

Tilton Northfield Fire District
Public Hearing
February 17, 2007

Petition warrant article:

Comm. Tom Gallant called public hearing to order at 10:00. Here to discuss a petition warrant article that has been rendered to the fire district, article 12 on upcoming warrants.

Comm. Gallant read the article. "To see if the voters at the TNFD Annual Meeting will act upon the following question: 'Shall we rescind the provisions of RSA 31:95C (adopted March 7, 2005) which restricts all the revenues from the Ambulance Billings to expenditures for the purpose of apparatus and equipment replacement.' (Petitioned Warrant Article) (Simple majority vote needed to adopt the rescission)." The RSA is clear that it takes a special public hearing for this warrant to be voted on at the annual meeting. Asked for someone to address the article.

Joyce Fulweiler: this came about last year. In 2005 a number of citizens came to the Northfield selectmen's meeting upset and wanting to split the district. Selectmen said no and the people said they didn't have a voice, a government "by the people". She gave the RSA's to one person about the village districts. So they decided to have the village district officials be elected. Second thing was having a budget committee. And third one was rescinding the special fund. The first two passed yet the rescinding article failed. For this year, she asked the Northfield selectpeople and they approved her to seek rescinding the fund again. This gives people a choice. Also, the selectpeople recommended her to contact the Tilton selectmen to see their opinion. She contacted Bob Veloski and they expressed they had an interest also and wanted to discuss again. That is how this came about.

Michelle Bonsteel: did they state a reason why they wanted it rescinded. Joyce responded it was something to do with leasing trucks or something and wasn't approved properly. Tom asked who are "these people". Joyce replied Kevin Waldron, Greg Hill, Gretchen Wilder and others. Joyce continued to state that when you restrict revenue, you limit your financing of village district. Tom: fact is that it is subject to its own budget. People do have a say in it. The budget committee had a say in it. The total amount is clearly laid out. Tom said whatever the people want we will do. We have had the trust fund. Monies were set aside to put in capital reserve fund. Tom was glad that Joyce was able to speak to the petitioned warrant.

Gretchen Wilder: in the past with things that she has seen, she feels full disclosure is great to bring forth to the voters. Let's go back to the pick up trucks, which started her involvement. These leases were blended into the budget. That is what prompted her to get involved. Full disclosure is essential. It was made known to her that "we have the money". But will end up costing us over \$80,000 with the leases. She feels full disclosure would have helped this situation. When you blend them in and we don't know that there is a new item - it was a bitter pill for her, it seemed "sneaky" to her. She is not alone in this feeling. You may have gone forward thinking it was right but it wasn't full disclosure. However the vote goes she will work with it.

Joyce feels there is more understanding now to the body of how the fund works.

Charles Hall, Tilton. Only thing that troubles him is that as a district we punish the taxpayers of both towns by voting down things. We collectively succeeded in costing the district money. Need to correct that and move on. If a new direction, fine, but need to move forward. Whether capital reserve fund or special fund, both excellent ways to save. But not costing us more money in interest payments.

Ken Randall had a point of info - both adoption and rescission of this particular act will be by ballot vote, it is simple majority vote.

Joyce we saw this with the school district we couldn't go forward with capital improvements with the 3 towns, once moved past that we were able to go forward and pass the \$18million bond issue to make new improvements.

Tom sees we are on the verge of it happening but now we are, in Tilton, doing a feasibility study on splitting the district. Tom feels it isn't in the best interest of the district.

Michelle Bonsteel commented on a question that had been put on floor at last public hearing. Question was asked how budget committee arrived and gave a recommendation and non recommendations, like there was some sort of deal that was going on between the budget committee and fire commissioners. She was offended by the question. She and the others worked very hard on the budget. Probably attended at least 10 meetings. There were hard decisions made by consensus. She feels it is in the best interest of commissioners to operate it the way we are operating. She sees her own fees that she earns for the district she works for going into the general fund and cannot use any of them to help her operate as a code enforcement official. Cannot utilize and get equipment they need without affecting the tax rate. Feels it would be a huge mistake to rescind the special revenue fund.

Tom asked if any other questions or additions. Bob Watson agreed with Michelle that the special revenue fund is a good tool that we need and it can be increased. The local people that get taken in the ambulance don't get charged. If you have insurance, we accept whatever the insurance pays and we don't go after any left over costs. We could and if we did, we could probably double the revenue. He doesn't feel a lot of people understand that they are not getting billed for the service. Tom mentioned we write off 40% of our charges. Other communities do charge. If it was going into the general fund, it would reduce taxes. There are a number of ways to pay for the maintenance and operation and proliferation of the fire dept. We as a district chose to go, in 2005, with the apparatus and equipment fund. This discussion and warrant article is a healthy thing. He appreciates the comments of Charlie Hall, also.

Seeing no other comments, Tom called meeting to a close at 10:19.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Janine L. Vary
Clerk