town Hall meeting room. It was agreed that the CAC could store their files in the currently empty drawers of that file cabinet.

Privilege of the Floor

Roaring expressed the opinion that there may currently be a significant inequity in current pay scales. She asked for a Town Board resolution requiring paid personnel to submit monthly time logs. [There is no state requirement for employees to keep track of hours, unless they are enrolled in the state retirement system.] This information could then be used to assess whether existing salaries are appropriate for the number of hours and amount of work produced by those who are paid.

Road Use Law Update

There was a discussion regarding the timeline for reviewing and approving the proposed Road Use Law. Dietrich reported on a meeting with Delta Engineering representative Steve Mesmer. Several questions were answered at that time. A meeting with the Town Attorney is to be held on

Wednesday, October 5, during which legal questions may be addressed. The Town and Planning Board will meet on October 17, following a budget review meeting, to address questions to both Mesmer and Krogh.

Planning Board Vacancy and other Appointments

Three applications were received for the vacant Planning Board seat. Copies of the applications were distributed to the Board. These applicants are to fill the seat that was due to be reappointed in January 2012. It is expected that the approved candidate will finish the last few months of this term and then be reappointed for the subsequent seven-year term. All applicants will be contacted for interviews, beginning at 7:15pm, during the Oct. 10 TB meeting.

There was a discussion about other yearly appointments. For 2012, these include a Board of Zoning Appeals term, a seat on the Environmental Management Council, the Assessment Review Board, and the Water District. The Town Clerk will draft a notice regarding these openings for the November Danby Area News. She will also correspond with those persons currently serving, to inquire as to whether they wish to be considered for reappointment. The Board set a deadline of November 21 for all applications. Interviews will be conducted in December.

rdSGEIS Response

Halton gave an update on activities of the Danby Gas Drilling Task Force. The current response will address water use and Danby's vulnerable aquifers, based on the Aquifer study undertaken by Todd Miller. The response will also address Home Rule and social and economic community impacts. Beeners reported that the Planning Board is also expected to draft a set of comments.

Dietrich informed the Board about a countywide public comment session to be held at the State Theatre.

Highway Biomass Boiler Project Update

Dietrich gave a status update. A contract was signed with the approved changes and a meeting will be held in the next week to formally "kick off" the project. It is anticipated that the boiler may be installed in February or March of 2012. Site preparation will begin this Fall.

Youth Services

Dietrich and Klein gave an update. Financial numbers have been presented to Shawley so that Youth Services can be incorporated into budget. A large cut in County supported youth funding. A strategy has been devised whereby Danby, Enfield, Caroline, and the County will share costs (\$6,000 each) for a program manager who will serve these three towns. Danby currently has a half-time youth program manager. The proposed strategy would fund an 1/3-time program manager. There is a second strategy which could fund five youth employment service. There was discussion around how such a strategy might work and whether this proposal is the best for Danby.

Property Tax Cap Impacts

There was further Q&A between Shawley and the board. Questions included clarification as to what items in the budget fall under the tax cap. Pensions are only partially excluded. These increased 50% for the Town of Danby 2012. It is anticipated that the Town can expect pension increases through 2014. A "Pension Reserve" account will help moderate the effect of this increase.

Agricultural District Review

Roaring presented her concern about revisions to Agricultural District #1 and actions she is taking. Roaring noted that the "Right to Farm" law states that concentrated animal feeding areas (CAFO farming) or intensive animal agriculture is not appropriate for Danby, but asserted that this provision does not protect the Town. She asserts that the only way to protect Danby is to decrease the size of

Agricultural Districts within the Town. Roaring proposes that Ag District #1 (currently up for review) be modified by the removal of all land currently included in the District that is not currently receiving an Agricultural Assessment or not currently being used for agricultural purposes. She asserts that this will not impact future farming or future agricultural assessments. She expressed the view that the rural character of Danby would be better preserved through conservation easements.

Roaring proposes that “irrelevant” parcels be removed from Ag Districts in Danby and only those parcels actually receiving agricultural assessment exemptions be retained. She will make presentations to the Farm Land Protection Board and to the County Board of Reps.

Roaring asked for TB support. The Supervisor expressed his view that this concern is best addressed in the overall review and update of the Danby Comprehensive Plan. Work on the Comprehensive Plan is scheduled to begin in 2012.

Announcements of Upcoming Meetings

There was a review of the timeline for the 7pm Oct. 17 meeting with Steve Mesmer of Delta Engineering and members of the Town and Planning Boards. This will be preceded by a budget review meeting at 6:30pm.

East Miller Road Demolition Update

Demolition of the structure at 704 East Miller Road is underway and work is being done on restoration of the land. Two other demolition orders are underway, both located in West Danby.

Adjournment

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:37pm.

Pamela S Goddard, Town Clerk