

## TOWN OF GUILFORD SELECTMEN'S MEETING

August 14, 2007

1. Meeting called to order by Chairman Bill Thompson at 7:00 PM. Present were selectmen Kent Burdin, Michael Dexter, Rick Lander, and Peter Martell, and scheduled guest Jim Wierman. Also in attendance was a large contingent of about 50 taxpayers to ask questions about the recent revaluation.

2. Motion made by Burdin, seconded by Dexter, to approve minutes of previous meeting. Unanimous.

3. Balance sheets distributed. No action taken.

Jim Wierman was introduced as he had requested being put on the agenda. He stated that he had five questions that he felt were relevant to everyone and began to go through his list. First he asked why residents could not have access to the sand pile all hours of the winter. Manager explained that the gate needed to be locked after hours and the unattended sand pile presented a sizeable liability exposure. It was agreed to consider the feasibility of a separate, accessible area for this purpose, outside the gate. Question two sought a breakdown of costs for using the transfer station at Dexter/ Corinna and manager explained the tipping fees and eighteen percent of operations costs were a contracted figure for the year. The third inquiry was about the formula used by the assessor to determine cost per square foot of buildings and manager gave a brief overview of various factors while explaining that a guide sheet with the codes would be supplied to those who wanted to look into it. The fourth question was simply a comment; he felt the assessor hired by the town was very rude. His fifth question was simply, how do we, as a town, stop this guy? Manager explained that the board would review the work-product and the contract and make a determination on final compensation.

The question came up about delaying the due date and giving people more time to pay these unanticipated increases. Manager stated that the board had considered this but was advised by

counsel that statutes prevented any change in due date, interest rate, or start of interest date once taxes had been committed. He further explained that assessors, in this instance, the selectmen, became state agents performing a state function in their elected capacity. Legislature has sworn to never delegate the authority to tax; it has become a state prescribed process at this point. No outside committee could be appointed to review and determine new tax values, even if so voted in a town meeting. The assessors cannot abdicate their duties and no committee may usurp them. The course of action remaining is to follow the process, apply for abatements where believed to be needed, lacking satisfaction there, appeal to the county commissioners and otherwise continue to follow the laws of the state.

Numerous comments from the gathering followed. Robert Shaffer asked if a committee could be formed to put this on hold and Chairman Thompson referred to the legal advice the manager had just explained; no it could not. He further stated that the selectmen have never refused to visit and review a home or property when asked to do so.

Most of the comments could be summed up as; he was extremely rude, he never looked at my property even though he was there, he never came to visit the property, he never returned my calls, he did not keep the appointment or call to cancel it, he measured wrong, he imagined buildings that do not exist. The manager stated that many had already had appointments following the receipt of their bills and some of those meetings would result in changes. Otherwise, an abatement request must be filled out and filed and help is available to complete these. Burdin added that he had heard no complaints until after the bills went out; otherwise they would have become involved earlier. Mr. Thompson said he would ask for a motion, later on the agenda, to hold an assessors meeting on August 21st at 7:00 PM and the public is invited. Donald Ebbeling asked if the assessor had to go by state laws and was answered in the affirmative. James French stated that errors notwithstanding, hopefully errors that would be addressed, the fact is, many, many homes have been undervalued for years and that all in all, perhaps with some adjustments, the overall assessment had all properties on a more even plane. Andy Lovell agreed but added we have gone from way too low to too high. Mr. Thompson ended this session and moved on in the agenda.

4. Manager read a letter from Piscataquis County Silo and Water Conservation District about a Wetlands Workshop for landowners and others with interest to be held on August 21st at the USDA office in Dover-Foxcroft.

5. A letter from Paul Stearns informed that two letters of intent had been filed by SAD#4 with the state regarding the study of a new school administrative unit. Burdin moved to appoint Brad Deane as the citizen-at-large to the study committee, was seconded by Dexter and Mr. Deane

was unanimously accepted.

6. A letter from the law firm of Brann and Isaacson offering their services for guidance in school consolidation was read. No action taken.

7. A report on the Piscataquis River Festival was given by the manager. The weather was better than predicted, the parade was great if a bit loud, the new events such as chili cook-off, cotton candy stand and scavenger hunt were successful, and the duck race netted \$1600.00 in profit which was turned over to the town by its sponsor.

8. Lander made a motion, seconded by Martell, to table the discussion on grants for non-profits until the next meeting. Unanimous.

9. Manager outlined sidewalk and road repair plans: the sidewalk along Water Street from Clark's Restaurant to the Shell station would be rebuilt with granite curbing and an asphalt surface; the road construction project on Guilford Center Road would be extremely expensive and only a section could be completed this year due to increased costs of asphalt. Manager also explained that an inquiry was being made of MDOT for assistance in repairing some of the damages caused by truck traffic during the reconstruction of Route 15.

10. A motion made by Burdin and seconded by Lander to hold an assessor's meeting on August 21st at 7:00 PM at the town office passed unanimously.

11. Under other business, Martell described the success of the newly formed Pirate Rec committee including a \$700.00 fund raiser conducted by the kids to purchase equipment. Dexter commented that Joe Gallant did another excellent job as recreation director with the Summer Program as well. Manager noted that the Housing Assistance grant had been encumbered, thereby locking up funds in the amount of \$250,000.00 for home improvements in Guilford, and that the administrator had received 25 applications to start with. On a motion from Burdin with a second from Dexter, manager was directed to verify with legal counsel the validity or lack thereof of the petition presented.

12. Burdin moved the meeting be adjourned. After a second by Dexter, the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 9:21 PM.