

**Town Of Needham Board of Selectman
Minutes for March 6, 2007
Needham Town Hall**

7:00 p.m. Call To Order:

A meeting of the Board of Selectmen was convened by Chairman John H. Cogswell at 7:00 p.m. Those present were: John H. Cogswell, John Bulian, Gerald Wasserman, James Healy (7:30 p.m.), Daniel P. Matthews (7:50 p.m.), Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick and Recording Secretary Greg Cooper.

7:00 p.m. Executive Session:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to enter into Executive Session to:

Exception 3 - to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, or to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel; and

To return to open session prior to adjournment.

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Mr. Cogswell polled the Board members. Unanimously approved 3-0.

(The Board returned from Executive Session at 7:18 p.m.) Mr. Cogswell declared a recess while waiting for the School Committee to appear.

7:30 p.m. Mr. Cogswell called the meeting back to order.

7:30 p.m. April 2007 Ballot Questions (Debt Exclusion and Operating Override):

Steve Rosenstock, Finance Committee Chair, appeared before the Board to discuss the issue of having a companion override that would address the operating and maintenance costs of the High Rock School once opened in 2010. He stated that the operating and maintenance costs are estimated to be \$1.2 million per year, which is nearly equal to the annual debt service costs of the construction project. Mr. Rosenstock stated that the Finance Committee wants the voters to know all the costs associated with the

new building. Mr. Cogswell agreed that taxpayers should be informed about the operating and maintenance costs but disagreed with putting a companion override on the ballot because the costs may change between now and the opening of the school and the Town's financial position may change which could impact the need for additional operating revenue. Mr. Healy expressed his support for asking for the operating and maintenance costs as early as possible. He stated that the Town will see increased operating and maintenance costs from the High School, Library and the proposed new Senior Center, and he suggested that all of these costs be addressed through a spring 2008 operating override. He expressed his desire to have them all addressed together to allow voters to make a more informed decision. Mr. Wasserman stated that he feels asking for the operating and maintenance cost now is too early because many variables could change prior to when the funds are actually needed. Mr. Bulian suggested that the Board and the Finance Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs meet to discuss how to develop a policy to address this type of an issue in the future. He would like to have more information on how other towns handle the issue of operating and maintenance costs of new buildings. Mr. Healy stated that Proposition 2 ½ was designed to give the voters the power of choice and he does not feel voters are being given the proper choice regarding the High Rock Renovation because operating and maintenance costs are not included.

7:45 p.m. School Committee - Overrides:

Marianne Cooley, School Committee Chair, and Dan Gutekanst, School Superintendent, and Don Gratz, School Committee Member, appeared before the Board to discuss two proposed overrides for the April Town Election.

Debt Exclusion Override - High Rock

Ms. Cooley stated that the School Committee has voted to request an override for the funds necessary to pay for the costs of the High Rock Renovation and the Pollard Technology Project.

The amount of the override request is approximately \$21 million. She stated that all of the construction would be permanent construction. Mr. Gutekanst stated that he met with the Principal of Pollard and they jointly decided to recommend to the School Committee that the modular classrooms at Pollard not be pursued. He stated that it was decided that adequate space would be available for the 2008-2009 school year. He did request that the design funds originally appropriated be kept available for future design needs. Mr. Healy stated that the Board of Selectmen answers to all of the electorate and although he disagrees with this particular course of action the question should be put before the voters. He stated his reasons for not necessarily agreeing with building a 6th grade only school.

Motion by Mr. Wasserman that the Board of Selectmen vote to place the following question on the April 10, 2007 Annual Election ballot:

Shall the Town of Needham be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition 2 ½, so-called, the amounts required to pay the principal of an the interest on the bonds to be issued I the principal amount no to exceed \$21,000,000 in order to provide architectural design, engineering, addition, construction, reconstruction, and/or electrical and technology upgrades of the High Rock School and Pollard School?

YES NO

Second: Mr. Bulian. Unanimously approved 5-0.

Operating Override- Schools

Ms. Cooley stated that the School Committee is interested in placing a \$1,128,670 operating override on the ballot for the 2007 Annual Election. She stated that the funds would go to restorations of past cuts including the Science Center, a literacy Specialist and a reduction in athletic fees. Mr. Wasserman stated that it is not easy for any Board to ask the citizens for an operating override but lack of state funding and additional mandated spending has strained existing budgets. Mr. Healy expressed several

concerns with the override and focused particularly on the issue of the Town Departments loss of funds resulting from a good faith effort to balance the budget. He stated that if the School Committee had intended to go for an operating override they should have gone for the entire amount needed rather than accept funding from the Town side of the budget. He stated that he would like to see future collective bargaining agreement escalations kept within the yearly revenue increases of the Town. Mr. Healy stated that the voters have the right to decide and therefore he would vote in favor of placing the override on the ballot.
Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of selectmen vote to place the following question on the April 10, 2007 Annual Election ballot:

Shall the Town of Needham be allowed to assess an additional \$1,128,670 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding operating expenses for the Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July first two thousand and seven.

YES NO

Second: Mr. Wasserman. Unanimously approved 5-0.

8:15 p.m. Consent Agenda:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1. Sign the Warrant for the Annual Town Meeting Tuesday, April 10, 2007.**

Second: Mr. Healy. Unanimously approved 5-0.

8:15 p.m. Adjourn:

Motion by Mr. Bulian that the Board of Selectmen vote to adjourn the Board of Selectmen Board Meeting of March 6, 2007.

Second: Mr. Healy. Unanimously approved 5-0.