

TOWN OF EDGECOMB
Minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting
December 7, 2009

PRESENT: John Johnson and Jack Sarmanian, (selectmen); Marilee Harris (secretary); Susan Johns (Wiscasset Newspaper); Claudia Coffin (treasurer); Byron Johnson; Jaryll Larson; Jim Lamson; Larry Omland (EMA Director); Amber Tonry; Mr. & Mrs. Chubbuck; George & Susan Sescik of Old County Road

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

*A motion was made to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2009 meeting as read.
Seconded. Passed 2-0.*

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Suggested amendment to November 23rd minutes

Jaryll Larson recommended amending the minutes for November 23 to include the reason for going into executive session.

*A motion was made to amend the minutes for November 30th to read "The selectmen went into executive session to discuss matters of Confidential records:1 M.R.S.A. State statute 405(6)(F)."
Seconded. Passed 2-0.*

Broadband on Spruce Ridge Point Road

Byron Johnson announced broadband is now working on Spruce Ridge Point Road. He and his neighbors have acquired broadband and are extremely pleased.

EMA report

Larry Omland, EMA director reported there were no issues with the roads after the recent snow storm. Mr. Omland felt that the road commissioner Scott Griffin had done an excellent job. Mr. Omland also reported the fire department has purchased a new door and it will be delivered and installed within the next two weeks.

Decrease of selling price for properties on Davis Island

Jim Lamson remarked several properties for sale on Davis Island had recently dropped their asking price by over \$100,000. Mr. Lamson expressed concern for property values in the area dropping as well. John assured him the assessment values are based on many factors and shouldn't be immediately affected by these reductions.

No selectmen's meeting December 28, 2009

The selectmen will **not** be meeting on Monday, December 28th.

NEW BUSINESS:

Town office needs

Claudia Coffin said she is in need of a new calculator and the dehumidifier in the vault has been having problems. John said Ms. Coffin should purchase a new calculator and to look into having the dehumidifier checked and to replace it if necessary.

Ms. Coffin noted the metal stakes in the front lawn needed to be moved as they have already been hit by the snow plow and another storm is on its way. Jack said they belonged to Scott Griffin and he would contact him to come and pick them up.

Request for a special Town Meeting

Claudia Coffin said she sent out 10 impending foreclosure notices which will come due on Dec. 30th, amounting to a total of \$19,492.00. John asked if this had been an increase from last year and Ms. Coffin said there were only 6 foreclosures last year and two of this year's were carried over.

Amber and Richard Tonry were one of the owners who received a notice for their 5-acre waterfront property on the Damariscotta River. Ms. Tonry explained to Ms. Coffin she had been working with the state waterfront program for the past 18 months to secure a grant to assist in paying the taxes. However, even if this program came through for them they would still not be able to pay the taxes by Dec. 30th. Ms. Coffin researched the statutes and found the only way to keep from foreclosing on the property is for the selectmen to agree to hold a special town meeting and offer a waiver, according to State Law Title 36, Section 944/5.

John asked if this procedure had been done before and Ms. Coffin said it had not been done in the last 20 years. When asked how much the Tonrys owed, Ms. Coffin said the Tonry's tax amount due is \$8,405.

John expressed his concern of a precedent being set that would allow others to request town meetings when they were unable to pay their taxes. John noted the reason cited in the state law for possible special town meetings was to benefit the town, not the tax payer, by keeping the town from acquiring property the town did not want.

John questioned if there were any costs for the special town meeting and if so could they be passed along to the tax payer doing the requesting. Ms. Coffin said the only cost would be securing a moderator and one could possibly be found who would be willing to moderate for free. Ms. Coffin suggested Chip Griffin.

Ms. Coffin also said legally the special town meeting needed to be posted at the town hall and post office and it would be nice to have it placed in the newspaper and especially Jo Cameron's column on the 17th and 21st.

John asked Amber Tonry to explain her situation. Ms. Tonry said she and her husband are commercial fishermen who fish on the Damariscotta River. They have a 5-acre lot on the river whose 2004 taxes doubled with the reassessment and since then they have had trouble making payments. The property went up to lien in the spring of 2008 and they sold property to pay the taxes. This prompted Ms. Tonry to contact the Working Waterfront Access Pilot Program for assistance. If accepted into the waterfront program the state would pay to place a covenant for their program. If they get a covenant on their program this could reduce the property taxes by 40%. The Tonry's came up with a new business program and are seeking other businesses, such as Pemaquid Mussel and a couple of independent clam diggers, who may be interested in paying rent to bring products over their dock to help increase income. By increasing the income and reducing the taxes the Tonry's hope to be able to keep current in paying their taxes. Ms. Tonry explained she has been working with Coastal Economic Enterprise, in Wiscasset for the past 18 months to develop their business program. Currently the Tonry's are waiting on the support of their bank to agree to their business plan before they can receive the \$145,750.00 from the Maine Future Waterfront Program.

Jack noted the Tonry's have been working on a plan and asked how long will it be before the Tonry's are paid? Ms. Tonry said if the bank agrees with their business plan, the money will be dispersed with payments to the town automatically sometime before July 2010.

John assured Ms. Tonry the town has no interest in owning her land, however, as the General Assistance official for the town he knew there were many people who could not pay their taxes and are not receiving any type of special help.

John asked Ms. Tonry if she had any idea when her bank was going to make a decision. Ms. Tonry said she was working with the state and working with the bank and an environmental site assessment had to be done along with another property value. When that was all done they will go back to a meeting in January and by spring would be able to close on the program.

A motion was made to hold a special town meeting, on Monday, December 21st, at 6:30 pm at the town hall, to support the request to waive the impending automatic foreclosure on December 30, 2009 of Richard and Amber Tonry's property, of Map R6-Lot 48.02. Seconded. Passed 2-0.

During the discussion following the motion John asked if there was a time period attached to the waiver. Ms. Coffin said there was no time period required, however, the town could make a time period. John said he would like to put into the discussion at the town meeting a time period of one year for the Tonrys to secure payment.

John also said he would have voted against the previous motion except there were only two selectmen present to vote and he decided it would be best to allow the townspeople to decide.

A special town meeting will occur on Monday, December 21st, at 6:30 p.m. at the town hall.

OLD BUSINESS:

Toys for Edgecomb

Jessica Chubbuck, a representative of the Edgecomb Republican Town Committee and chairperson for the “Toys for Edgecomb” Toy Drive reported everything is going really well. The committee has collected two boxes full of toys already, along with \$65 for donations. Ms. Chubbuck said she hoped it will increase as people continue to shop before Christmas. On Dec. 14th the committee will meet at 7 p.m., upstairs in the town hall to put all the toys in gift bags. Ms. Chubbuck invited any resident to come and participate. Representative Jon McCain will be assisting as well. John said he had received several calls and recommended since it was difficult to buy for older children the committee could use the money collected to purchase gift cards for them. Ms. Chubbuck said she had talked with Cynthia Simmons from the Positive Matters Foundation in Newcastle. Ms. Simmons said she wanted to work together to insure there were no duplications. John agreed and said he would contact Ms. Simmons as well.

Joint selectmen’s meeting

Jack said tomorrow’s joint selectmen’s meeting was scheduled for 4:30pm at the town hall. In addition to the selectmen from Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Southport and Edgecomb, Jack had invited the School Board members from Union 49 and CSD #3, Superintendent Eileen King and Steve Ward, Chairman of the Edgecomb School Board to attend. Jack hoped the group would work together to create a new coalition in order to put some pressure on the state. One specific concern was the recent state cuts which affected the Edgecomb School budget. Larry Omland asked if there would be anyone from the state present at the meeting. Jack said the selectmen had considered inviting the local representatives but decided against it this time as this was a time to meet and brainstorm. Depending on the direction the group may decide to take, representatives would be invited to future meetings.

Newspaper article discussing tax increases for local towns

Jack shared an article from the Wiscasset paper dated December 2, 2009 showing a chart of the ten year tax growth for towns in this area. The chart said Edgecomb taxes had grown 98 percent, however, the town’s real growth was only 39 percent, which is similar to those of Boothbay and Boothbay Harbor. The selectmen noted the taxes changed when the new school was built and there had been a re-evaluation of property. Jack said he felt the increase of taxes was bothersome to the selectmen and something that needed to be addressed. The selectmen needed to consider how the town can keep from continuing tax increases. Currently the town’s budget is divided

into 70 percent for education, 20 percent for county taxes and 10 percent for town expenses. One of the problems with the school's budget is there are two areas of high expense that cannot be changed, the amount for special education and the amount spent on tuition of \$8,655 per student for grades 7-12.

WARRANT:

Number: 14 Amount: \$260,816.21

A motion was made to sign the above warrant. Seconded. Passed 2-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

None

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

None

CORRESPONDENCE:

None

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.