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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
March 21, 2012**

Present: Norman M. Needleman, First Selectman
Stacia R. Libby, Selectman
Joel B. Marzi, Selectman

Norman Needleman called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m., it was held at Essex Meadows.

Approval of Agenda:

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to approve the Agenda. Joel Marzi seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes:

The March 7th Regular Meeting and the Budget Workshop minutes were tabled until the next Board of Selectmen meeting for approval.

Communications and Correspondence:

Philip Beckman reported on the upcoming Memorial Day Parade, he stated that anyone who wants to participate should contact the Selectman's Office.

Mr. Needleman presented the new handout Citizen's Guide that Kelly Sterner, Director of Finance, created. The purpose of this guide is to communicate the budget process, facts, and figures to everyone.

Public Announcements:

From the audience a resident asked if Essex Village has a historic district or an architectural review process that addresses construction or reconstruction in the village. Mr. Needleman answered no, there isn't at this time.

He asked if there is a reason for not having a review process at this time. Mr. Marzi stated that there was a review board for down town Essex. What the historic district attempted was not favored by the public.

Mr. Needleman stated that Essex prides itself on not wanting a lot of rules and regulations, and the sentiment is that people don't like being told what to do.

Mr. Needleman reported that the Board of Education budget has a 1.7% increase over last year; however, this includes all day kindergarten.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

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NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution – Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to approve a Resolution authorizing Norman Needleman as signatory. Joel Marzi seconded the motion, it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Town of Essex Retirement Plan – Credited Service

Mr. Needleman requested a vote of confidence from the other Selectmen to proceed on changing some of the language of the Town of Essex Retirement plan. Currently the language reads that when a part time permanent employee works a minimum of 1,000 hours a year they can qualify for the pension plan. Mr. Needleman is proposing to change the wording, so that part time employees would not qualify.

Mr. Needleman proposed approaching the Retirement Committee to request they change the wording in the current retirement plan but to do so in a way that is fair to current employees and change the rule going forward for new employees. Mr. Needleman stated that granting a pension to part time employees who work 20 hours a week is not appropriate.

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to have the Selectman proceed with looking into changing the wording in the Essex Retirement plan. Norman Needleman seconded the motion, it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

Mr. Needleman also discussed going from a defined benefit to a defined contribution plan and going from a pension plan to a 401k. This change would have to go to a town meeting for approval. Mr. Needleman stated a vote of confidence was received from all three selectmen to proceed with this inquiry.

Community Transformation Grant

Lisa Fasulo, Director of Health, reported that on September 27, 2011 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced more than \$103 million in Community Transformation Grant funding to states and communities across the country to fight chronic disease. The Connecticut Department of Public Health received \$500,000 in funds to support community prevention efforts. Each participating Health Department or Health District in the region will receive per capita funding. Essex Health Department will receive \$2,870. The Essex Health Department would like to participate in this grant funded opportunity and asks the Board of Selectmen for their support.

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to accept the amount of \$2,870 from the Chatham Health District to the Essex Health Department. The amount is from grant funding from the Center of Disease Control through the lead fiduciary agent the Chatham Health District. Joel Marzi seconded the motion. All in favor.

Sinking Fund Request – Essex Tree Committee

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to recommend to the Board of Finance to appropriate a sum not to exceed \$3,050.00 for the purpose of additional plantings. Said sum to be taken from the Essex Tree Committee Sinking Fund. Stacia Libby seconded the motion. All in favor.

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Appointments and Resignations, Boards and Commissions

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to appoint Walter Schieferdecker as a Member to the Connecticut River Gateway Commission. Stacia Libby seconded the motion. All in favor.

Set Town Meeting:

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to set a Special Town Meeting on Monday, April 9th 2012 at 7.00 p.m. Joel Marzi seconded the motion, it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

2012 – 2013 Budget Review and Vote

Norman Needleman reported that we have had four budget workshops; there is currently a 3.35% increase in the Selectmen's budget.

Mr. Needleman stated that due to the bad economy, several of the sinking funds were cut. This year the Selectmen are reinstating some of these funds back into the budget. There is also a 2% salary increase for the non-union employees, the three Selectmen, and Treasurer decided to take no increase. This budget includes the statutorily actuarial numbers that need to be placed into the pension plan. Mr. Needleman stated there had been no other changes since the last budget workshop.

Motion was made by Stacia Libby to recommend to the Board of Finance a Board of Selectmen's Budget for 2012 – 2013 in the amount of \$6,854.304 at an increase of 3.35%. Joel Marzi seconded the motion. All in favor.

Mr. Marzi stated there are four major drivers for this year's increase in the budget and twelve areas of decrease. The major drivers are increases in the fringe benefits, the treasurer's office, park and recreation, and the highway department. Mr. Marzi stated he does not like the 3.35% increase. The reinstatement of the capital and sinking funds, there will not have to be an increase next year and he expects park and recreation will decrease.

Mr. Needleman stated the one sinking fund that has been restored only part of the way is the Fire Department. He also reported the Fire Department gave the Selectmen a 10 year plan. The amount of \$1.5 million is needed in order to replace equipment over the next 10 years. Not necessarily new equipment, just replacements.

Mr. Needleman stated that last year the \$150,000 Fire Department Sinking Fund request was cut back to \$75,000 and has been flat for the last several years. This year the Selectmen put it up to \$125,000 and they would like to go back to the \$150,000 next year.

Mr. Needleman stated to do the same thing and provide the same services year after year, costs more money each year. They are trying to improve efficiency and communication. Mr. Needleman stated that they are elected and want to do the best jobs that they can. He then thanked the Board of Finance, Director of Finance, and Administrative Assistant for their hard work this year on the budget.

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Public Comment:

From the audience, a resident inquired how many years of service must a town employee work before they can retire with full benefits. Mr. Needleman stated the police pension plan is different than the town plan. Police can retire at any age with full benefits after 20 years of service. The town retirement plan multiplier is 1.4% and you are vested in the plan after 5 years, you must reach age 65 to get full benefits. There are no cost of living increases, nor do we provide lifetime medical for retirees. You can retire earlier, but at a significant reduction.

A resident inquired whether the total assessments of taxable properties in Essex have gone up or down. Mr. Needleman stated that there is a revaluation coming up, it will affect your 2014 taxes and the grand list has gone up.

There was discussion regarding the proposed new development on Ingham Hill Road. Mr. Needleman stated that the Selectmen have no input on that proposal because it is a Zoning and Inland Wetlands issue. Mr. Needleman stated that he was aware of someone coming in to discuss obtaining small parcels, and there is nothing they can do to stop them from getting approvals. Mr. Needleman stated he believed they are trying to optimize the value of the land so they can enter in preservation for public land with the State of Connecticut to acquire as open space. They would like in excess of 20 million but the state came up with 9 million. There is a plan being presented for a subdivision at the end of Ingham Hill with no benefit to the Town of Essex. Mr. Needleman stated if anything changes he will contact them.

There was discussion on the traffic that goes over Bokum Road. There was discussion on placing a "No Thru Trucks" sign. Big trucks should not be going through this road. Mr. Needleman stated that he would have Trooper Kerry Taylor and Director of Public Works, Dave Caroline take a look at this road for placing additional signage. There was mention that this road was a colonial cow path.

Lois Ely reminded everyone that April 24th is the Republican primary; polls will be open from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

SELECTMEN GENERAL DISCUSSION:

Mr. Needleman reported on the e-mail newsletter that is being sent out periodically. To register log onto the website at www.essexct.gov.

Motion was made by Norman Needleman to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. Joel Marzi seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria P. Lucarelli