

**March 23, 2006**

The Town Council meeting was called to order by Heidi Rogers at the Town House, 181 Howard Hill Road, Foster, RI at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present:

Heidi Rogers, President  
Steven Bellucci, Vice President  
Ralph Berkowitz  
Colette J. Matarese  
Harold R. Shippee, Sr.  
Bradford Gorham Esq., representing Town Solicitors

President Heidi Rogers asked Steven Bellucci to preside over the meeting as she was not feeling well.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag was recited.

The following citizens spoke under concerned citizens.

Marsha Bowden of Maple Rock Road  
Colette J. Matarese Council member  
Ronald Cervasio of Old Plainfield Pike  
Cheryl Davis of Abbey Lane

Ralph Berkowitz moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to approve the January 25, 2006 minutes.

Ralph Berkowitz aye, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese aye Heidi Rogers aye

Heidi Rogers moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to approve the February 9, 2006 minutes.

Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese aye Heidi Rogers aye Ralph Berkowitz abstained.

Heidi Rogers moved, Colette J. Matarese seconded and it was so voted to approve the February 15, 2006 minutes.

Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese aye Heidi Rogers aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. abstained.

Ralph Berkowitz moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to approve Payroll Warrant #37 in the amount of \$20,918.36, Payroll Warrant #38 in the amount of \$20,879.59 and General Warrant G-16 in the amount of \$66,630.87.

Colette J. Matarese remarked that the council still did not have payroll warrants 24 through 31 and again said that the council should not go forward and the council should at least see the payroll warrants from back in October. Steven Bellucci asked Ralph Berkowitz to check on those warrants.

Ralph Berkowitz. aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese nay Heidi Rogers aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

Walter May a member of the Friends of the Town House reported that the analysis was not complete to give a recommendation to the council on the bid award for the installation of the fire alarm system at the town house.

Ralph Berkowitz moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to table the matter of the awarding of the bid for the fire alarm until the next meeting.

Ralph Berkowitz. aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese aye Heidi Rogers aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

Walter May, a member of the Land Trust read a letter regarding meeting with Michael Tusoni, committee chairman, RI National Guard Memorial Committee. Mr. May indicated that he showed the Hayfield property, Green Acres and the Tikkanen property for possible sites for the national guard memorial. The town will be notified of the decision of the committee after the statewide review.

Steven Bellucci opened the public hearing for the preliminary budget and capital budgets for the town for the fiscal years 2006-07 and read the advertisement that was in the Observer. Steven Bellucci reported that the council would be holding another workshop before the adoption of the budget and then the council agreed to meet on Tuesday March 28, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.

Lynne S. Rider of Burgess Road asked if there were any year to date figures for the current year budget. The figures were not available.

Councilor Matarese provided the council with a budget that she had worked on because of the errors in the budget at the last workshop.

Councilor Matarese noted that the figure for the Foster-Glocester School Capital & Debt should be \$263,247.

Ronald Cervasio of Old Plainfield Pike said that the citizens have to stop adding to the school budget at the financial town meeting.

Robert Boyden of King Road remarked that it would be confusing if two different budgets were used and the one done by the Treasurer should be used.

Mr. Bellucci remarked that the council did cut the school request by deleting the business manager and the legal fees and the difference between the principal and superintendent salary. Mr. Wallace noted that the principal salary was paid by a grant for a few years however the grant no longer pays for the salary anymore.

Gordon Rogers of Cucumber Hill Road noted that the enrollment went down at the Paine School.

Mr. Wallace, Superintendent informed the council that the current business manager works about 20 to 24 hours a week.

Ralph Berkowitz asked how he knew he worked that amount. Mr. Wallace answered that he told him that was the hours that he worked. Colette J. Matarese asked if the school's books were up to date and in order and all bills paid and did he have up to date expense sheet, with payroll warrants paid and all retirement expenses paid. Mr. Wallace answered yes to all her questions.

Gordon Rogers of Cucumber Hill Road questioned how many secretaries worked in the office in 1998 and currently. Mr. Wallace said he could only answer that now there were two in the office. Mr. Rogers commented that there should be only one.

Ronald Cervasio of Old Plainfield Pike commented that the school should not have their own lawyers and what software does the business manager use from home and what license because the school did not pay for a license.

Steven Bellucci believed that the business manager's position went up 65%. Mr. Wallace explained that the school committee and Mr. Moore negotiated a contract with a salary of \$18,500 and the difference from last year is only a 3% increase.

Neal Whitelaw of Jenks Road reported that the money from last year included the stipend from the treasurer last year as well as the cost of the blue cross for the deputy treasurer and the actual cost for the school in the budget was \$25,000 not the \$12,000 that the council believed it was. Mr. Whitelaw said it was a savings of \$6,000 not an increase.

Cheryl Davis of Abbey Lane said that she was all for the school but if enrollment was down she did not understand why there should be a principal and a superintendent.

Steven Bellucci read off Public Safety and said that the Foster Ambulance had an increase of 1.91%

Colette J. Matarese noted that the cost of the street lights was not included on that page and street lights are always under public safety. She noted that last year it was \$4500.

Steven Bellucci noted the fire companies' request:

South Foster \$47,643, Foster Center \$48,650 and Moosup Valley \$45,325

Lynne S. Rider of Burgess Road questioned what the figure of \$78,617.61 that was listed for Foster Center for 04-05 was for. Harold R. Shippee, Sr. said that was a wrong figure.

Rose Salvadore of Walker Road questioned if the wrong figure would be corrected before the financial town meeting.

Walter May of Anthony commented that the percent amounts appear to be incorrect. President Heidi Rogers said to ignore the percentage figures.

Steven Bellucci noted that salaries were 3%

Cheryl David of Abbey Lane commented that Richard Grant was not qualified to be the Director of Public Works as he did not have the licensing.

Colette J. Matarese questioned the snow removal overtime line item amount and believed it was too small of an amount. She also questioned the amount of the asphalt line item being too small at \$6,000.

Ronald Cervasio of Old Plainfield Pike told the council to get a bond issue for all the roads in Foster.

Gordon Rogers of Cucumber Hill Road commented that in the budget of 04/-05 the line item was over \$15,000. Mr. May said it was to pave the surface of the Plainwoods Road bridge.

Colette J. Matarese noted that in the police department the officers' salary was reduced by \$45,000 which was cutting the request of two police officers by one. She said that it could also be reached by backing out the actual salary and backing out the benefits of the recruit instead of decreasing the salary line item itself by \$45,000. She noted that the family plan for health benefits was about \$13,000.

Ronald Cervasio said that he has figured out that the town burns the life of a car in a year by having the guys drive them home to their houses. He said it should be a contractual arrangement and they should report it on their taxes. Steven Bellucci said that he would discuss it in contract negotiations.

Colette J. Matarese believed that the \$12,723 for 04/05 fuel was incorrect.

Steven Bellucci noted that the fees would be going up at the pound in Scituate and the Animal Control Department would be increased by over \$20,000.

The Planning Director salary was reduced as he was also the Public Works Director.

Lynne S. Rider believed the council was locking in a planner at that low salary and stated it would be hard to find someone for that amount.

There were no questions on zoning.

Steven Bellucci noted that the building official did receive a 3% salary but his hours were being increased.

Colette Matarese remarked that she did not remember decreases the electrical and plumbing inspectors to a 3% increase. The council will discuss at the budget workshop.

Lynne S. Rider questioned benefits under the tax assessor budget.

Colette J. Matarese remarked that the new IT person should be listed under the miscellaneous budget not the town clerk's budget.

Colette J. Matarese remarked that the increase in the treasurer's salary was misleading as the current budget list \$9,750 however it is in the school budget as well as the \$3,250 is in the school budget and it is now added in this budget.

Colette J. Matarese also commented that everyone else was getting 3% increases why was that budget getting 6% plus the increase of \$9,750. Heidi Rogers agreed that it should be 3%.

Walter May questioned if the mowing was eliminated in the recreation budget. Steven Bellucci answered he thought it was in public works. Colette J. Matarese remarked that it was possible it was put in maintenance.

Lynne S. Rider of Burgess Road questioned the amount of travel. Heidi Rogers would check on travel and mowing.

Colette J. Matarese asked if the summer concerts were still in the budget for next year. Ronald Cervasio said that the committee was told that the budget was the same as last year.

There were no questions on Human Services.

Steven Bellucci explained that the Engineering Board was increased \$6,000 for training for accredited courses for all departments and if not used would go back into the general fund.

Cheryl Davis questioned if training was already in the fire department budgets.

Harold R. Shippee, Sr. explained that this year it was and next year it would be changed. Colette J. Matarese noted that each company has the money and there was no way to be able to allocate if one company does not use the training money.

There were no other questions for the engineering budget.

Walter May of Anthony Road noted that the town should get into recycling more. Colette J. Matarese remarked that newspapers were used in the winter by the citizens and that is some of the reasons for the low recycling.

Colette J. Matarese noted that the trash budget was wrong that trash/recycle did not cost the town \$610,083.00

The cost of health insurance was discussed under the miscellaneous administrative budget. Colette J. Matarese said that it should all be broken out for each department. Colette J. Matarese also questioned the longevity amount and believed that too was incorrect. Mr. Gorham noted that the bond fee should not be listed as the bond was paid off.

Walter May of Anthony Road noted that there were zeros for two prior years and that was incorrect for the Land Trust budget.

It was noted that the libraries also has zeros for the two prior years.

The Town Clerk remarked that only the bottom line is usually in the budget for the libraries not the budgets as they receive a lump sum from the town.

Colette J. Matarese noted that fire companies usually only have the bottom line and not their budgets. Heidi noted that they were broken out on the first page.

Ronald Cervasio of Old Plainfield said that the town should not be taxing people to buy fire trucks when you don't have the money.

Bradford Gorham explained about the 2% capital account.

Steven Bellucci said he was in favor of doubling the amount for paving because of the conditions of the road. Richard Grant would have the information for the council on the salt shed at the next workshop.

There was a question on what the \$15,000 for grant property was.

Pamela Fontaine of Danielson Pike questioned the monitoring system for the Paine School for \$25,000. The Town Clerk remarked that it was for heating control and monitoring system.

Robert Peterson of Foster Center Road and suggested to the council that they should list the goals that the council has for the budget at the financial town meeting.

Steven Bellucci read a letter from Chief of Police William Mack of Scituate notifying the council that the cost \$20,663.36 would be expected from the Town of Foster to cover 32% of the cost of the operation of the Scituate animal shelter.

The Town Clerk was directed to contact Chief Mack to get a breakdown of the Scituate Animal Control Shelter.

Colette J. Matarese moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to table the matter until the next budget workshop.

Ralph Berkowitz aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Colette J. Matarese aye Heidi Rogers aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

Ralph Berkowitz moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded to appoint Lisa Mills as interim treasurer and to advertise for a deputy treasurer. Harold R. Shippee, Sr. questioned about advertising for a treasurer and Ralph Berkowitz remarked that he wanted to hold off until after the financial town meeting as every time the council advertises for the position the candidates are looking for the big salaries. Heidi Rogers said she would hold off advertises for a deputy treasurer because the council will not really know until the financial town meeting on what will be available. She remarked that maybe the council should look into a temporary agency rather than advertise. Bradford Gorham advised that the town charter states that the treasurer chooses a deputy subject to the approval of the town council so it was really up to the treasurer to choose a deputy. Colette J. Matarese agreed with Heidi Rogers and said that already the deputy treasurer is the acting

treasurer and the budget office from the state's municipal affairs office did send suggestions to the council, a list of candidates who could provide assistance to the town in catching up on financial reporting and providing assistance in preparing the town budget. She noted that they were people who were experienced and well qualified and she rather look into that and stay the way the town is now. Councilor Matarese said to get someone who knows a municipal budget to get the budget up to par. She believed it was better to contract someone who knows municipal budgeting and knows the Phoenix system and go in and clean up the mess that is there. Steven Bellucci asked Ralph to make a new motion to split it in half. Ralph Berkowitz said that he was still discussing and said that the cost would be higher cost than what is in the budget. Colette J. Matarese said that that was not known yet the council had not explored it. Ralph Berkowitz said that the deputy budget was an hourly rate. Colette J. Matarese said that Lisa was stressed out as it was and the council should be looking at what is good for the town. Ralph Berkowitz said the agency that would assist are.....Brad Gorham remarked that that was not what they talking about but they were municipal finance people from other cities and towns who would do part time work for Foster. Ralph Berkowitz said it would cost more than what is in the budget. Steven Bellucci said he wanted to deal with the appointment first and then instruct her to have interviews. Colette J. Matarese said she believed the council would be better off as keeping it as it is as her as acting treasurer and for the council to take the bull by the horn and do it themselves. Colette J. Matarese noted that she worked on the budget however there were a number of problems with it. Councilor Matarese noted that she has not had an evaluation as a deputy treasurer and to promote her officially was acting too quickly without a good discussion, without looking at all the options. Councilor Matarese said she was now acting treasurer and anything over the deputy hours she is getting the treasurer's pay and the council should leave it at that and go forward into the financial town meeting and make any of the decisions after that. Heidi Rogers said that appointing her as treasurer on an interim basis is a temporary thing until the council goes through the town meeting. Colette J. Matarese said it would not be in the town's best interest to do it. Harold R. Shippee, Sr. agreed and said that it should be left as is until after the financial town meeting. Heidi Rogers said that she was working the 35 to 40 hours a week and should get that pay. Heidi Rogers reminded the council that Darlene Weiss was getting \$30.00 an hour. Heidi Rogers said that she would withdraw her second if Ralph wanted to withdraw his motion.

Heidi Rogers moved, Ralph Berkowitz seconded and it was so voted to appoint Lisa Mills as treasurer on an interim basis. Colette J. Matarese said that the council did just go through a horror show that she did not want to repeat. She said that some of the things that she had been made aware of was that the ING Retirement account was paid however it was not caught up to the right amount. She said the town's retirement has not been paid since October probably because of the payroll since October and the expense reports are still not updated. Colette J. Matarese said that the school department almost had to go to not paying the teachers because the transfer was not made. Colette J. Matarese remarked that Western RI Home Repair Program was shut down because transfer money that was not supposed to sit in an interest bearing account was not made and there was no money. She continued to say that there were payroll errors, quarterly payments and purchase orders have not been put on the warrant and invoices from departments have not been placed on the warrants. She noted again that the council still did not have payroll warrants 24 through 31. Colette J. Matarese said that the person the council is discussing did not attend the budget workshop or any of the budget meetings. Colette J. Matarese said that at this point in time the council did not evaluate someone and to go this step is a mistake. Heidi Rogers said that the state pension was a real big problem and was from the warrants going way back and as far as the teachers not getting paid she had asked Malcolm for something in writing and she did not receive it until March 6<sup>th</sup>. Heidi Rogers said she received a fax for her to sign as Lisa did not want to be the only person to sign to transfer money. Heidi Rogers said that for the WRIHRP the money in the account does not match the amount that was supposed to be transferred from the state and they were trying to get the correct figures from the state. Heidi Rogers said that she

was not aware of any payroll errors. Colette J. Matarese said that is why it makes it so much more important that the council goes forward and not be stuck in hours or time and able to get someone who knows municipal finances and straightens out the books. Colette J. Matarese said that she was not blaming Lisa but she does not know municipal financing and she knew she was a CPA but she does not know the system. Colette J. Matarese said that the transfer of the school money needs to be done on a timely basis and why she needs to have approval when she is acting treasurer was beyond her. Colette J. Matarese said that the town could be fined for having the WRIHRP money in an interest bearing account because it is a pass through and the contract is that it does not sit it washing through and Lisa does not know these things. Colette J. Matarese said that if the council does not make this action now the council will have more flexibility talking to people who know municipal affairs so the town's books are in order and then maybe make this kind of motion so she can go in when everything is clean and start off the year with a good clean books in the new fiscal year. Colette J. Matarese said that asking Lisa to take on that position when she does not have the municipal background was doing her a disservice. She said that she would vote to pay her what the treasurer would get on an hourly basis and not back the town into any corners.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese nay Harold R. Shippee, Sr. nay

Heidi Rogers noted that for a future agenda item to add part time temporary casual help for that department. Heidi Rogers said that she or Ralph would speak with her to contact those people. Bradford Gorham remarked that Lisa had the list of individuals. Bradford Gorham noted that the state budget office and the accounting officer, Ernie Almonte got together and tried to help the town out and suggested a list of people from a variety of other municipalities that had time to help out on a contractual basis to help the treasurer out. Mr. Gorham said that the treasurer just wanted to get some contractual help to work through the votes.

Heidi Rogers moved, Ralph Berkowitz seconded and it was so voted to table any action on the deputy treasurer.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

Colette J. Matarese read a letter form the Foster Preservation Society again asking the town council to vote to erect the playground at the Woody Lowden Center and not on the town house fairgrounds.

Colette J. Matarese moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. and it was so voted that the playground construction be at the Woody Lowden Center.

Ronald Cervasio, a member of the recreation committee spoke up and asked the council to go with the motion and put it over at the Woody Lowden or it will never get done.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

A letter was received from the Canterng Colts requesting the Foster Fairgrounds for May 21, 2006

Colette J. Matarese moved, Ralph Berkowitz. seconded and it was so voted to allow Canterng Colts the use of the Foster Fairgrounds for the 13<sup>th</sup> annual horse show on Sunday, May 21, 2006 pending availability and pending proof of insurance

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

A pole petition was received for T. Parker for 7 new poles and 6 anchor guys. Richard Grant, Public Works Director approved of the location after the utility companies agreed with his changes to follow the town's utility corridor plan.

Ralph Berkowitz moved, Colette J. Matarese seconded and it was so voted to accept the pole petitions for T. Parker Road as amended.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

The council members received a list of amendments to the Foster Gloucester Regional School District Charter.

Bradford Gorham explained that he reviewed the proposals with the current charter and listed the changes that were recommended by the school committee.

- 1) Provides full regionalization for all schools K-12.
- 2) Name will be changed to the Ponaganset Regional School District.
- 3) The School Committee will consist of 7 members at large from both towns.
- 4) 4 year staggered terms
- 5) Change the location of the boundaries regarding the 2 mile common boundary.
- 6) Change the time of the regional financial town meeting.
- 7) Any motion at the financial town meeting will be the majority votes cast.
- 8) Add an automatic 2% investment for capital improvements.
- 9) Transportation will be provided by the district.
- 10) If implement an additional \$75,000 over and above the amount budgeted would go for implemented the regionalization.
- 11) Amendments to the charter would be made by the majority of the voters combining both towns.

Bradford Gorham advised the members that they should sit down with the district regionalization committee and start to discuss it and he did not believe that Foster should place it on the ballot in its present form.

Colette J. Matarese moved, Harold R. Shippee, Sr. seconded and it was so voted to table the matter until the next meeting.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

A letter was received from Representative Gorham regarding his proposal for rural conservation district. The matter would be placed on the next agenda

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Heidi Rogers moved, Colette J. Matarese seconded and it was so voted to go into executive session according to 42-46-4-5 (a) (5) for acquisition of property and the minutes be closed and all minutes from previous meetings remain closed and the meeting will be adjourned at the end of the executive session.

Heidi Rogers aye, Steven Bellucci aye, Ralph Berkowitz aye Colette J. Matarese aye Harold R. Shippee, Sr. aye

The executive session was adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Submitted by,

Anne M. Irons  
Town Clerk

An electronic tape is made a part of the record for a complete account of the council meeting. This tape is on file in the vault at town hall.