

Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham Newsletter

Issue #5, May 2004

NOTICE:
OUR NEXT MEETING IS ON MAY 13, 2004
7:30 PM - WILBRAHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Royce Layman: School Committee Team Leader

The most important development in the Regional School District at present is the union contract settlement that was reached at 2% for all members. In addition, the teacher group decided to forego all step raises until the second pay period of May 2005. The implementation of a new healthcare provider that further contained increasing costs was also adopted for the new contract period. According to school officials, "the agreement has the right balance between quality education and the need to be fiscally prudent during these economically difficult times." The union contract plus the school district effort in containing the annual budget increase to 4%, shows real cooperation from all parties. It has to be noted that Dr. Gagliarducci, School Committee and other school administrators and teachers have been working hard to balance the budget and reduce increased costs to the town this year. We are all grateful for this.

We will now need to focus on the MRHS Capital Project with a keen eye to determine how this might affect the community. There is real need here and it may be more costly to delay some parts of the project than doing them now. In any event, we will keep a watchful eye on these proceedings and make recommendations as they progress.

Patrick Mc Comb: Selectmen Committee.

The Concerned Citizens of Wilbraham Warrant, having the Town Moderator pick the Finance Committee, certainly has gotten the attention of the board of Selectmen. They appear to favor the current system. Under the current system, the Board of Selectmen have total control of appointments and reappointments. The Town Moderator gracefully and honorably, offered to recuse himself during this warrant at Town Meeting. The offer was declined. The Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen, made no such offer. In fact they sought the opinion of Town Counsel. Town Counsel informed them that they did not have to recuse themselves. Since they do not have to, they are on record saying they won't. Thanks to team members, Chuck Marsman, Greg Chacones, Ted Sowa and Jean Courtney

Raymond Smith: Safety Departments Team Leader with Frank Pychewicz.

The proposed Safety Complex is costly at \$10.5 million, but it has pitfalls other than the high cost. Land preparation, septic problems, higher fuel costs and a long ride to answer emergencies in the three districts along the Boston corridor, where 65% of the calls originate. Focus for the safety departments will not change since there are new housing departments (age55+) planned for these districts.

Moving to the proposed site will surely add to the fuel costs, response time will be slow and noisy sirens will disrupt otherwise quiet neighborhoods. Response time calls on the mountain and to Three Rivers Road will be also considerably increased since they will be farther away. Will it be possible for a pump truck laden with water and other trucks be able to climb Monson Road? Or, will it be necessary to use the present access from Boston road?

There are less costly, yet sensible, alternatives to the proposed complex. The present Fire Department site is perfectly situated to respond to the majority of calls rapidly. Existing response

patterns for all areas are known. The town fuel depot is at the present site. This building was designed to withstand a 500 pound bomb! It could be easily be modified by additions to comfortably house Emergency Operations at far less cost than the proposed complex.

The land around it does not need to be developed, as does the proposed site, which may not support septic system. In addition, the Woodland Dell Station could be modified to house two responders for the population in the south end of Wilbraham.

We already own the property and buildings necessary to handle emergencies and we have excellent people manning the equipment. For a fraction of the cost of the new complex we could revamp what we own. The project could be accomplished in phases to ease the bonding issue.

John Lovejoy: Finance & Capital Planning Committee Team Leader.

The Finance Committee has had one meeting in the last month. It was on May 5. They fine tuned the earlier budget figures which they had voted on. Under a new law passed last year to give towns more flexibility in reconciling year end budgetary short falls and surpluses, the Fin Com, on the recommendation of the Board of Selectmen, transferred \$52,545 from 5 budgets (surpluses) to 6 budgets (short falls). These transfers usually took place in an Article at the Town Meeting. However, the law, good only for FY 2004 (which we are in), and FY 2005 (the budget we are creating for next year), can only occur when the transfer is 3% or less of the budget from which the moneys were to be transferred.

When all FY 2005 budgets were finalized the Fin Com had \$79,000 extra. They voted \$24,000 to the Town Properties budget to care for certain necessary repairs; they took the remaining \$55,000 and added it to the \$13,000 already voted, making a \$68,000 commitment to the Stabilization Fund, Article 13 at the Town meeting. The Reserve Fund was set at \$150,000 for FY 2005.

Final Comment

I couldn't be more serious when I tell you how important this coming Warrant Meeting and the Town Meeting is. There are some very important issues that will be decided. We have all worked hard to become better, more involved members of our community. We would ask only that you strive to attend these meetings on May 13th and May 17th. We want, also, to thank each and every one of you for all that you have done, your help and your generous contributions that funds our organization in this our first year. We will be heading into our second year with our membership in the 170's and it's still growing. Congratulations !! See you Thursday!

Our next meeting is on Thursday, June 10, 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 Meetings

Selectmen Meetings
Mondays, May 3 & 24, 2004 - Wednesday May 12, 2004
at 7:00 PM Town Hall
June 7, 2004 at 7:00 PM

Finance Committee
Wednesdays, May 5th 2004 7:00 PM At Town Hall

School Committee Meeting
Tuesday May 11, 2004, 7:00 PM Thornton Burgess
Tuesday May 25, 2004, 7:00PM MRHS
Tuesday June 8, 2004, 7:00 PM Thornton Burgess

Town Meeting
May 17, 2004, Minnechaug Regional High School, Monday 7:00 PM
We will need every vote we can muster!!!

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