

**Town Minutes March 4, 1996**

The Meeting was called to order at 8:10, immediately following the School Annual Meeting.

***Article 1: To act upon the reports of the Town officers.***

The question was moved by Philip Coleman, and seconded. There was no discussion. The question was called by P.

Coleman and was seconded. The question passed on a voice vote.

***Article 2: Will the Town vote the sum of \$175,507 to pay General Fund and Road expenses for the ensuing year, and pay outstanding orders or obligations of the Town, with interest, the tax rate on the 1996 Grand List to be determined by the Selectmen, divided as follows:***

<b><i>Roads, including winter work</i></b>	<b><i>\$107,550.00</i></b>
<b><i>General Fund Costs</i></b>	<b><i>\$67,957.00</i></b>

The question was moved by Alison Joseph, and seconded.

Alison Joseph asked why there was an increase in the Planning Commission budget, and specifically why there was an change in the Commission's status from voluntary to paid. She asked as well what this might mean for the other commissions, boards and groups (like the Fire Department) in Town. She noted that she had reviewed the payment of planning commissioners and found that no other boards in the county were paid except the Middlebury.

Mr. Ford said that the purpose for the increase in the budget, as proposed by the Planning Commission, was to be able to pay a stipend of \$20 per commissioner per meeting attended. No payment was to be made for meeting not attended. He noted that the work of the commissioners extends beyond the actual time spent at the meetings, and that the work load has increased over time—especially this year with the revision of the Town Plan.

Mr. Collitt, a member of the Planning Commission, noted that several of the commissioners did not like the idea of the stipend, but some thought that it would make the members obligated to attend meetings if they were paid.

Mr. King, another Planning Commission member, said that the commission is now meeting once a month, compared with twice a month as it used to, so the work load per meeting has increased.

Carol Ford said that she feels that it is appropriate to pay the Planning Commission for attending meetings since board members who attend give up family time. She said that a per-meeting stipend is a small price to pay to have willing participants in Town government, and the small payment doesn't cover half what it really costs.

Kim Kimler said that to start paying the Planning commission would set a dangerous precedent which might lead to a policy of paying all volunteers. He said that the Town should work with volunteers.

Peter Crone said that he used to be a member of the Planning Commission and he

felt it is an honor to serve. To be paid he would have considered an insult. He said that payment would decrease the passion for the responsibilities of the position.

Joyce DiCianna (retiring School Board member) said that she and others spend much time in their elected or appointed positions, and every one should be paid. Furthermore, she said that it is unfair that the School Board is not paid, while the Selectmen are. She said that all should be paid, or none should.

Tim Hanson, Clerk and Fire Chief, said that the prospect of paying the Fire Department (and nascent First Response) volunteers is scary, considering how many hours these members of the community donate to the Town. He said that the Fire Department would expend nearly all of its budget if it had to pay for the time the membership gave the Town.

Warren King (Planning Commissioner) said that any decision by the Town to pay a stipend to the Planning Commission would be offset by proposed increases in zoning permit fees. In other words, those who used the services of the Planning commission would be paying for them through fees. Jean Todd, a Planning Commissioner, said that the work of the Planning Commission also includes work as the Zoning Board of Adjustment, which hears appeals to the zoning ordinance.

In response to a question regarding how the request for stipends was included in the budget, Mr. Ford said that the Selectmen requested a budget from the Planning Commission, which they received, and which included the stipend request.

David Disque made a motion to decrease the budget by \$2,700, a total derived by adding the stipend portion of the Planning Commission budget and the Selectmens' stipend. Kim Kimler seconded the motion.

Susan Collitt asked why the Selectmens' pay was to be removed. She said it was not reasonable to do this since they have been paid so long. Several other Townspeople said that they did not believe that the Selectmens' stipend should be removed. Joyce DiCianna said that there needs to be a policy decision made that treats everyone fairly, but that for now the status quo should be maintained pending the outcome of the Towns discussion. The issue is one of equity.

Ross Elliott said that he felt that the Boards should be paid for their many hours. Joyce Henderson said that it is difficult to get Planning Commissioners to meet and the money might serve as an incentive. Fran McIntosh said that there needs to be a Town-wide policy on this reimbursement issue.

Lauren Cox said that the budgets are put together by the Boards year by year, and are not necessarily driven by policy.

There followed a long discussion about how to reduce the budget by a specific amount targeted at the Planning Commissioners' stipend. The point was answered that there is no way to mandate that the spending be reduced on a specific line but that the Selectmen were likely to follow the sense of the meeting.

Kim Kimler called the question, and was seconded. The Moderator explained that this was a vote to end debate. The motion was defeated on a voice vote.

Mr. Seligman moved that the budget be reduced by \$990 (the exact amount appropriated in the budget to pay the stipend to the Planning Commission), and was seconded.

Diane Dunsmore called the question on the motion, and was seconded. The motion to amend was passed.

Richard Collitt asked what was happening with the Middlebury College's gift-in-kind funds. The Clerk said that there is an accounting in the Town Report as to how funds have been spent and the Town expects the funds to be spent for the remainder of the year. There have been meetings with the College and the Town to outline ways to best use these funds, including having the College take care of the Town's recycling, having the College do work on Town or School properties; and having the College work on the Fire Department's equipment (making a new mini-pumper, for example). The funds were not spent in full over the

last few years—there is an accumulation of more than \$30,000 that needs to be reduced this year on items that either are in the budget or would have been in the budget soon.

Joyce Henderson asked how this work is accounted for. Mr. Ford said that the Town has an "account" with the College where they keep track of all the materials and time they provide. This accounting will be published in the Town report when the work is done.

After this discussion the question was called by Phil Coleman, and seconded. The question, as amended, was voted in the affirmative by voice vote.

***Article 3: Will the Town have current property and personal taxes collected by the Treasurer, taxes due to be paid November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1996?***

A. Burrige called the question, and was seconded.

Kim Kimler called the question, which was voted in the affirmative without discussion.

***Article 4: Will the Town vote the sum of \$12,500 to the Ripton Fire Department to help pay the expenses for the year?***

Carol Ford moved the question, and was seconded.

Chief Tim Hanson reviewed the plans for 1996. He noted that the Addison County Sheriff was not able to obtain a four-wheel drive truck for the Department as had been promised, but the Department had purchased one instead, and the plan was to have the College fix it up and turn it into the mini-pumper that the Department had long needed. The budget has been decreased because of this—there will be no need to borrow funds to get this work done since it will come out of the gift in kind funds.

to be able to draw water off the Middlebury River.

Nearly 12 Ripton residents are taking a first response class, so that some time later this year there should be a certified first response unit in Town. The Middlebury Ambulance Association has been very helpful in providing instructors for this class. There is some money in the budget for First Response expenses. The First Responders will be voted members of the Fire Department and will be insured by the Fire Department's liability insurance.

One dry hydrant has been installed on Robbins Crossroad. The hope is to install another one this year, in the center of town,

After this discussion, the question was called by Phil Coleman, and seconded, and voted in the affirmative.

*Article 5: Any other business proper to come before this meeting.*

A question was raised about payment to Board members and other participants in Town government. The Selectmen said that they would study the issue and report back to the Town.

David Disque asked how the amount the Town paid Middlebury Union High School was determined. It was explained that this amount was determined by how many students the Town sent on a pro-rata basis.

Rosalyn Chirnoff spoke for the social service agencies that have requested funds from the Town, which will be voted by paper ballot tomorrow. She said that there will be less money for the poor and working poor over the next few years, even though the amount they now get is only 50% of the basic needs for a family.

After this discussion, Mr. Burrige called moved the meeting adjourn, was seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.