

Dover Warrant Committee Open Hearing on the Warrant

March 22, 2010

Members in attendance: David Stapleton, Chair; James Kinder, Vice Chair; Peter Smith, Secretary; Kate Bush; James Dawley; Kathy Hall; David Melville; Andrew Waugh; Jane Wemyss

Mr. Stapleton called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

Mr. Stapleton opened the meeting by discussing the Warrant Committee's objectives for the fiscal 2011 budget: that no Proposition 2½ override be necessary, and that the various departments budget for level services. That these objectives were both met was due to the hard work of the Towns departments, boards, and committees.

Articles 1-3: The articles were read over without comment.

Article 4: Peter Smith (Warrant Committee) presented the components of the budget, the details of the operating budget (Article 4), projected revenue, and the anticipated use of Free Cash to close the gap. Asked why the Minuteman School budget is up, Ford Spaulding responded that Dover will go from one student enrolled this year to two next year.

Robyn Hunter (Co-Chair, Regional School Committee) presented an overview of the Region's contribution to the operating budget, and how operating costs and debt service are apportioned to the towns. Gerald Clarke noted the increasing tax burden emanating from the schools, citing in particular the change since 1990. Ms. Hunter drew attention to the disproportionate impact of State mandates, especially in the area of Special Education. Asked for specifics, Valerie Spriggs (Superintendent of Schools) declined to cite numbers off the top of her head, but offered to supply them to any who requested them through normal channels.

Article 5: Peter Mitchell (Capital Budget Committee Chair) outlined the Capital Budget. Asked as to the funding mechanism(s) to be used, he said that this was up to the Selectmen.

Articles 6-10: The articles were read over without comment.

Article 11: David Ramsay (Town Administrator) presented the case for renovating the dispatch area at the Protective Agencies building. He noted that the workspace dates to 1978, before the introduction of computers. The traffic flow is poor, and there is no ability of the dispatch officers to conduct private conversations. The new layout would provide a workspace geared to current practice and equipment, would have a second position, and would allow the officers to close off their area when necessary. However, the idea is to create a boundary, not a barrier. The plan would also improve the environmental characteristics by replacing the windows with energy-efficient glass and make the high windows opening, as today the sun overheats the area spring and fall.

Article 12: Mike Francis (Trustees of Reservations) presented the bylaw changes to permit a new parking lot for Noanet Woodlands on Powissett St. The Parks and Recreation Department has long wished that the Trustees establish another parking area other than that at Caryl Park. Also, the current practice of parking on the shoulder of Powissett St is dangerous. The proposed

bylaw change would make recreational parking lot sizes in residential areas a function of the areas' acreage. Asked about the specifics of Noanet's acreage, Mr. Francis said that it would allow a 25-space lot, and that it was the Trustees' hope that it be a single lot.

Article 13: Peter Smith (Warrant Committee) introduced Article 13, which would amend the bylaws to permit a smaller quorum at Town Meeting. He noted that two years ago the start was delayed 25 minutes until a quorum was reached. Barrie Clough, Town Clerk, noted that Dover's current quorum of 175 is the fourth highest in the state. Most towns of similar size have a quorum of 100, and some, like Concord have no quorum requirement. Ken King suggested that it might be better to wait for a good-sized quorum so that a representative number of citizens are present. Mr. Clough responded that the other problem is that people show up for just those articles that are of interest to them and then leave, which can shut down the Meeting until a quorum is re-raised. Gerald Clarke raised the possibility of advocates for or against an article could more easily use a motion to reconsider as a way of reversing a vote if many people leave but a quorum is still present.

Articles 14-16: The articles were read over without comment.

Article 17: Mark Sarro (Planning Board Chair), explained the article, which is a major cleanup of the Planning portions of the bylaws. He noted that the existing text is very choppy and disorganized, having been amended 15 times since written. The relevant texts – original, replacement, and markup – are available on the Town website. There will be a public hearing on April 6.

Article 18: Bonny Akins (Board of Assessors Chair), spoke on the article, which would replace "Assistant Assessor" in the bylaws with "Town Assessor". She noted that the new title would more accurately reflect the position's role along side the Town Accountant and Treasurer.

Article 19: The article was read over without comment.

Article 20: Jody Shue (petition sponsor) spoke in favor of the article, which would build a sidewalk along the south side of Springdale Ave. from Hawthorne Lane to Main St. She noted that the proposal meets all the criteria in the Planning Board's guidelines: it would connect to the existing network of sidewalks, connects to other walking trails and off-road areas, and is in an area of high traffic volume. Approximately 60 homes abut the area (Springdale, Main, Maple, Southfield, and Old Colony), housing some 40 elementary school age children. Every day there are many walkers, runners, and bikers traversing the proposed route and the "loop" around Main, Haven, and Church Streets.

Several questioned whether this would be a sidewalk or a bike path; Ms. Shue retracted earlier references to bicycles. Jack Walsh, Chair of the Finance Committee on Roads, stated that it was the opinion of his Committee that the proper planning process had not been followed. Further, he noted that the cost estimate of \$133,000 does not include any labor cost, assuming that the construction work would be performed by Highway Department workers. However, this would displace 120 man-days of other road work and is not acceptable. Contracting the work out would likely increase the total project cost by up to \$100,000. Karen McKoy noted that no long-term maintenance costs are presented. She stated that rather than having groups of neighbors propose sidewalks via Town Meeting articles, it would be better to work from an approved master plan. Justine Kent-Uritam raised the problem of the wetlands to be traversed by the sidewalk and noted that the Conservation Commission has not been involved in the planning.

Article 21: Chip Spaulding (petition sponsor) spoke in favor of the article, which would build a sidewalk along the south side of Dedham St. from Burnham Rd. to Caryl Park. She noted that it both connects naturally to the existing sidewalk network, and provides a safe route for children to both the playing fields and the Chickering School campus. Randy Robinson noted that there is a sidewalk on the other side of the street, and if there is a safety issue, maybe a raised crosswalk at Burnham or Hutton Rd would suffice.

Article 22: Andy Waugh (Warrant Committee) introduced the article, which would turn over control of 5 Whiting Rd from Park & Rec to the Selectmen. Asked if there was any plan for use of the buildings, Carol Lisbon of the Board of Selectmen said no, but that it was currently rented out to Dover Automotive, which covers all the operating cost.

Article 23: Nancy Simms (Parks and Recreation Commission) presented their case for expansion of the playing fields at Caryl Park, including two artificial turf fields. The Commission investigated other sites but found none that would work. The current fields are used three to four times more than is healthy for a grass field. There are no girl's softball fields. The reconfiguration would expand the fields area in Caryl Park from 12 to 17 acres out of a total of 83. The Commission has obtained legal advice that playing fields are within the scope of George Chickering's 1917 bequest of the land for use as a public park. She noted that turf fields were chosen because they can withstand much more use than grass. Park & Rec is waiting to hear from the Water Commissioners, and is meeting shortly with the Board of Health. Finally, she stated that the area in question is zoned Open Space, not Residential as some had reported. All were encouraged to attend the public hearing on the matter the following night, or to view the materials on-line at www.doverrec.com/carylpark .

Priscilla Jones (Historical Commission) asked if any trees near Caryl House would be taken down, Ms. Simms said no. Karl Johnson (abutter) asked if a traffic study had been completed. Ms Simms said that it would be presented at the public hearing, and the Chief of Police had voiced no objections. Harvey George (Board of Health) stated that his board does not support the project. The turf material is hydrocarbon-based and has a finite life (Dr. George suggested as little as 6-8 years; Ms. Simms, citing manufacturer's warrantee, countered with 10-12), that few recycling centers will accept end-of-life material, and that the Town could incur a disposal cost as high as a million dollars, if it could find a disposal site at all. Further, he worried about what would leach out of the material during its life (and post-life, if disposal is not possible). Barbara Roth-Schechter (Board of Health) enumerated studies pointing to increased risk of injury to athletes on turf versus grass. The Warrant Committee asked that the Board make it's research (with links to cited studies) available on the Town website. Sharon Grant (Capital Budget Committee) questioned whether turf upkeep had been considered; if impervious how it would affect runoff; if not impervious, what might leach out of it; and if the needs study took into account the decline in elementary school age and below children. Kathleen Mitchell (Citizens for Public Parks) stated that her group had retained an environmental law firm to review the matter, and had forwarded this day a letter to several Town boards. They are concerned with a lack of answers to various environmental and financial questions. Financially they worry that the fields would displace other worthy projects, and that should the turn not last as long as the bond financing it, the Town could face spiraling costs. They also believe that dedicating park land to youth sports fields violates George Chickering's gift "for all to enjoy". Ann Nolan (field hockey coach) stated the need for turf fields for field hockey, as all other teams play on turf, and it being a ball-on-the-ground sport, Dover girls are at a competitive disadvantage when they play elsewhere. Gerald Clarke

worried that this project's – and other aspects of the budget – broader costs are not fully revealed due to each department's narrow focus. He also pointed out that the Town's age demographics have shifted significantly over this decade, with fewer school-age children and more seniors. Susan Mosher (abutter) drew attention to the proposal's inclusion of artificial lighting. Liz Marson-Hughes (abutter) asked if the fields would be fenced and locked when not in use. Ms. Simms said there were no such plans. Justine Kent-Uritam noted that up to half of the children participating in youth sports are from Sherborn, and asked if Sherborn is contributing to the cost of the project. Ms. Simms said that at this time, the Town of Sherborn has not offered any funds. Increases in participation fees will provide some funds from Sherborn participants. Also, Park & Rec is hoping to begin gathering contributions toward the eventual replacement of the turf.

Article 24: Nate Van Duzer (Regional Schools Committee) announced “good news and bad news.” The good news was that there would be no money needed this fiscal year to repair the wastewater system at the Regional Schools. The bad news was that the system will require major repairs due to design deficiencies, and that request will be in the fiscal 2012 budget.

Article 25: The article was read over without comment.

Article 26: David Stapleton (Warrant Committee) introduced the article, which would fund a structural assessment of Caryl House. Priscilla Jones (Historical Commission) asked if the same consultant that conducted the assessment would also perform any repairs. David Ramsay (Town Administrator) explained that any work would be bid out like any other project. He also assured her that the Historical Commission would be kept informed of all findings and proposals.

Article 27: Kathy Hall (Warrant Committee) explained the article, which authorizes funding the GASB 45 OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) fund.

Article 28: Jim Dawley (Warrant Committee) introduced the article, which would fund the taking of a small parcel of land adjacent to the Willow St bridge in order to allow a major repair. The land taking will cost the Town \$160; the bridge repairs will be carried out and funded by the State.

Articles 29-36: The articles were read over without comment.

*Mr. Melville moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Dawley;
the motion was agreed by consensus at 9:50 pm
the next meeting will be March 24 at 6:30 pm*

Respectfully submitted,
Peter Smith, Secretary

approved March 31, 2010