

MINUTES
FREEPORT TOWN COUNCIL MEETING #10-05
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
May 17, 2005 – 7:00 P.M.

CHAIRPERSON'S CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT ABSENT EXCUSED

Thomas Rumpf, P.O. Box. 819, S. Freeport
John Arsenault, Prout Road
Charlotte Bishop, Maquoit Drive
Rich DeGrandpre, Timber Ridge Road
Frederick White, 45 Pleasant Hill Road
James Cassida, 5 Timber Ridge Road
Genie Beaulieu, P.O. Box 74

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS: To waive the reading of the Minutes of Meeting #8-2005 held on May 3, 2005 and accept the Minutes as printed.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To waive the reading of the Minutes of Meeting #8-2005 held on May 3, 2005 and accept the Minutes as printed. (Cassida & DeGrandpre) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes).

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS: Announcements

Chair Rumpf pointed out that the Town's Annual Clean-Up Days will be held on May 21 and May 22 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. If anyone has any questions concerning what will be accepted, they can call the Recycling Center at 865-3740.

Winslow Park is offering free camping by Freeport residents during the weeks of June 6-12 as well as September 19-25 on a first-come, first-serve basis. Reservations can be made by calling 865-4198 or by stopping at the gatehouse.

Family Fun Day will be held at Winslow Park on Saturday, June 4. There will be free admission to the park all day. Activities will include road races, pancake breakfast, games, kite flying demonstration and free ice cream and hot dogs.

Councilor Arsenault advised that Stephanie Slocum has being hired to serve as the Freeport Economic Development Director. She will begin on June 13.

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Councilor DeGrandpre advised that the Appointment Committee met and made quite a few appointments. Their list of applicants is now low. He urged members of the public to fill out an application if they have any interest in serving on boards or committees.

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS: Public Comment Period – 30 Minutes
(Non-Agenda Items Only)

Chair Rumpf moved on since there were no public comments.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS: To take action on the following items of business as read by the Council Chairperson.

ITEM #58-05 To consider action relative to adopting the May 17, 2005 Consent Agenda.

BE IT ORDERED: That the May 17, 2005 Consent Agenda be adopted.
(Beaulieu & White)

Chair Rumpf reviewed the Consent Agenda for members of the public.

ROLL CALL VOTE: (7 Ayes).

ITEM #58-05 To consider action relative to the adoption of a Fiscal Year 2006 Operating Budget for the Town of Freeport. (PUBLIC HEARING)

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Public Hearing be opened.
(White & Arsenault) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes)

Chair Rumpf explained the history of how the Council arrived at where it is presently. The Council met with the School Committee and School Superintendent last night to address school needs. The Council needs to determine whether it should honor the pledge it made a year ago and renewed earlier this year to dedicate any increase in state education aid to tax relief or whether it should renege on that pledge and adopt some alternative.

He asked for public comment.

The following people asked that the Council not reduce the school budget:

Jim DeGrandpre, School Committee member and Lois Kilby Chessey, Teacher and taxpayer.

Susie Saunders from Freeport Economic Development Corp and Co-Chair of the Vision 2010 Implementation Team provided a written copy of a report and offered to answer questions for Councilors.

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Rod Regier noted that the Council is moving in the right direction and asked that the word "cut" be eliminated when discussing the school budget since there is something over \$550,000 which is proposed in the school budget and the Council is asking that it be reduced by \$164,000 and it is necessary to add back in \$127,000 because of the way the budget is constructed. At the end of the day with the numbers being discussed right now, the Council is dealing with a \$520,000 increase in the school budget, which is not a "cut". \$520,000 is somewhere close to what the average increase has been in the school budget during the last half dozen years. He recalled the increases in mill rate that occurred over the past few years. He urged Councilors to return money to the taxpayers that is intended for property tax relief. It is his opinion that there continues to be a need for department consolidation across all towns.

Robert Alderfall, resident, supports the Council's resolution of returning the funds to the taxpayers.

Jean Cusenow, resident applauded the Council for trying to reduce the school budget and reduce the mill rate. She had questions on items in the school budget.

Holly Sussler, resident and Ann O'Brien, teacher, urged Councilors to not cut the school budget.

Chief Darrell Fournier addressed needs on the Municipal side. He asked Councilors to keep these needs in mind and treat the municipal side equally.

Jerry Tims of Middle School, Dan Kagan and Robin Monahan asked the Council to work with the School Committee.

Jim Plummer, Public Works Director, had a handout for Councilors. If more money becomes available, his highest priority would be road paving.

Beth Parker, Ann Archambault, Chris Munroe and Victor Skorapa noted they are in support of the School Committee's Budget and urged the Council to not reduce it.

Bart Carhart, Recycling Director noted he has a couple of items that need funding consideration. He is hoping to expand the hours of operation at the Recycling Center and also is proposing a silver bullet in the Flying Point area.

Diane Dennison wants to find a compromise because she is aware of people that cannot afford any tax increases.

John Eagan of Curtis Road supports the School Committee's recommendation. Kerry Hotelling, teacher in a neighboring school, recommended increasing the school budget.

Jim Lincoln, Guidance Counselor at the High School, shared his experience at the high school dealing with class size. He urged Councilors to support the proposed school budget.

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Chris Roney, Jerry Kennedy, Meg Albright—resident and teacher, Betsy Curtis, Mary Lemer, Patrick Enking, Rick Hendee—School Committee Member, were not in favor of reducing the school budget.

Councilor White had questions for Mr. Hendee about prioritization. . Councilor Beaulieu noted that the School Committee can make whatever adjustments needed but the Council has no say on what those changes will be. Councilor White explained that he understands the process.

Chair Rumpf clarified that even with the Council's recommended school budget crediting the new additional school funding to the schools along with their share of increased tax valuation, it would still lead to an increased mill rate based upon the school's increase alone. It is savings on the municipal side and other sources of revenue that would enable some reduction in the mill rate even with the original school proposal.

Jarred Blake—Senior at FHS, Liz Standen and Mark Standen urged the Council to support the School Committee's budget and not increase class size.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Public Hearing be closed.
(White & Arsenault) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes).

Councilor Bishop noted that there are other people on the other side of the issue that are not here tonight because they too intimidated to get up to speak. On a \$200,000 house, the figure being discussed this evening is \$48. She is not against education but is looking at both sides of the coin. She displayed two white boards indicating what \$48 can provide to Freeport residents such as 24 pounds of pasta and 24 jars of spaghetti sauce, 48 cans of tuna, drug prescriptions for people on a fixed income, etc. While \$48 may not mean much to some families, she suggested that they step up and give it to the Superintendent of Schools.

Chair Rumpf noted there is a workshop scheduled on Monday. Councilor DeGrandpre advised that he has more questions that need to be addressed.

Councilor Beaulieu explained that several people have stopped her in the grocery store and thanked her for promising to hold down taxes. They indicated that they could not attend the meeting and speak.

Councilor Arsenault noted that a lot of people this evening said they would be more than happy to donate the \$38 or \$48 being discussed. He would propose that an endowment fund for the schools be put in place to receive these donations, which would serve as a reserve account for new programs. It would help fund programs in future years.

Councilor Cassida thanked everyone for coming and is disappointed that most people have gone home while the Council has a lot of decisions to make. On a personal level, he supports the Curriculum position and the 2.6 teachers being proposed. It is important that everyone understand that not everyone in this community has the ability to spend \$31 or \$48 extra this year. This figure is based upon a value of \$200,000. The contribution on homes that aren't

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valued at \$200,000 is less. There are also homes considerably larger that are valued more than \$200,000. There are elderly people who have been lucky enough to acquire their homes when they didn't cost a million dollars or \$500,000 but are now saddled with their asset. The home that they have lived in for 30 or 40 years is costing them in taxes more than they can afford on their fixed incomes. Those people are the ones that cannot afford to live in their homes. Taxes are driving them out of this community. Do we want those long-time residents of Freeport who happened to be lucky enough to own an asset that is valuable from a tax perspective? Their contribution is a lot more than \$31 or \$48. We are talking about hundreds of dollars, depending upon the value of their homes and they cannot afford to keep their homes. These are the people that will be most benefited by the Council holding a firm line on the tax rate. He did not hear this much tonight except by Diane Dennison. If an endowment is set up to benefit the school, he is all for it but there are people in the community that cannot donate to it. All Councilors support education and if it is left to them, they would give the schools all the money they need. The Council is looking at the entire budget and its effect on the community.

Councilor DeGrandpre noted that he has received calls and correspondence from people that do not have the courage to stand up and say things at the podium. He is struggling with how to do the best thing for the Town of Freeport. He has more questions to ask. Everyone has a different challenge.

Councilor White indicated that there is not much he can add. His wife is a school nurse and Chris Leighton described him as "friendly to schools" in a conversation a few weeks ago. He is a supporter of education in many ways. He is aware that there are families that struggle in town and a balance is needed in decision-making. He supports delivering the same level of support that was provided last year. He is still curious how the School Committee will prioritize its budget.

Chair Rumpf thanked everyone who spoke this evening for maintaining civil discourse. He noted that everyone wants the best schools and municipal services. It is a struggle that will not go away. This discussion will take place every year. Next year will be a revaluation in Town. Taxpayers near the coast will see increases and most likely the burden on residential taxpayers will increase. Freeport is the smallest school district in the Casco Bay Education Alliance, which is what is used as a model for competition. We are almost 25% below the average school size. Basic Administration is more expensive on a per pupil basis because we are a smaller school district. We should be thinking of entering into consolidation talks with other school districts in this area and not just Pownal. He credited the School Committee for working with Pownal. The only way we will continue to be able to control taxes and continually maintain, and hopefully improve our school system, is to start getting more aggressive on how we think about ways to work together not only on the outside of Freeport but within the town of Freeport between the School side and the Municipal side. We should look for ways of consolidating functions in some manner such as libraries and perhaps consolidating our Finance functions rather than having two separate finance departments between the schools and the Town. It may be worth looking at this sort of thing. Councilor DeGrandpre has agreed to serve on the Facilities Committee at the request of the School Committee in developing a long-term plan on what it will take to maintain school facilities.

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This problem will not go away and everyone wants the best schools possible and wants to be considerate of taxpayers in this Town who aren't as well off as a lot of us who are privileged to be that were in attendance this evening. The Council will have to continue to be bold in its thinking about how we work together to be more efficient or look for other ways to accomplish those dual goals.

Councilor Cassida noted that there are still questions to be answered and the workshop is still needed on Monday. Mr. Olmstead noted that 45 minutes or one hour would be needed for the Municipal side. The School Committee could come in at 8 p.m.

BE IT ORDERED: That Item #59-05 be tabled until May 24, 2005. White & DeGrandpre) **ROLL CALL VOTE:** (7 Ayes).

ITEM #60-05 To consider action relative to proposed amendments to the Traffic and Parking Ordinance concerning On-Street Parking for the new Community Center, South Freeport Parking Restrictions and Hedgehog Mountain Road Parking Restrictions. (Chapter 48) (Public Hearing).

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Public Hearing be opened. (Arsenault & Cassida) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes)

Councilor White explained the amendments to the Ordinance concerning Grove Street and Depot Street.

In South Freeport they looked at South Freeport Road between Main and Pine and Park and Church. The only change they are suggesting is that there be no overnight parking. He indicated where parking would be allowed. Councilor Beaulieu advised that some of the recommendations for no parking were to make sure that safe situations were set up for the residents and people driving through the area. Discussion followed.

On Hedgehog, Councilor White indicated the changes are pretty cut and dry. From the point of the gate on the westerly side coming back to Pownal Road there will be a no parking strip of 250'. The road is too narrow to permit parking on both sides.

Chair Rumpf welcomed public comments.

Faith Baker, resident of Freeport and a member of the Bustins Island Village Corporation Advisory Board (BIVC) explained the big weekends with overflow parking in the past. It has never been their intention to park in front of residents' houses but it will happen. The BIVC does support the recommendations for safety reasons. Discussion followed.

If there is an opportunity to expand parking at the Soule School, she hopes the Town will seriously consider doing that. Councilor White noted that residents of South Freeport did not want to make very many changes. They will survey how many cars will be parked in the Soule School parking lot and how many weekends had overflow. Councilor Bishop asked Ms. Baker to check and see if families with multiple cars coming up for

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weekends and planning to park two or three cars would be willing to park at the high school or the Park and Ride. People want to park as close as possible but in this type of situation, perhaps they would be willing to park elsewhere. She is willing to work with the Traffic and Parking Committee.

Kristen Peterson, resident, urged the Traffic and Parking Committee to post Main Street because the traffic is significant. The demand for parking at the waterfront is huge. She mentioned that boats coming out of Brewer's need to make wide right turns to go up the hill.

Joe Migliaccio thanked whoever initiated the new parking changes. He doesn't see the growth going backwards or the need for access to the wharf diminishing. If you don't get the parking and traffic flow right, you really can lose a neighborhood. He doesn't see how the restaurant fits into this use. He knows they have their own parking lot but they get a disproportionate part of the public parking. Councilor White explained what exists there. He wants everyone to keep on it. It is a good start.

Stuart Jones, Church Trustee, noted that they have no problem with the proposed parking changes. He feels it is a good start.

Ms. Baker asked if there would be an opposition to overflow cars going around the circle at the beginning of Soule School parking. Chair White noted that the Project Review Board will be looking at it tomorrow.

Guy Quattrucci, representing Friends of Soule Park, noted that he attended all the Traffic and Parking Committee meetings. He supports the South Freeport Road parking proposals. It is a good start. There's a significant net gain in parking at Soule School. If there is an overflow spilling out, he is sure residents will come to the Traffic and Parking Committee.

MOVED AND SECONDED: That the Public Hearing be closed. (White & Bishop) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes)

Councilor Arsenault pointed out that he believes that the Town lost an opportunity to grab the brass ring on this. This is land that belongs to the Town.

BE IT ORDERED: That the proposed amendments to the Traffic and Parking Ordinance be approved.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED: That the proposed amendments pertaining to Grove Street take effect upon completion of the necessary street improvements. (Bishop & DeGrandpre) **ROLL CALL VOTE** (6 Ayes) (1 Nay—Arsenault).

OTHER BUSINESS:

Report from the Community Center Fundraising Committee

Councilor Cassida noted that Bob is not in attendance this evening. He suggested that it be discussed on June 7.

Informational Exchange

Island Rover

Councilor Bishop will discuss this item with Mr. Olmstead.

COG Executive Committee

Councilor Beaulieu pointed out that she is a nominee to the COG Executive Committee. She will be voted on in August.

Councilor DeGrandpre noted that he met with the Facilities Committee from the school this morning and he believes it will be a great opportunity for both sides.

MOVED AND SECONDED: To adjourn at 10:30 p.m.
(Cassida & White) **VOTE:** (7 Ayes).

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Coffin
Council Secretary