

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
March 18, 2013 - Monday**

Present: Edmund Harrington, Chairman
Kenneth DiFazio, Vice Chairman
Arthur Mathews, Councilor
Frank Burke, Councilor
Michael Smart, Councilor

Also Present: Jeff Bina, Director, DPW

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Harrington called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM. He invited Jeff Bina, DPW Director, to the table for discussion of the following:

Department of Public Works Staff Reductions and Privatization of Town Services

Chairman Harrington noted that in 1973 the DPW staff numbered 195-it currently stands at 86; less than half of what it was forty years ago. He asked the Director what services are currently outsourced. Mr. Bina responded that trash collection is outsourced, and that the transfer station/incinerator is no longer operational. He noted that with increased technology, the staff can do more with less manpower, but that repairs take longer with less staff. Councilor Harrington asked if there has been any elimination of services. Mr. Bina responded that services are still performed; they just are not as timely. There was a discussion of field maintenance. Councilor Harrington asked if the Mr. Bina agreed with the Athletic Boosters regarding the playing field conditions. Mr. Bina agreed that surfaces are compacted and without equipment or manpower, they are not able to aerate or slice seed. Councilor Harrington questioned the division of maintenance for fields between DPW and schools. Mr. Bina responded that it was a plan that occurred under the former administration and has been coordinated with Tom Slattery of the School Department and it has gone fairly well. Each department has a specific list of fields it maintains and the conditions across the board are comparable. They are not optimum conditions, but all fields are in similar conditions and most of the fields are playable. There are some hazards, and expectations differ and the fields are in use for longer periods. Councilor Harrington cited concerns from parents of athletes from other towns. Mr. Bina responded that he has not been made aware of any complaints of safety hazards. He noted it's difficult to take fields out of service. Councilor Harrington believes that if a revenue stream could be located to bring them to optimal condition, what the cost would be. Mr. Bina will put together a list with accompanying costs.

Councilor Harrington noted the recently released study regarding payment management. He asked if the Director agreed with the study. Mr. Bina responded yes. Councilor Harrington asked Mr. Bina to develop a list of what it will cost to maintain the streets at

the current condition. Mr. Bina responded with only use of Chapter 90 funding, the roads will continue to deteriorate. To bring them all up to acceptable level at one time would be a \$35 million cost. Councilor Harrington asked what it would cost to improve the street conditions by 10%. He also asked what amount would be required to bring sidewalks up to fair or acceptable levels. He requested Mr. Bina to compile a list and bring it forward to the committee.

At the request of Councilor Smart, there was a brief discussion of the equipment taken out of service during the recent storm. Mr. Bina responded that during the last two high intensity storms, it was difficult to keep up with snow removal to the expectations of the public with equipment that was taken out of service for breakdowns. Councilor Smart asked about the split for outside contractors plowing, sanding and spreading. Mr. Bina responded that the town did more of its own work in the past. It subcontracts 60-70% of plowing and uses its own workers for spreading salt and sand.

There was a discussion of equipment. Councilor Mathews noted it is alarming to see that a total of 16 vehicles were out of service in the last two storms, and he is shocked at the age of the vehicles in service. Councilor Harrington asked the Mr. Bina to compile an equipment repair and replacement list. Director Bina noted the current list is a phased in replacement schedule. Councilor Harrington responded that the list should be more aggressive since they are behind on replacements. He asked Mr. Bina to compile a list to include an annual cost basis. Councilor Bina noted the replacement schedule is based on the life expectancy on the CIP. Councilor Harrington asked him to come up with a list for several years- a replacement schedule if there were a revenue stream in the budget. He also noted that with reduced manpower and aging equipment, the department has done an admirable job with the last two storms and he congratulated the Director. Mr. Bina noted he will pass it along to his staff.

Councilor Mathews noted that with the reduction in the number of personnel, the summer help program has taken a hit and that needs to be taken into consideration. He asked if any consideration has been given to subbing out the maintenance of the fields and have DPW staff focus on pothole work. Councilor Mathews questioned if it would be more efficient and possibly be a cost savings. Mr. Bina responded that some work is subcontracted such as catch basin cleaning, and sidewalk repair. There is an efficiency of scale when doing many patches. As a fields and grounds maintenance program is developed, they can look at that. Councilor Harrington agreed; analysis would have to take into consideration the long-term costs of benefits for employees; salary is not the only consideration.

Councilor Harrington asked if there are other concerns or critical needs in the department. Mr. Bina responded that the conditions of the municipal buildings are a concern. He does not want to get to the point where they are addressing emergencies. Councilor Harrington asked that priorities be identified; take stock and determine what it would take to keep them.

Councilor Harrington summarized that they have identified areas within town budgets including fire, police, schools and now DPW and he is astounded by the amount it will take to meet the net school spending deficit. It all needs to be brought to the public's attention. These are all the result of conditions that have occurred over a number of years. There are restrictions under Proposition 2 ½ and there is a need to make an overall assessment of the financial condition of the town.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:11PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Burke.

UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Chairman Ed Harrington
Public Works Committee