

APPROVED 4/15/96

TOWN OF NEW BOSTON

SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES

April 4, 1996

A special meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Town's department heads was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Goodin.

PRESENT: Darlene M. Goodin, Chairman
Gordon A. Carlstrom, Selectman
Michael S. Pimenta, Selectman
Todd I. Selig, Town Administrator

The following department heads were also present: Sarah Chapman - Library; Claire Dodge - Planning Office; Sandy Gallup - Recreation Department; James McLaughlin - Police Department; Lee Murray - Highway Department; Bonnie Bethune - Transfer Station; James Dodge - Fire Department.

The following individuals were also in attendance: Dan MacDonald, Dan Teague, Paul Codispoti, Lee Lowell, Lee Brown, Marcel LaFlamme, and Paul Clifton-Waite of the Union Leader.

Chairman Goodin explained to all present that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues pertinent to the growth and goals of the Town of New Boston. Three agenda items would be discussed: 1. Improving communications between department heads and the Selectmen; 2. Setting goals within each department; 3. Discussing issues which the department heads may have for the Board of Selectmen. Chairman Goodin stated that the meeting would end no later than 9:00 p.m. Chairman Goodin also made it very clear that personal issues between individuals present at the meeting should be discussed outside of this forum.

1. Improving Communications.

Chairman Goodin stated that she would give all present an opportunity to voice their concerns in regard to communications between the department heads and the Board of Selectmen.

Sarah Chapman stated that she would like to see that the department heads are consulted before decisions are made.

Claire Dodge agreed that the department heads should be consulted for input during the decision making process. Ms. Dodge feels frustrated when a dictate is issued by the Selectmen without any apparent rationale behind it. Ms. Dodge cited the Selectmen's ruling some time ago that she should not consult directly with

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Town Counsel without the Board of Selectmen's/Town
Administrator's prior approval.

Sandy Gallup was concerned about the budget process. She felt as though she did not know where her 1996 budget had stood until the public hearing on the entire 1996 Town Budget.

Jim McLaughlin felt that communication was very important. He felt that the Board should develop policies in writing so that a record would be established for future boards.

Lee Murray stated that he had not had a communication problem with the Selectmen. He did feel, however, that department heads should have input on policies.

Bonnie Bethune stated that she would like to have more definition as to how various positions fit in with one another such as the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, and department heads. Ms. Bethune also would like to see job descriptions created for each of the Town's positions.

Jim Dodge felt that there had been a lack of participation in the decision making process. He felt that the goal was to get everybody working as a team, but that this had not occurred in New Boston for quite a while.

Chairman Goodin stated that the primary reason department heads were not called in again and again to meet with the Selectmen during the 1996 budget process was because the Board did not want to impose on them. Chairman Goodin also felt that the Board had made some mistakes over the last year.

Selectman Pimenta felt strongly that communication goes both ways. It is also up to the department heads to let the Selectmen know when they are concerned about an issue or a decision.

Selectman Carlstrom articulated his belief that some of the Board's decisions were made in a vacuum. He felt that the budget process could be improved upon by getting more department head input. He also indicated that the Board was in the process of establishing goals for itself. Personnel policies were also in the process of being developed.

Chairman Goodin stated that the relations between the department heads and the Selectmen had probably reached rock bottom, and that everyone would have to work very hard to improve the situation.

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Jim McLaughlin stated that he was very concerned about a decision made by the Selectmen in January of 1995 in which the Board refused to reprimand itself for the inappropriate actions of one of its members.

Selectman Pimenta felt that if Chief McLaughlin had a problem with a Board decision back in January of 1995, he should have discussed it with the Selectmen and brought it to their attention at that time.

Chairman Goodin explained that personal attacks such as this would not be discussed in this forum.

Selectman Carlstrom asked everyone to state issues they might have involving trusting the Board of Selectmen to deal with them in an honest and fair manner.

Claire Dodge felt that trust was an issue for her. Sandy Gallup agreed.

Jim McLaughlin felt that it has seemed in the past that alternative agendas and politics had been going on behind the scenes in the decision making process.

Claire Dodge stated that for too long Town business had been run by the rumor mill.

Lee Murray felt that he has not had a problem with the Board of Selectmen. The only problem Mr. Murray has had with the Selectmen has been over sick time, and this had been brought to the Board's attention.

Bonnie Bethune said that more clarity in policy would be helpful. Better record keeping is also important as became apparent when Ms. Bethune and Town Administrator Selig undertook to prepare the application materials for the State of New Hampshire 20% Landfill Closure Reimbursement Grant Program.

Claire Dodge stated that honest opinions aired by department heads had too often been taken personally by the members of the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Dodge felt that she would like to be able to give the Board her honest opinion on issues.

Selectman Pimenta felt that the department heads also have to be able to accept decisions which they may not agree with. The Board of Selectmen, after all, has to do what is best for the Town as a whole.

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2. Setting Goals.

Chairman Goodin explained that the Board would be asking all of the Town's departments to prepare goals/objectives for the future. The Board of Selectmen, meanwhile, was working on goals and objectives for itself.

Discussion ensued as to whether there should be fiscal parameters set by the Selectmen before departments were asked to contemplate goals for the future. In the end, the Board felt that it would have to look further into this issue before responding.

Selectman Carlstrom did, however, state that he sees goals as a means to: 1. Set milestones for performance; 2. Give department head guidance in the planning & budget process; 3. Let everyone know what is coming in the future.

Claire Dodge and Jim Dodge both felt that the Board of Selectmen must give more direction with respect to setting goals.

Bonnie Bethune felt that a mission statement for the Town might also help facilitate this process.

3. Department Issues.

Selectman Pimenta asked for a consensus on whether the department heads felt that the Selectmen should or should not attend monthly department head meetings. The consensus was that at least some of the Selectmen should try to attend these meetings. After some discussion, it was also decided to resume department head meetings which would be held on the first Wednesday of each month at 9:00 a.m. in the Town Hall Conference Room.

Jim McLaughlin asked the Board of Selectmen to evaluate department heads' participation in the current bid process. He would like to see the Selectmen's Office actually put items out to bid, as opposed to having the department heads undertake this process themselves.

Sandy Gallup updated the group on the growth of the Recreation Department's baseball league from 214 children in 1995 to 244 registered children in 1996. In addition, she informed the group that the Army Corps. of Engineers was willing to assist the Town in making improvements to the ballfield on Old Coach Road.

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd I. Selig". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Todd I. Selig
Town Administrator