

February 8, 2017
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Souhegan Cooperative High School Theater
Boston Post Road, Amherst

Chairman Brew called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and declared a recess for the Annual Town Meeting Deliberative Session.

Chairman Brew declared the recess over and the meeting resumed at 10:00 PM. He asked if the Board was interested in making changes to vote previously taken on warrant article #22 in light of the \$200,000 amendment to increase the proposed FY 18 operating budget which passed this evening.

Mr. Grella stated he had no problem with the amendment nor did Vice Chairman Panasiti, although both were not happy that the overall increase to the budget was now close to 5%. Mr. Lyon indicated he was disappointed with the amendment also because of the increase in the budget, noting that the Chairman could not have done more to dissuade the meeting from supporting the amendment.

Mr. Jensen was not pleased at all emphasizing the significant effort the Board put into the budget process and how we struggled to not lose sight of the taxpayer's ability to pay. He felt their effort was for naught.

Mr. Grella moved to support article #22 as amended. Second by Vice Chair Panasiti. The motion passed 4-0-1. Mr. Jensen abstained and offered the following:

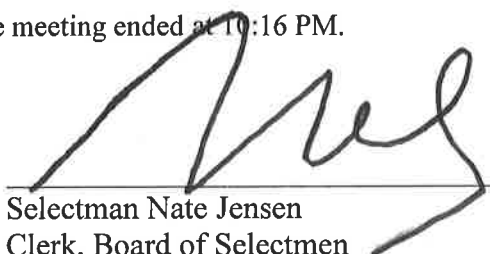
After careful deliberation over a number of months, the Board of Selectmen prepared a fiscally prudent and strategically sound operational budget for the town that requested a 2.27% increase for the next fiscal year (a dollar request of \$292,000). At the Deliberative Session on February 8th, over the strong objection of the Selectmen, a slight majority of voters in attendance at the meeting added another \$200,000 to the bottom line of the budget for inclusion in the road building budget line of the Department of Public Works. This change will increase said line from \$900,000 to \$1,100,000 and will make the requested increase for the operational budget \$492,000.

During the budget process, the Selectmen properly decided to defer the road construction budget line increase for one year as the town expends the final \$2M of spending authority under the \$15M road bond. This deferred the tax impact of the increase to the following year when the town's payments on interest and principal on the bond will start to decrease and thus the increase would have less, or more likely no impact on the tax rate. By adding this \$200,000 to the bottom line of this year's operational budget in Warrant Article 22, the year-over-year increase to the operational budget is now almost 4.5%. In my view, in this economy, this is an indefensible budget increase request and I therefore cannot endorse the budget as a selectmen.

The Board of Selectmen continue to prioritize road building in the town. Under the original budget, DPW had \$2,900,000 of road work scheduled for the next fiscal year. The additional \$200,000 of road work that this budget increase represents could have and should have been delayed one year to reduce the burden on taxpayers.

Mr. Lyon moved to adjourn the meeting. Second by Mr. Grella. Vote was unanimous 5-0.

The meeting ended at 10:16 PM.


Selectman Nate Jensen
Clerk, Board of Selectmen


Date