

Special Town Meeting
September 27, 2006

Robert Valentine called the meeting to order at 8:01 P.M. He started off by talking about the town meeting being the Legislative body of the Town.

Robert Valentine opened the floor for nominations for moderator. Hugh Allen nominated John Morris, seconded by H. John Krukar. Joan Lang closed the nominations and asked the clerk to cast one ballot for John Morris, seconded by Francis Goodhouse.

The Moderator asked the clerk to read the call.

John Morris asked for a motion to accept the call. Lavinia Breakell made a motion to accept the call. Seconded by Laurie Mosley. Passed unanimously.

John Morris turned the floor over to Robert Valentine.

Robert Valentine spoke to the background as to why the Board of Selectmen of each of the three towns chose to call this meeting. For the past six months the three First Selectmen Jack Travers from Warren, Phil Birkett from Morris and Robert Valentine as well as some of the members of the Board of Finance from each town have been having discussions with the Board of Education, on a policy that the Board of Education has adopted in regards to charging fees to our municipalities, particularly recreation which is a vast majority of the uses that we do use Goshen Center School, James Morris, Warren School and Wamogo for sports programs in addition to other programs which our Recreation Director Dale Ives puts together, which could include line dancing, karate, many programs. We are pretty fortunate here in Goshen that we have an excellent Recreation coordinator who does a lot of programs, puts together great programs for all of our residents from our youngest residents to our oldest residents.

He went on to state that when this policy was put forward it was actually adopted several years ago and not necessarily enforced uniformly over the years. There are times particularly when our Recreation Commission use the facilities here at Goshen Center School when we did pay some additional fee for overtime for janitorial services but that was based strictly on additional hours that were necessary. That was a gesture from our Recreation Commission to the Board of Education in acknowledgement that there may be some additional costs.

He further stated that in all of this discussion the Board of Education subsequently decided that the policy which they had adopted some years ago had not been enforced adequately, or varying degrees in force and they decided that they were going to review the fee schedule that was associated with the policy and implement a new fee schedule. That fee schedule was presented this past June in a Board of Education meeting. First a Facilities Committee meeting of the Board of Education and then subsequently two days later to the Board as a whole. He stated that the fee schedule ranges between \$38 and \$44 an hour to use the facilities subsequent to that Robert Valentine, Jack Travers and Phil Birkett made it clear to the Board of Education that they felt that it was inappropriate to be charging our communities for the use of the facilities and that we had already, through budget process of Region #6, paid those fees. In addition to that they did some research and found that although Region #6 was created in 1953, initially for our high school in 1970 we decided as three towns through referenda to bring our grammar schools into Region 6. When we did that there was a necessity viz via state statute to have a study committee to look into the possibility of bringing our grammar schools into the Region #6, and that study committee presented a report. That initial report of the study committee was then by statute put to referenda in all three of our towns. That referenda initially failed and it failed over the issue of the towns feeling as though they would loose control of the schools that they had owned and managed prior to 1970. Once that referenda failed, the study committee went back to work and presented a new report. That report was voted on in 1970 and he read one pertinent section to that report which was the question that was voted on February 28, 1970. This is #8 on the recommended plan (see attached). We think that that language is very clear. In that we had not paid fees prior to ourselves, that we as the Town of Goshen should not pay fees to the district for further use. We strongly felt and presented that to the Board of Education that we felt that that language was a contract and a contract that we all agreed to through our legislative bodies at referenda in 1970. The board disagreed, subsequent that the Board of Education did ask for a legal opinion from a Shipman & Goodwin. We did ask Town Council for a legal opinion which he had read (see attached). The Board of Selectmen was in a position were we felt strongly that we had an agreement when we created Region #6 and brought our grammar schools in. The Board of Education disagrees; they have a policy that is contrary to that contract. We would vigorously enforce any contract that we have. We urge the Board of Education to reconsider, as of this date and even as of yesterday as our Board members were nice enough to come to the Board of Selectmen's meeting yesterday, there is still discussion on how much to charge our towns for fees to use the facilities. I strongly believe having reviewed their budget, that their budget represents a revenue line item that is equal to their expense line items. Those revenue line items...there are no items within the revenue line

items for fees that they would charge our three municipalities for the use of the facilities. Therefore their budget is balanced. The fees that they would charge would be in addition to. The Board of Education has a different point of view. We have as a Board of Selectmen two choice: 1. To allow the Board of Education to administer fees or charge fees contrary to our 1970 agreement. Or 2. To challenge that by either taking legal action against the Board of Education to enforce our contract of 1970, we believe that foolish because of the fact that we fund Region #6, so we have decided to bring to town meeting a proposed amendment to the 1953 plan, which is the base or principal plan that created the district in the first place and that amendment is pretty clear in what we want to do by proposing that amendment is to make it absolutely clear, that we the Towns who are Region #6 should not be charged fees for the use of the facilities.

Robert Valentine went on to describe the process as a simple process and it is the same statutory process that we had to go through in 1970. An amendment to the plan is first proposed to the legislative body, in either all or one town(s) for their consideration; after and if one municipality approves calling for a district meeting to amend the plan, the Regional school district #6 shall by statute call a district meeting. That district meeting is the opportunity for all of us, Board of Education included, to speak to those issues that are surrounding this whole question if weather or not fees should be charged. There has been a lot in the press about this. We strongly believe that our plan of 1970 is not being followed, and that the most inexpensive way to bring this issue to a head, without further debate on whether or not it is appropriate is to bring it back to our legislative body and ask our legislative body to request of the Board of Education to hold a district meeting, at which time those interested parties can come and be heard, both sides, the debate can be had and we can decide this one way or the other an so that is why we are here this evening. To ask the district board of education to call a district meeting for the purpose of debating and in the end adjourning to referenda for this question in all three towns. That is the statutory process that Chip Roraback talks about and that is the process that we ask tonight that the towns people, through its legislative body approve.

John Morris explained the purpose of the meeting briefly. Then he explained to have a meeting you vote yes if you do not want the district to have a meeting you vote no.

William Grambo asked if this fee would also affect the use of the High School itself seeing as it is not part of any of the three towns physically?

Robert Valentine responded that there is a town meeting at the same time in all three towns at the same time and because of not being able to agree with the Board of Education they have decided to pull all the facilities in, WAMOGO, Goshen Center, James Morris and Warren.

John Morris asked for any further discussion. He then called for a voice vote. "All in favor of calling a district vote signify by saying Aye". Vote was unanimous.

Robert Valentine thanked all for coming out and urged everyone to attend the district meeting to voice any pros or cons.

Al Shull asked if the school board is required to have referenda? Robert Valentine stated that the statute does say that they shall. They shall have a district meeting, they shall produce a report and they shall have a referenda.

Henrietta Horvay made a motion to adjourn at 8:24 P.M. Seconded by Wilrose Duquette.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara L. Breor
Town Clerk