TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
September 9, 2009

Present:
Al Collings
Tom Schnare
Phil Landine
Roy Roberts
Jack Tivnan
Diane Vayda
Peggy Walker, Assessor
Terry Barrett, Tax Collector
Marie Arsenault, Accountant
Keith Arsenault, Treasurer
Barry Nadon, Selectman
Nicole Vongratsamy

The meeting was called to order by Chair Al Collings at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes: Jack Tivnan made a motion to approve the minutes of August 26, 2009. Nicole Vongratsamy seconded the motion. Voted 6 to approve, 1 abstain.

Review tax collections/real estate valuations: Al Collings thanked Terry Barrett, Tax Collector and Peggy Walker, Assessor for attending our meeting and answering questions. Al Collings said that valuations are not quite up to market now and will we be seeing more abatements. Peggy Walker said there may be a 10% decline in sales and that the biggest abatements are seen when the Town takes over property. There is $100,000.00 in an overlay account to be used for abatements. Al Collings asked about new growth. Peggy Walker stated that we are not seeing the growth that we have seen in other years. Building permits for last year numbered 90 and this year there are only 58 to date. Terry Barrett presented Tax Collector’s Totals from 07/01/2007 through 07/01/2009. Terry Barrett was asked why there are more collections at this time. She explained that mortgage companies are paying for taxpayers when they get behind in their payments. She said she expects about $50,000.00 more coming in for 2009. Discussed Quaboag Nursing Home. Keith said they were behind because no one sent invoices. They are being operated by a new company and found that they were $90,000.00 in arrears. They have been sending payments and this will be paid in full by 12/31/2009.

Tax Collector Terry Barrett explained the procedure for collection of taxes. Bills are mailed out and taxpayers have 30 days to pay. They are then sent a demand and have 14 days to pay. They are then sent two letters at 14 day intervals and have 14 days to pay. After this they go to the Registry of Deeds and a lien is placed on the property. After a lien is placed, these properties are removed from her books and sent to the treasurer for collection. I try and work with people and give them payment plans. If there is no activity, a lien will be placed on the property.

Keith Arsenault Treasurer stated that a lot of the properties are small parcels owned by people who have moved or died and about 1/3 of letters mailed out have been returned unknown. The interest rate is 16%. I wait until the amount owed is at least $2500.00 before sending out for foreclosure. I try to work with people on the larger parcels before
foreclosure. This year four large properties over $100,000.00 have paid. Another parcel I started foreclosure and the taxpayer was able to get a reverse mortgage and made a $30,000.00 payment. Peggy Walker said in the “Tom Long Report” valuations for 2000 were $188,000.00 and in 2009 were $422,000.00. Keith Arsenault said in 2012 the elementary school will be paid for. The following year we will receive $400,000.00 and the DOR says this has to be used to reduce the tax rate. He would like to do this over a four-year period. The school payments are going to be less over the next couple of years. Keith Arsenault stated that it was important to keep his Tax Title Account as in tight economic times he may need this account to collect monies.

Review revenue & expense projections: Marie Arsenault said that $368,000.00 had to be taken from free cash to balance the budget. The amount of certified free cash as of July 1, 2009 is $954,605.00. Al Collings presented a Preliminary Budget Forecast 2010-2013 Planning Assumptions. After the October Special Town Meeting, it is anticipated that we should have $652,000.00 in free cash. Keith Arsenault talked about an override. Barry Nadon said we should give people a choice. Jack Tivnan said that it would not pass in this economy. Barry Nadon said that we should start talking about it now. Jack Tivnan thanked Al Collings for all of his hard work on this project.

October Special Town Meeting: Al suggested that a week before the Town Meeting that we have an informational meeting for the voters. The meeting will be scheduled for October 21, 2009 at 7 p.m. Al Collings will talk with Cindy at the Senior Center to see if we can hold the meeting there.

Fleet Account: Al presented an updated Fleet Account Schedule. This year the Police 2004 Chevy Tahoe is scheduled to be replaced. Police Chief Tom O’Donnell will be at our next meeting. Barry Nadon reported that the cemetery truck has been repaired and paid for out of their funds. Fire Chief’s replacement of 2001 Explorer: Fire Chief Bob Benson has put on 250 miles, the front end has been repaired and it is in good shape with 113,000 miles. Tom Schnare wants to know the mileage on all vehicles. Police Chief Tom O’Donnell is putting together an operational plan for the Police Boat. This is to include working with Doug Blood and he has a boat. Tom Schnare asked to have the Police Boat removed from the Fleet Account list. Al will do this. Al Collings spoke with Highway Superintendent Jason Benoit and told him there was no money for the sidewalk plow and backhoe. Jason said that he was more in need of the backhoe than the plow. Roy Roberts asked about the backhoe repairs. Jason has not gotten back to Barry Nadon on this. Al Collings will update the Fleet Account for next week. Currently we have $187,804.00 in the Fleet Account and $278,633.00 in the fire truck stabilization account.

September 16, 2009 Meeting: Water Department capital needs/MTBE receipts. Municipal Lighting cost/usage: A chart will be available at this meeting.
October 24, 2009 ATFC Annual Meeting:  Al asked if anyone wanted to attend the meeting in Franklin. Tom Schnare made a motion to sign a Warrant for $40.00 for Al Collings to attend the meeting. Jack Tivnan seconded the motion. Vote was 7-0 to approve.

Jack Tivnan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Nicole Vongratsamy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine M. Long
Secretary