

## **Selectmen's Meeting with Library Trustees**

**Friday, April 11, 2008**

**Present: Selectman Ives, Bowles, and Maxfield.**

**Also present: Library Trustee Sandra Blanchard, Greg Silva, and Susan Kowalski.**

**Chairman Ives called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM.**

Chairman Ives provided the Library Trustees copies of the 2008 Town Meeting Minutes referencing the Library budget and the amendment to the budget. He also provided correspondence from DRA Auditor Jamie Dow regarding encumbering funds from the current budget to be used in next years budget and noting that if any Library funds from this budget remain as of June 30, 2008, those funds (unless they are encumbered) would go back in to the general fund. Selectman Maxfield asked if the Trustees had encumbered funds before. Ms. Blanchard stated that they had. Chairman Ives stated that the Trustees had contacted him asking for this meeting and he asked the Trustees for their input on the direction of this meeting. Ms. Blanchard stated that the Trustees whole purpose for this meeting was a follow-up from the last meeting in regards to the 30% reduction in their budget for 2008 – 2009. She asked the Board if they had found any money in the Town budget that could be used for the Library, such as a surplus, or contingency fund that they could access. Selectman Maxfield stated there is a contingency fund that is for emergencies towards the end of the budget that arise. He discussed RSA 32:10-e regarding transfer of appropriations. Selectman Maxfield said that while the RSA gives the Selectmen the authority to transfer appropriations, he did not feel the Board would go against the vote at Town Meeting. He asked the Trustees how they planned to operate with the 30% cut as he does not see how they can operate at full capacity. Mr. Silva stated the Trustees wanted to see what the outcome of this meeting was going to be before they moved forward or made any assumptions or speculations. He said it appears there will have to be cuts in both the salary portion and the operating portion of their budget. Chairman Ives stated that since the Library Director and Children's Librarian are salaried employees, there should not be any cuts to those hours because they are salaried positions. Selectman Bowles stated that the Library Trustees have the authority to cut the salary amounts of the Library Director and Children's Librarian if they choose. He said he is not suggesting a cut to the salaries; he just wants it stated that cutting those salaries is an option. Chairman Ives said he was talking about the operating hours of the Library if the Library Director and Children's Librarian are salaried positions. Ms. Blanchard said they would probably have to cut back 25% on the hours and there would be a lot of cuts throughout the budget but they have not determined where they will be made as of yet. Mr. Silva said that the Library Trustees did not come to this meeting expecting that the Board would have \$58,000.00 for them; he hoped that there would be some funds in the budget to help offset the cut. Chairman Ives said his opinion is that he would not be in favor of taking any funds from the Police, Fire, or Highway Department budgets. He said that he had not looked for any money within the budget because he wanted to hear from the Trustees to see what they

had found for options or cuts within their budget. Ms. Blanchard said that in the past when the Selectmen had asked departments to cut back their spending because of emergencies they had done their best to help and cut back. Mrs. Kowalski stated that the Board had suggested the Trustees begin collecting fees for use of the meeting room, and the Trustees are not comfortable with charging fees as many of the groups that use the room are non-profit. Chairman Ives discussed the possibility of charging a fee for the Library Card, or fees for the videos. Ms. Blanchard said that it is a free public library and the concept is to make it equitable for everyone. Selectman Bowles said that the library is not free in the sense that the Town has to pay to run it. Chairman Ives said that the Trustees need to face the reality that the Town cut their budget by 30%. Mr. Silva said that at the same time people need to know what a public library is, it is for the Town and everyone needs to try their best to maintain it. Chairman Ives advised the Trustees that he felt they needed to find ways to make this budget work and scrape every penny and show the Town at next years Town Meeting that they worked hard to keep the Library operating as best they could. He said there have been a lot of public relations issues relative to the Library and urged the Trustees to find ways to make this budget work. Selectman Maxfield said he felt it would be difficult to setup a system of collecting fees that would allow the Trustees to quickly raise the \$58,000.00. Selectman Maxfield discussed the issue of pay cuts for employees who have been with the town for many years. Chairman Ives said the reality is that there are many people around that have been put in the position of either taking a pay cut or loosing their jobs. Mr. Silva said that if you give someone a pay cut you take the chance of them leaving and if it is a valued employee, it is a bad choice. Chairman Ives said that is the tough decision that the Trustees have to make. He said that the Board does not plan on coming up with \$58,000.00. Ms. Blanchard asked if the Board was willing to look to see if there are any funds that could be used for the Library. Chairman Ives said he could look, but he does not plan to take funds from the other departments. He said that the contingency fund is for disasters that spring up and the Board cannot take the money out for Library operations. Chairman Ives went on to say he does not consider the Library budget an emergency issue, as it was a planned event. Selectman Maxfield stated that the Highway Department overtime line is over by \$8,000.00 and there is \$10,000.00 in the contingency fund, so there is not a lot of wiggle room. He said the budgets are set and very solid. Mr. Silva asked when the Board would know if there were any remaining funds in this year's budget. It was stated the fiscal year ends June 30<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Ives said if the Trustees could get some figures together so that if there were funds left over in this budget there may be a way, he is not sure, if the money could be encumbered. Selectman Maxfield said the Trustees would have to have contracts in order to encumber any money. Selectman Bowles said he did not agree. He said the townspeople voted, and he is not going to go against their vote. Selectman Bowles went on to say that in looking at the expenses that have occurred this winter, he feels that fuel, overtime, sand, salt, etc. are going to go over budget and he feels the money in the current budget is going to be expended. The Board said that the budget is tight and they try very hard to keep spending down as much as possible. Selectman Maxfield discussed the budget figures relative to the budget and warrant articles. Selectman Bowles asked if the Trustees have sat down and reviewed their budget. Ms. Blanchard said the Trustees have talked about the budget and individually reviewed it. She said they are trying to decide if it would be better to

close for a few days or have shorter hours. Mrs. Kowalski said that the Trustees are looking to have an energy audit to determine what they could do to cut costs. Ms. Blanchard said that the Trustees are considering sending out a survey to find out what hours work best for the citizens. Chairman Ives asked if the Trustees knew how much it would cost to send out the survey. He said that mailing out a survey would be an additional cost. Selectman Bowles suggested having a survey form available at the Library in an effort to keep the cost down. He went on to discuss other libraries that operate with volunteers or have minimal budgets. Selectman Bowles said he felt that there was still room to work within the budget and to get the respect of the townspeople back, the Trustees needed to find a way to make it work. He said that he understands technology is changing and everyone wants to have the best of everything, but it is difficult for the townspeople who have to support all of the programs and departments. Selectman Bowles went on to say that he feels the Trustees can look at their budget and find ways to cut back, as not everyone believes there has to be free videos, etc. He said that until the Trustees win back the respect of the townspeople, it will be difficult to move forward. Selectman Bowles said there are many people in town that feel the Trustees need to get back to basics that they do not need to have the most expensive things. He said people want to see fiscal responsibility, they want to have things that are workable. Selectman Maxfield discussed that back when the addition was voted on for the Library, the townspeople voted in favor, and now the townspeople have voted to cut the library budget by 30% so the Trustees have to look at balance of sometimes the vote will go their way and other times not. Chairman Ives said that it could be that the Trustees are paying the price for the sins of the past, of extravagances that happened 5, 6, or 7 years ago, and it seems to have boiled over and the current Board of Trustees are the ones that have to deal with it. Mrs. Kowalski said that the building has been there for a long time and it has to be maintained. Selectman Bowles agreed and said that the Trustees will have to find a way to make it work with the budget that was voted in and he is not sure of the operations of the Library, so he is not sure how the Trustees will be able or if they are able to do it. Selectman Maxfield asked for the donation figures for the children's room. Ms. Blanchard said she did not have the exact figure, but that she thought it was approximately \$50,000.00. Mr. Silva said that there are actually two figures, one is the actual money raised, and the second is the labor and volunteer hours. Selectman Bowles said that there were many people who volunteered to help with the children's room but were never contacted for their services. Ms. Blanchard said that many volunteers were used. Selectman Bowles said that although it is water over the dam, the Trustees will be dealing with the issues of the past. Mr. Silva said that when he was asked to be a Trustee he had no idea how difficult it would be. He said it is disheartening to see the results of Town Meeting and discussed the issues with education in this country and the need to have the library to assist with education. Mr. Silva said it is very important to have the resource information available for the education of people within this community. He said it appears that there are a lot of hard feelings within the community and it is taking away from the purpose of the library. Mr. Silva said if there had been a posting for Town Meeting stating that this 30% budget cut to the Library was going to be brought up, he feels there would have been a larger number of supporters for the Library in attendance. Chairman Ives stated that since we live in a democracy, sometimes this is the way democracy works. Selectman Bowles said he felt that most

people in town think the Library is important, however, he thinks many people in town have an issue with the management and operation of the facility. He said he agrees that it is a good resource for townspeople, and he understands the importance of the facility, but he feels that the cut to the budget was not about people not wanting a library, it was about the management and operation of the facility. Mr. Silva said he understands that the people have spoken and he relates it to taking the wheels off of four cars at the Police Department. He said that basically it would sever how that department could operate and what they could do for the community. Mr. Silva went on to say that the Police Department could find a way to make it work, it wouldn't be as effective, and they wouldn't be able to respond as quickly, but they would find a way. He said that is what the Library will have to do, although it will not be able to provide the same level of service as they can provide at the \$192,000.00 level. Mr. Silva said it can still be functional, and it will still be there, but at a different level. He said people may agree that it is an important part of the community but they have to decide if it is going to be a full library or a ¾ library community. Chairman Ives said he thinks the Trustees will have to come back to the townspeople with usage figures and sell the library back to the town. The Trustees said that the information is in the Town Report. Chairman Ives said he understood that the Trustees were caught off guard with this vote. Mr. Silva said the people who brought this forward were very clever because they had a plan and it was obvious that they executed it very well and the Trustees were caught off guard. Chairman Ives said that in the 20 years he has been attending Town Meeting this was not the first time something like this happened and it won't be the last. He said that he encourages everyone to attend Town Meeting because if a person does not vote, then they really don't have the right to complain. Chairman Ives went on to say that the library supporters who did not attend Town Meeting really do not have a right to complain as they did not voice their opinion when the vote was cast. Mr. Silva said that Chairman Ives was right. A member of the audience wanted to make a suggestion. Chairman Ives stated that the meeting was between the Selectmen and the Library Trustees and he was not entertaining any public comment at this meeting. He said if anyone wanted to speak with the Trustees after this meeting that was fine but he did not want to rehash the discussions that took place at the Selectmen's Meeting a few weeks ago. Mrs. Kowalski said that she feels the Trustees can make cuts but it is the people of Loudon who are going to be affected by the cuts. She said the Trustees will do their best to not affect the children's programs, but there will be adjustments that need to be made and there may be meetings that will not be able to be held at the meeting room in the Library if the Library is not open that day. Chairman Ives advised the Trustees that they should document everything that they do so they can bring it to the townspeople next Town Meeting. Mr. Silva said that when the Trustees come to the Selectmen during next years budget preparation, he feels that they would bring a budget that includes the figures they requested for this year plus any additional expenses they determine are necessary to get the Library back to full capacity. Chairman Ives said that the Trustees have the right to come to the Selectmen with any budget they choose, but they need to be able to justify the increases and be ready to defend their requests at the budget hearings and at Town Meeting. Selectman Maxfield advised the Trustees he felt that the Trustees were the ones that needed to make the decisions as to where the changes and cuts would be as it is the responsibilities of the Trustees. Chairman Ives asked if the Trustees wanted to meet

again regarding this issue. Ms. Blanchard said she felt that maybe a meeting closer to the end of this budget year would be a good idea. Chairman Ives said he feels that communication is a good thing and that there had been some feelings of animosity between the boards but it is important to sit down and work things out. He went on to discuss the importance of meetings being posted, minutes being kept, and everything being out in the open and above board. Chairman Ives said when people cannot get the information they seek in a timely manner, it gives the impression that things are not above board. Ms. Blanchard said the Trustees know about the Right-to Know Law and they keep minutes of their meetings as well as post the meetings. The Selectmen stated that there had been many requests for minutes and information from the Library and it has taken a lot of effort to get that information. It was stated that there are still minutes that have not been forwarded to the Selectmen's Office. Selectman Bowles advised the Trustees that they need to be more forthcoming and he hopes that they realize they have to rebuild this whole thing from the ground up. He said it's the communication, trust from the people. Selectman Bowles said he knows that there is a group of people who adore the Library, but there is also a group of people who do not feel it is being managed and operated appropriately and somehow, the Trustees need to find a way to get their support. Selectman Bowles discussed the petition and signatures that were obtained in support for the library and stated that while it shows that the library has supporters, it does not help the library gain the trust and respect of the voters who showed up at Town Meeting and voiced their vote. He said it is important to move forward and regain the trust of everyone. Selectman Bowles said that when the Selectmen's Office asks the Trustees or the Library Director for information, it is not forwarded when asked. He said it took months before most of the minutes were forwarded to the office. Selectman Bowles asked if the Trustees had ever had a public hearing for the Library Personnel Policy in effect. Ms. Blanchard said that the Trustees have to hold a public hearing once a year to accept any donations that have come in publicly. Selectman Bowles said that the RSA states any funds in excess of \$5,000.00 needs to have a public hearing for acceptance. Ms. Blanchard said that a donation of \$5,000.00 does not happen very often. Selectman Bowles said that since the Library does not follow the Town's Personnel Policy and as far as he knows there has never been anything before the Selectmen that shows the Library Personnel Policy has been officially put in place. He said that any time the Selectmen wish to amend the Town's Personnel Policy they have to hold a public hearing. Ms. Blanchard said that the Trustees need to review all of their policies. Selectman Bowles said that everything needs to be in place, the laws need to be followed. Ms. Blanchard said that the Trustees have put everything in place and all anyone needs to do is ask. Selectman Bowles said the Selectmen have asked, and asked many times without any response. Selectman Maxfield said the petition that was signed was just to show support for the Library. Ms. Blanchard said she would personally invite the three Selectmen, as Town Fathers to please come to the Library and use the facility and be an inspiration to others. Chairman Ives said the Board does not want the meetings to be confrontational, they need to be informational. He said that all the laws that apply to the Selectmen also apply to the Trustees and in the past those laws have not been completely followed and now that the Trustees are on their own, people are going to be watching the Trustees even closer. Selectman Bowles discussed the new expense to the Library budget relative to accounting and payroll and the Trust Funds. He said that the money could

have gone to another expense, but now that the Library has to pay for those services, they will have to find money somewhere in their budget for this expense. Selectman Bowles said that the Trustees need to go to the drawing board and do what ever they need to do to make it work.

Chairman Ives concluded the meeting at 5:16 PM.

#### THE LOUDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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Steven R. Ives, Chairman

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Dustin J. Bowles, Selectman

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Roger A. Maxfield, Selectman