

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
TOWN OF JEFFERSON  
February 23, 2009**

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen for the Town of Jefferson was held at the Selectmen's Office Monday, February 23, 2009 at 6:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Bruce Hicks, Chairman, Norman Brown, and Kevin Meehan, members comprising a quorum of the Board.

PRESENT: Linda Cushman, Assistant to Selectmen, Chris Wheeler, Lynne Holland, Cathy Warren, Greg Odell, Ray Gradual, Tim Overhoff, WMRSD School Board Members, Superintendent Lafasciano and members of the public

Bruce Hicks opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. He states the purpose of this meeting is to address the future plans for the Town and what part the Jefferson School plays in it.

Chris Wheeler said that he was the chairman of the facility committee and would give some background on the School Boards position with the Jefferson School. The issue of closing the school has been an on again off again subject for several years. At that time the middle school concept was being addressed.

In 2006 a facility study was started. The study was completed in 2007. The facility study recommended at that time that the Dalton and Jefferson schools were under utilized. There had been an informal discussion about six weeks ago regarding the Jefferson School and the Town wanting a new library. It was asked if plans to close the school were in the immediate plans. The answer then was no and is still no.

It was, asked if the Town has an urgent need, or want of the school. The Board of Selectmen believes that more study needs to be done to determine if closing the school is the best thing.

Chris Wheeler stated that for the upcoming year the School Board does not want to close the school. The Dalton School was closed after the Dalton Selectmen asked if the School District would convey the school to the Town of Dalton. A school can be closed by a vote of the School Board. It does not have to have a vote of the district voters. If the Jefferson School was closed it is estimated that it would save between 600 and 800 thousand dollars.

Chris said that the facility committee meets at least monthly. They are trying to address the issues that were brought up in the facility study. He states that his personal opinion is that there should be a one-school concept. One elementary, one middle, and one high school. Chris believes that the sooner the

mix is made the better. The concerns of younger students will be taken into consideration.

It was explained that there might be a shortfall of \$421,000 in State aid this year along with the \$570,000 that you the public cut from the school budget. This money has to be made up somewhere. The money that was to go toward the CTE addition has also been cut and may not be reinstated at all. There will be a survey going out regarding the future of the CTE program.

Bruce said that he had asked Town committees to attend so that they could have input on this issue.

Joe Marshall member of the Library Committee said they have been looking at a new building after town input. Having talked to an architect for building specs Joe said that he asked about the school building. It was estimated that to retro fit the school building it would cost between 80 and 90 per cent of the cost of a new building.

Jason Call said yes the Athletic Assoc. could and would like to have the facility. He however does not believe that they have the manpower to operate the facility.

Bruce asked for any public comments.

Tim Noyes asked what studies had been done to prove that student would do better in a larger school.

David Conway asked when they would be able to get the answers to their questions.

Ray Gradual, School Board member gave his back ground as an educator. He stated that there is no question that students in smaller groups do better however there is the issue of economics. Greg Odell stated that there is data however, it is not conclusive. If you have questions you should submit then to your Board of Selectmen and we will get the answers. We are here to have this discussion with the public before any action is taken. There are 98 students in the Jefferson School, 60 local and 38 from other towns.

It was stated that Town property values could go down with out a local school. What is the additional cost of transportation?

Lynne Holland, School Board member stated that she supports the Towns people. She says that Jefferson is different than Dalton. She stated that she did not support the purposed cuts to the budget, as she did not believe that it was being done in the spirit and intent of the public at the budget hearing.

Chris Eaton stated that Jefferson School was the only school that passed testing done recently. Chris Wheeler said that by 2014

every student needs to meet the 100% mark of 'no child left behind.'" This includes special ed students. The question is how does the District meet this need. Ray Gradual stated that by 2014 who knows what is going to be required. It was questioned if the Jefferson School is meeting the requirements how can the Board justify closing it. Do you lower the quality of education? The School Board strives for quality education however; the economics have to be addressed.

Cathy Warren stated she is glad to see all the support that is being showed for the Jefferson School. She says the School Board is striving hard to be forthright about their plans. Quality education is important to this Board. The most important thing is quality education. This should be a positive thing.

Cathy Conway said that quality education is not a luxury. She would like to see a brake down of the estimated 600 to 800 thousand savings. Chris Milligan asked if this was a one-time saving. How long will it be before we see a request for additions at other sites.

Bruce Hicks told the audience that they should contact the School Board members with their questions. Lynne Holland is the Jefferson rep.

It was stated that there are two seats on that Board that will be vacated this year. Two new members are not going to make a change. Everyone needs to work together.

Tom Brady stated that with the prison opening in Berlin that it is more than likely that young families will be moving into the area. This being the case enrollment should increase. Tom said that Stanford University has done a study that shows that small schools accelerate student learning.

Some of the stimulus money that is being promised to the State is dedicated for education, which in turn will be allocated to Towns. Dawn Bechtold asked if any consideration had been given to reconfiguring the schools.

David Conway said that he would like to point out what a cooperative is. A cooperative is to help one another not necessarily about the cheapest product.

Ray Gradual said that they have to work in the confines of the budget.

Peter Riviere commented that the public needs to present ideas to the School Board that could be implemented and keep the Jefferson school open.

Norman Brown stated that at the budget hearing there were some areas suggested to cut the budget. In looking at the changes

that are being suggested for the budget the input of the public at the hearing are not being considered. Perhaps the School Board needs to look at the minutes of the hearing.

It was asked if a one-school concept was initiated were would the schools be. Chris Wheeler said Lancaster and Whitefield. It was if there was enough room in these buildings. Yes.

Bruce thanked everyone for coming.

Peter Estabrooks submitted to the Selectmen recommended changes to the minutes of the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. He had an unapproved copy of the minutes.

Mr. Estabrooks gave the Board each a copy of his worksheet that has the history of the budge and operating expenses. Mr. Estabrooks said that he would be back next week to see what the Board has done with this information.

The Board reviewed and approved the bills for payment next week and signed the warrants. Wendy Wells will be in Tuesday to sign checks and pick up the signed warrants. The Highway report was reviewed.

The minutes of the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved as written.

Linda Cushman stated that with the Governor's purposed budget cuts that it is possible there would be a shortfall in the Towns budget. She presented the Board with some possible changes that could be made to the budget. It was suggested to contact DRA to see if a warrant article could be written to address this issue.

Norman said that he has not gotten the report from Fish and Game after they visited the bridge site. Norman said that he would check with DES to get some more specific information on what is needed.

Linda stated that she would be contacting the Planning Board to asked them to look at sending a letter requesting DOT to include the Route 2 project in Jefferson in this years work. It may be possible to get the funding out of the stimulus money from the Federal Government.

Avery Sweeping has submitted a contract for the 2009 season. The cost has increased \$5.00 from last year. The 2009 rate would be \$115 per hour.

Kevin Meehan said that he has had a request for the Board minutes to be posted in the newspaper. It was suggested that perhaps the highlights of the meetings could be sent to Wilma Corrigan to include in the Town news.

The County budget was discussed. Linda said that detailed budget should be here by the end of the week.

Mike Meehan suggested that if paving of the Town road entrances were to continue that it would be a good idea to extend the paving another 4-feet.

Being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,