

Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham Newsletter

Issue #3, March 2004

ATTENTION: THE MEETING IS ON THURSDAY, NOT TUESDAY

A lively meeting with a good deal of audience participation. It was announced that our new website, generously donated by members Patty & Stan Shaw of EXCELL.NET, was up and running I hope you take time to check it out. There has been a new team (Ray Smith & Frank Pychewicz) formed to act as oversight & suggestions group for the Safety Complex and as well as the existing safety facilities. We'll be hearing more from them. The Concerned Citizens Board of Directors studied & were polled regarding the newly submitted article to the town warrant regarding proposing to change the selection of the Finance Committee from the Selectmen to the Town Moderator. The Board, by a vote of 8 yea's and 1 no, decided to support the measure. As you may have read, there has been talk by the Superintendent of Schools of the dire need for repairs at the High School. I am attempting to gather 2 or 3 members to serve as oversight for the School Capital Projects. Please talk to me if you are interested in helping out. There is one other article that the board supported unanimously and that was to list all of the town employees and their incomes every other year in the town report

Royce Layman: School Committee Team Leader

A proposed budget from the regional district for 2004-05 called for a 4.3 % increase over last year bringing total revenue to \$32.9 million, an increase of \$1.3 million over the current budget. The Superintendent had called for the inclusion of 5 ½ new teaching positions, with 3 of these replacements for attrition loses and the addition of 1 1/2 new positions. Increased capital expenditures i.e. health insurance, fuel & maintenance costs account for the balance. This proposal was construed by the Superintendent as a "first look" but he also stated that there was a lot of work to be done before the final budget would be presented to the towns. Since the original proposal, the combined town finance committees have met and asked for a pairing down of 1 or 2% of this figure. Negotiations are ongoing and it appears that there is a real effort to stay within a realistic figure especially if state revenues can bring in some additional dollars. Another area of major concern is the proposed capital project of refurbishing of the High School. This of course would be a bonding issue, but would still add a new burden to the tax payers. There is no question that some major renovation is needed here but the question at this time is a matter of priorities. What must be done now to maintain safety and added cost due to waiting and what is reasonable to defer until revenues are restored is the question before the Committee and town meeting members. In looking at the published MRHS Capital Projects List, it appears that there are choices that can be made to accomplish both agendas.

March promises to bring more clarity on both the School Budget development and Capital Project direction. CCW efforts appear to have made an impact and are being heard.

Patrick Mc Comb: Selectmen Meeting Team Leader.

Recently, the Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham made the Board of Selectmen aware that last years override can be undone. The Warrant Article must be presented by the Board itself for a Town Meeting vote. The reaction by the Town Administrator was decidedly negative. Oddly enough, during this meeting the Administrator spoke of the millions of dollars in bonding for M.R.H.S. (some public statements put the figure at \$15,000,000.00) as if it were a done deal. Hopefully the Board will do the right thing on both issues, let the people of Wilbraham decide at Town Meeting.

It appears that the \$10,000,000.00 public safety complex is off the table, at least for this year. I will miss the March 4, 2004 Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham meeting, as I will be on vacation. I'm sure one of our able teammates, Greg Chaconas, Ted Sowa, Chuck Marsman or Jean Courtney will fill in.

John Lovejoy: Finance & Capital Planning Committee Team Leader.

Here at the end of February the Finance Committee has finished up all of the budget, and voted on a figure. They pared some, made adjustments in others. They have made a balanced effort to replace a few positions. The Town Administrator has asked to have the Assistant Town Administrator replaced at a cost of about \$50,000. A discussion of the request ensued and on a 4 to 3 vote the position was put in the budget for FY '05. However, as is often the case for this item as well as others when o 3 vote the full Committee is not present, a new vote is sometimes taken. The Police Dept. is seeking 4 new cruisers, they may get 3 or perhaps 2, and they may be funded through the Capital Budget rather than by the FY '05 Police Operating Budget. The figure for County Pensions was a little less than anticipated, which will allow a small amount of money to be placed in otherwise tightly squeezed budgets.

In the Capital Budget the Fire Chief was given the green light to expend roughly \$81,000 (approved by Town Meeting '04) for two modules to be parked adjacent to the current Fire Station to address their desperate overcrowding situation, and approximately \$30,000 of that amount for the reconfiguration of the working space in the Fire Department. The Police Department seeks about \$82,000 to provide more secure working space for the dispatchers, to move the desk officer's location front to the public area, and to provide adequate computer work stations for the on duty police officers. Both of these items seem to indicate that these Public Safety functions understand that a Police Fire Complex is some years down the road.

The next month will be spent reviewing the Regional School Budget and, to the extent necessary, making adjustments in the Town Budget when more up to date financial information is available

Sewer Costs

At our last meeting on February 10th Al Sambor brought up providing sewers to the entire town. I have a project summary that was done by the DPW in 2000 on expanding sewer service to additional parts of town. The cost of: 1.) increasing sewer capacity to the Springfield system: 2.) Extending Main St sewer down to and including town center, Wilbraham-Monson Academy, Elderly housing,, residential homes and Minnechaug: 3.) Extending Stony Hill sewer down to and including Wilbraham Country Club, the town hall, and residential homes. The price tag was \$5,800,000 in year 2000. That's 8.3 miles of sewer line. I couldn't even guess what cost to complete the southern portion of the town.

Our next meeting is on Thursday, March 04, 2004 at 7:30 PM
at the Middle School - 466 Stony Hill Road. Please come. Bring a Friend!

Important things are going on. You need to come to the meeting to be kept up to date.

Other Important Upcoming Town Meeting

Selectmen Meetings

Mondays, March 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29, 2004, 7:00 PM Town Hall

Finance Committee

Wednesdays, March 3 & 17 (tentative), 2004, 7:00 PM Town Hall

Joint meeting Finance Committee and School Committee
Wednesday, March 31, 2004
7:00 PM Town Hall

School Committee
Tuesday, March 23, 2004, Minnechaug Regional High School

www.concernedcitizensofwilbraham.org