



**TOWN COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 21, 2010**

Michael Bowie, Chair District 2 2012
Gina Mason, Vice Chair District 1 2010
Fern Larochele, Jr., At Large 2010
Roger Cote, At large 2011
Mark Lunt, District 1 2012
Dale Crafts, District 2 2010
Lori Pomelow, At Large 2012

CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE TO THE FLAG. The Chairman, Michael Bowie, called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag at 6:30 PM.

ROLL CALL. Members present were Councilors Bowie, Mason, Crafts, Larochele, Cote, Pomelow and Lunt. Also present were Stephen Eldridge, Town Manager; Jessica Maloy, Finance Director; Michael Cote, Code Enforcement Officer; Budget Advisory Board Members Don Fellows, Rick Graham, Dorothy Fitzgerald, and John Wierzbicki; Miriam Morgan-Alexander, Board of Appeals; and approximately 100 citizens in the audience.

PUBLIC HEARINGS- NONE

CONSENT AGENDA

VOTE (2010-153) Councilor Larochele, seconded by Councilor Mason moved to approve the minutes of August 17, 2010 and a Pole Permit for 57 River Road. **Order passed - Vote 7-0.**

COUNCIL ORDERS, RESOLUTIONS, & ORDINANCES

PROPERTY ASSESSED CLEAN ENERGY ACT
(PACE) ORDINANCE
(Final Reading)

Mr. Eldridge said this is the final reading of what they call the PACE ordinance. It was legislated by the State for towns that want to participate in this loan program for qualified people for money for clean energy for their homes. It is all administrated by a 3rd party. We only take part in it by advertising about it and letting people know it is there.

Councilor Bowie said we had a first reading at the last meeting and a public hearing. Does Council have any questions on this? Councilor Cote said this is all going to be done through the State; it has nothing to do with us at all. Councilor Bowie said it is all done by a third party. Nothing to do with us, the only thing that is required, based on the law, is that we have to have an ordinance. The ordinance we have in front of us is really provided to us by the State. Councilor Pomelow said and the educational. Councilor Bowie said correct.

VOTE (2010-154) Councilor Pomelow, seconded by Councilor Larochele moved to adopt the Property Assessed Clean Energy Act (PACE) ordinance.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Frank Hogan said do you get applications here for that. Mr. Eldridge said no, you will have to call the third party. Councilor Bowie said we will have literature here in the Town Office that will help explain the program, but you will have to contact a different entity in order to apply for the funding to support doing the clean energy.

Dorothy Fitzgerald said my question is a point of order. The Friday night meeting was not officially adjourned with a motion and a second. Is this a legal meeting? Councilor Bowie said I believe so. It is one of our normally scheduled meetings. The Friday night meeting was a special meeting. Mrs. Fitzgerald said the Friday night meeting was not legally adjourned, so was that meeting recessed until now? Councilor Bowie said no, it was not recessed until now. It was closed. Mrs. Fitzgerald said it wasn't closed legally. Councilor Bowie said I guess we will have to ask our attorney on what protocol we have to take.

Vote By Roll Call - Yeas: Councilor Bowie, Larochelle, Mason, Crafts, Cote, Pomelow, and Lunt. Nays: None. Order Passed - Vote 7-0.

MORATORIUM ORDINANCE PROHIBITING
MARIJUANA DISPENSARY FACILITIES
(Final Reading)

Mr. Eldridge said this was a request by the Council to put in place an ordinance giving a moratorium so the Council has an opportunity to look at the request that some people have made to have a marijuana dispensary here. This gives the Council 180 days to have discussions to see if they want to prohibit it or allow it.

VOTE (2010-155) Councilor Pomelow, seconded by Councilor Crafts moved to adopt the moratorium prohibiting marijuana dispensary facilities.

Councilor Pomelow said I wonder if we have the additional information we had talked about. I know that Steve had expected them to come to our last meeting on August 17 and they didn't show. Mr. Eldridge said have not heard from them at all.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Inaudible comment from audience. Councilor Bowie said right now the ordinance, should it pass, will be enforced by Council to prohibit any dispensary for 180 days. Council then has to have discussions with public input as to how they want to move forward on a more long term ordinance. It is more to give us time to go through the details and analyze what it means to the community.

Vote By Roll Call - Yeas: Councilor Bowie, Larochelle, Mason, Crafts, Cote, Pomelow, and Lunt. Nays: None. Order Passed - Vote 7-0.

TAX RATE OF INTEREST

Councilor Bowie said some discussion had taken place with Council based on the whole tax issues and concerns we currently have going on to look at either eliminating or somehow doing something with the tax interest so that we are not charging interest on late taxes given the situation. It is up to Council to see what they would like to do. My recommendation is that we eliminate tax interest for this year while we are trying to get an analysis done on this topic.

Councilor Cote said I think that is the least we can do given the hard time we have put our constituents in. I think we have to do that. Councilor Bowie said I would entertain a motion to eliminate the interest on the tax bills for this fiscal year.

VOTE (2010-156) Councilor Cote, seconded by Councilor Mason moved to eliminate the tax [interest] on all tax bills for one full year.

Councilor Larochelle said this is different from what we have done in past years. Is there any more guidance, would that be for the first half of the first half, would that be considered the whole year without, I mean, is there any incentive with this for when people pay the first part of the year. I'm curious because this isn't something we've done in the past. Councilor Bowie said based on my understanding of what we've been told by legal counsel, unfortunately there's nothing we can do should we find any error in the commitment. There's nothing we can do to change that tax commitment this year, therefore we can't do anything for the bills that are due in March. My recommendation would be that they be eliminated for this entire year so there's no penalty invoked, as well as other things that we'll probably discuss tonight that we are going to try to work on.

Councilor Larochelle said so unless arrangements are made, the due dates will still be the same due dates. Councilor Bowie said right, this is just based on the interest. I think Council will be discussing tonight when those due dates are.

Councilor Pomelow said will any consideration be given to people who have already paid their taxes, as far as those who have paid on time. Councilor Bowie said no interest has been paid if you paid on time. I'm not sure if there has been any interest charged for people who haven't paid yet that have come in, but if so I would recommend that we reimburse them. Mrs. Maloy said there has not been any interest charged to anybody who has come in.

Larry Fillmore said I have several comments. The first one is that on Friday night I told you or asked the Council that if you are going to have discussions like this that involve the town and we know there is a big interest because they were in that room all Friday night and down the hall Friday night. I suggested to you people to move this meeting to a facility that would allow these people to have seats so that they can hear you down the hallway and in there so that we can know what you people are actually doing. Did you not hear the question? Did you not hear what I asked? I mean is there a problem in this room with the acoustics? This is ridiculous. You want to have a meeting and you have us here standing around. Those people can't hear you down there. You knew this was going to happen because you were here Friday night or at least your body was here Friday night. This issue right now needs to be tabled until you can get a facility for these people and you announce what you are going to do to the town residents so that the real people can be here to make their comments to you before you make any decisions or vote on anything. That's point one.

Mr. Fillmore said there is a check and balance in all government all the way to the president of the United States. You made a comment that we'll just have to live with this tax bill. Even if you found flaws in it, we have to suck it up. No way. If your process is proper and it was done correctly, then I agree with you, but if there are fallacies in your system, in the manner in which it was inputted or calculated or whatever, because garbage into a computer is garbage out. Has anybody taken the voter registration log by addresses, it's computerized you can sort it by addresses, and bounced them against the number of accounts that are into your tax system to see whether or not you've got them all. If you didn't get them all, where are we then? We're short now, so it won't going to hurt anything. You got a lot more work to do before you make these people pay their taxes that you guys screwed up, apparently. Jerry can give you information. There a lot of people here that can give you information. There are a lot of things that should have been done before this tax bill ever was issued. It should not have been a closed item without the people in this town knowing about it before they got their tax bills. That's wrong. We hold special meetings all the time. If we realized there was a tax shortage, or money shortage, why didn't we hold a special meeting for the town to have a say in what we're going to do. Maybe we didn't want to go 50% to 80%. Maybe we wanted to go 10% the

first year, 10% the next, 10% the 3rd year. There have to be alternatives, but because you didn't leave us with any, you want us to accept the fact that you can't change it. There are checks and balances. If it is screwed up, fix it. Don't make us suffer.

Richard Main said I would ask about the length of time that was presented in the motion. It was stated that it would be for one full year and that one full year is September 15 to September 15. I would suggest that the motion be amended to indicate that it is through June 30 because the liens will go out somewhere near the end of June on the unpaid balances. I would suggest it be only for the current fiscal year and not obligate a future Council in that regard.

Don Fellows said I don't know if this is a point of order or what, but my ears heard Roger make a motion that the taxes be eliminated not the interest. That's your motion on the floor, at least that's what I heard. If that's what you meant, fine but I don't think so. *Councilor Cote said I stand corrected, Don.*

Michelle Swatsworth-Turmelle said two years ago when the tax bills went out we switched from the duplicate to the current billing system. The first set of duplicates when we changed over the first bill that was sent out as you recall, was wrong. There was about a 14% increase. The billing was incorrect. It had to be reprinted and redone because I had come to you guys because I had issue with the fact that you paid double the cost for switching. There was an error. It was corrected. I'm curious, why are you now saying if there is an error found why cannot it be corrected? I don't understand that.

Councilor Bowie said I'm only being told what our attorney said. I'm not sure if it's the same type of error. What the attorney has told us is that once you make the commitment, I don't think the error in the dual bill issue was based on the commitment. I think it was a straight calculation error within the software. The commitment can't change. If we find that the calculation for the commitment was wrong, and I'm sure the Council would agree, as we try to work through this and have the information brought to us, if we find something is there, we're going to work to do whatever we can to find out how much we can change of that. I think it gets into more of the legalities of where it is in the process that the error was made. If it's in the commitment number itself, which drives the mil-rate, I think that's what we've been told, I wouldn't swear to it unless our attorney is here, but I haven't seen him yet, but that's what we can't change. But if the software calculated the number wrong, based on that same mil-rate, then that is something I think could be fixed. Those are the things that we are going to try to work on in the next week or two to try to bring this to closure so we can make sense of all this and get to some type of resolution.

Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said correct me if I'm wrong in the way this went. In July you guys voted on the commitment to go from 56% to 80%. Overall, you guys made the vote on accepting the budget. You as a Council didn't vote on the commitment on the current tax bills that went out. Those went out, as I recall I heard Councilor Mason say she didn't know about this change until she got her bill. So that commitment is not something that all seven of you made that commitment to, correct? Councilor Bowie said the Council votes on the budget and the revenue projections. The Council has no say in setting the commitment. The Council does not vote on the commitment. The Council doesn't tell the Assessor how to assess. The Assessor assesses based on the State laws that he's required to do under the special tables that he's given to do that. The Council doesn't vote on a commitment or agree to a commitment.

Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said you agreed because you voted on the budget. Councilor Bowie said we vote on the budget and we project revenues that feed into the commitment process along with what we get for homestead exemption and everything like that. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said but those commitments that you voted for projected revenues changed in August. Councilor Bowie said no, they did not. Our budget has not changed. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said I heard about a 1.8 shortfall from one business. Councilor Bowie said that's a valuation. That's a change in valuation that's done by the Assessor. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said right, but that's money that comes into

our town. Councilor Bowie said that's the complicated piece of all this, which is difficult to understand. That change in loss in valuation that is done by the Assessor. It has no impact on our budget. It has no impact on our revenue. It does have an impact when it is all pulled together as to what the mil-rate becomes to then drive tax bills. We have no say in how that valuation changes. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said no, I'm not saying you have a say, I'm saying that is something that changed after you voted on. Councilor Bowie said but it is nothing we have control over. I can't go back and open up the budget because the valuation changed. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said all I asked was that there was something that changed in August after you guys voted on the budget because had you known about this information that came in August, you certainly wouldn't have approved the budget as it was in July. Councilor Bowie said we certainly would have looked at things differently, yes. Ms Swatsworth-Turmelle said something obviously changed in August that would have affected our budget had you known about it. At this point, I think what people want to hear is, not that they can't have their bills changed, we've done that in the past. We did it 2 years ago. No matter what the error was, they were changed. If an error is found now, what people want to know is can it be changed. If so, why not because it has been changed in the past no matter what the reason, why can't it be changed? Because we're certainly not going to expect to get a refund if we've overpaid, that would be ridiculous.

Councilor Bowie said if the change results in the fact that we can do that, we most definitely want to do that. We can't go back and change the budget. We can't change our revenues. The only thing we can hope to find out is that in the valuation process there was an error made either through the calculations or whatever that doesn't impact the commitment of the mil-rate. I believe that's the piece. I really need the lawyer here to explain all of that.

Councilor Bowie said Mr. Therriault, what we are trying to understand is that we cannot change the commitment because that has been legally set by the Assessor and has been submitted to the State. We can't go back and change those tax bills unless we find a potential error in the way the software calculated. Mr. Therriault said if there is a mathematical error or something of that nature, yes. Other than that, no. Councilor Bowie said we can't go back and open up the budget and we can't change revenue projections. Mr. Therriault said there's no provision in the Charter that allows for that. Councilor Bowie said we can't go into surplus to try to offset that. All of that we've looked at.

Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said so if the assessing information overall is incorrect, you're telling me that can't be amended. The corrections can't be made if the assessments are incorrect. Mr. Eldridge said no, he said if the calculations that the computer spit out were wrong, then we can go back and make the adjustment. What I would recommend if that is the case, that we would look at making up the difference in the second billing, which is what we do sometimes in other cases.

Mr. Therriault said if there is a problem with an assessment, there is the abatement process. Councilor Bowie said that's the point I wanted to make sure of. If it's something the Assessor valued incorrectly, that has to go through the abatement process. We can't make a change globally for that. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said every single tax payer would have to go through the abatement process. Councilor Bowie said I think what would behoove us as we try to go through this, which is one of the things I want to have a workshop to go through this, is I want the town to find that error. I want the town to find out if there was an error in how this was calculated or how our valuation process went that made this error. If we then find that valuation error, we will work with the citizens of the community to figure out how we come through the abatement process and work with everybody. We're not going to sit back if we find out what the error is. We're not just going to sit back and say you come in whenever you want or if you want to. I want us to be proactive in this approach. When we find out and understand where's the underlying issue that's driving our taxes up the 10 or 11% that we're seeing. I think the Council needs to have a workshop with staff.

Councilor Bowie said I'm going to ask the auditors to come in and audit our commitment. I want it to be looked at. I'm asking for a workshop for staff to come to us and explain every one of the

drivers that make up the whole tax process. There are a number of pieces that make this up. There is the revenue, what our loss of revenue was, what our budget increase was, what our debt increase was, there is also the whole new personal property piece that came into play, there's the Dingley issue that we are all talking about. What I would like to have explained to Council through staff, is to show us the calculations of each one of those drivers and how that built the total percent increase for the taxpayers taxes. Of each one of those, what percent are they to get you to that total 10 or 11%. If we can't prove that out, then we need to have found where the error is, then understanding what that error is, then we can decide what avenues we have to make any changes.

Councilor Bowie said we may come through it and find out that everything was correct. The auditors may come back and say you did it all right. We may come back and go through this detailed look and find out that everything stays the same as at was. At least then we'll be able to explain to everybody that this percent was based on Dingley, this percent was based on our bonds that we approved this past year for the trails and such, and this percent was because the budget increased by 2 or 3%. At least that way we will have some solid information that we can bring forward to you and explain that to you. That's my goal and I believe it's Council's goal of what we need to get to. I'm trying to ask to see if we can have that done in a couple of weeks. In the meantime, I would like us to eliminate this whole interest thing for this year, which we are talking about and Roger nicely changed it from the entire taxes. The other thing the Council wants to talk about is, let's delay the whole payment process. Normally the bills are due the end of September, what if we make it November. Give us time to come through this, so you don't necessarily have to come in and pay those bills and hopefully we find out the answer ahead of time.

Councilor Bowie said you may find out you still have to pay them, but that's the kind of approach that Council wants to work through to come to grips with this issue. None of us are happy and we definitely know you are unhappy. We've heard that and we recognize that, but we all need to understand how it works. This is a very complicated matter. It's not an easy thing. It's difficult just for Council to understand, let alone to try to explain it to 9,000 citizens, not that we don't want to by any means, but it is a very complicated matter. I would like Council to get all of this together to understand it so that we can better present it to everybody.

Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said so can we graciously expect that Mr. Dow will be out of this process. It will be done independent of him. Mr. Eldridge said one of the things we did today was that we put together and I put it out for everybody to see, some of the steps that we're going to take to correct some of the problems that we have found. One of them is the Assessing office. Mr. Dow is no longer in the town's employment, which is one of the things we addressed right away. The other thing is Mr. Van Tuinen who is the consultant we hired earlier, who some of you who are here got to hear speak about the land valuation that he looked at. He has agreed to come on board and work with us to go through all the data. He is very familiar with the data because he was here with Mr. Dow entering data, answering questions, and looking at things very thoroughly. He's agreed to come in, review the office, review all of the records, and stay as long as we need him here, hopefully a month, maybe longer so that we know we have all of the right data, everything is correct. If we have to make changes, he's the person I would choose to help us through that along with legal counsel.

Mr. Eldridge said tomorrow I will call our auditing firm who we've had for a number of years and ask them to look at the commitment amounts that we used. I think it would make more sense for Bill to come in first to make sure the data that was put into the system is correct. Then we can move forward. Mike has already covered some of the other things-that we move the tax date back. We had no plans to charge interest at least for another month when the bills went out. If anybody has concerns and they want to have an abatement process to look at, you need to come in and see Mr. Van Tuinen. Once I have his hours when he will be here, he can walk you through that. In the meantime, if there are citizens who need assistance, I know there are some people who asked out front. We've got to get to our staff tomorrow and let them know there are options. We do payment plans. We do it when we have people who have gone through the lien process. We work out

whatever they can afford. We move it forward so that we can make it work for anybody. Those are some of the things we are looking at to do.

Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said the interest and penalties are? Councilor Bowie said that's the motion on the floor right now to eliminate that for this year, any interest payments, and then all of these other things we've discussed to continue going forward with those in short order, because this is not something you want to prolong. It needs to be done quickly within the next couple of weeks so we can come to some type of resolution. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said so Mr. Van Tuinen was contracted to do the land. He's going to do something similar, subcontract or to some extent help out with this piece of it. So it is wait and see. Mr. Eldridge said yes. Councilor Bowie said he will be paid out of the current assessing budget so there will be no extra cost.

Councilor Pomelow said at one point in our discussions we talked about there being a certain number of days or a period of time that a taxpayer must come forward to question or dispute their assessment. Is that from September 1 when the commitment was made, there was like 185 days. In lieu of us doing this process, is the time clock already ticking, where if somebody has a question about their assessment they need to come forward now because we don't know how long a period of time it is going to be. We're hoping to have answers over the next few weeks. Mr. Eldridge said if you have questions about the assessed value, those are things we can look at and should not affect what Mr. Van Tuinen will be looking at. Come in if you have a question to go through. Mr. Van Tuinen will look at the property and make sure he feels it is assessed correctly.

Councilor Pomelow said the second part is that not applying interest to tax bills is for both personal property and real estate taxes. Councilor Bowie said it's your entire tax bill.

Bob Donovan said it is kind of late in the game for the Council to start learning how this system works. Never mind the Town Manager is supposed to know how this process works. I'm a former Selectman from 1979-1991, 12 years. What has happened here is totally unacceptable to the taxpayers of Lisbon. The Council needs to take quick and aggressive action to restore some credibility in this relatively new form of government is accountable to the people and not out of control. There is no reason why this meeting couldn't have been held in the gym. The previous assessor/appraiser caused no harm to the Town of Lisbon, yet he was forced out. He repeatedly requested money to upgrade the values of properties over a 4 year period, but was repeatedly denied. How can the mil-rate drop from 25+ to 21+ yet the town budget increased 3%. We should have increased the mil-rate to cover the increase. The letter of law on the across the board levy on property values is a scam that avoids bringing the issue to the people and the Council for an approval of the budget. This kind of end around had to be known by the Assessor/Appraiser and the Town Manager must have condoned. Where was the chair of the Council on this? He is the closest to the manager and should have kept the Council informed. The full Council should have approved the final budget. From what was in the paper a lot of the folks didn't know about this increase levy until they got the information in the mail. I recommend that the Assessor/Appraiser and the Town Manager be fired and that the Council reorganizes and removes the current chair of the Council. The Council members should reevaluate how they serve the taxpayers of Lisbon. Again, quick and aggressive action needs to happen by the Council to ensure that the taxpayers of Lisbon that you are protecting their interests.

Dot Fitzgerald said Mr. Bowie, did you say that if people want an abatement that they have to provide information to the Assessor. Councilor Bowie said they need to come in to see the Assessor to discuss that. Mrs. Fitzgerald said how is an individual taxpayer supposed to get the information necessary to get an abatement. Do they have to go out and hire an appraiser? Councilor Bowie said to be honest with you I don't know everything that's required for an abatement. I don't know what information is needed in order to challenge what the Assessor does. I haven't seen the abatement form or what things go into that.

Councilor Crafts said I had an abatement done years ago on my house because I questioned the tax amount. The Assessor will go out with your card and look at your house to see that all of the data that is on the card matches up with what you pay taxes on. In my particular case, it said I had a fireplace, which I didn't have. I ended up getting that abated and my taxes came down a little bit. It's going back, reassessing, and making sure there is no inaccurate information to start with. Then if you believe that it is still assessed too high, then I'm afraid you would have to come in and prove your point, but that's where you start with the abatement process.

Mrs. Fitzgerald said each and every tax payer needs to remember and understand that their valuation has gone from 56% to 80%, so you add another 20% on to that 80% and this is what your Assessor is telling you your house, your property is valued at, that you can sell it for, lots of luck.

Mrs. Fitzgerald said another thing I want to bring up. There's another paper out there that says tax billing steps of action. Number 2, fill vacancy until a new Assessor is hired. Who hires these people? Who hired the Assessor? Mr. Eldridge said I do. Mrs. Fitzgerald said how well did you check out Mr. Dow when you hired him. Mr. Eldridge said we checked his references. I checked people who he didn't list as references who I know. Mrs. Fitzgerald said who's we? You said "we checked." Mr. Eldridge said I checked, I checked his references. We had an interview committee, this is how we do it here, to review the applicants. We choose the ones that we think are best qualified and we interview them. Mr. Dow was one of those. The group that interviewed him and all the others made that recommendation based on if his references were okay. I checked references he had given us along with several other people who he had worked for. I got good references.

Mrs. Fitzgerald said I understand that he's been let go from various towns that he worked for, but didn't find that out. Mr. Eldridge said I did not find that out. I was not told that by the people there. Mrs. Fitzgerald said who is on that committee. Who is on this hiring committee? Mr. Eldridge said I would have to look back and see. It's over a year ago. Councilor Bowie said I would like to keep this discussion around the order that is on the floor, which is our tax rate of interest. Mrs. Fitzgerald said it rather is because if we are going to have. Councilor Bowie said you are discussing a personnel matter and a personnel approach right now. Mrs. Fitzgerald said well, yes and no, because if you are going to be hiring another interim Assessor, that is pertinent to what is going on right now.

Bill Bauer said I recently had an appraisal done on two pieces of property in Lisbon Falls. Within the last 15 months I had it professionally appraised. I had the figures. I met with Mr. Dow yesterday. My question is do I have to meet with a new person now that he is no longer employed by the town. In going over the figures with him, I find that I have been overcharged by \$1,000 for one tax year on two pieces of property. I had a professional appraisal and I have the documentation with that. Compared with what he has, and based on the 80% rule, I have been overcharged by \$1,000. \$700 on 1 and \$300 on another. Do I now have to meet with Mr. Van Tuinen and go through the same thing, or is my case started. I've already paid these 2 tax bills, too. If we find it's true, do I get a rebate, not a refund, on next half year's taxes? Councilor Bowie said yes. Mr. Eldridge said if you haven't filed an abatement form, then you need to meet with Mr. Van Tuinen. Mr. Bauer said we went through some paperwork yesterday, I'm not sure what we did fill out, but he agreed with my figures. Mr. Eldridge said I'll check his office tomorrow. Mr. Bauer said I just don't want to think it has been taken care of and find out later on that it's past the 180 days.

Beverly Curtis said is Mr. Van Tuinen an accredited assessor? Mr. Eldridge said yes, he is. He's been in the business for a long time. He works all over the state. He also does appraising for large equipment like in the mills. He just finished a revaluation in Durham. He's got more than 1 employee, he's not the only one. He's very competent. Council has had the opportunity to sit with him. We've contracted with him to look at our land value to start. I think the Council was very comfortable with him. I think he is able to talk in language that everybody understands.

Councilor Cote said would it be a good idea to establish a timeframe so people don't get caught up in 180 days. We're going to have a considerable amount of problems here and it's probably going to

go by the 180 days. Do we as a Council have the authority to change that? Councilor Bowie asked Mr. Therriault if the Council has the authority to adjust the 180-day time limit. Mr. Therriault said no, that is under State statute. Actually, it is 185 days and it is from the day of commitment which was approximately September 1, so it is 185 days from September 1. They have to file that form by that day. Councilor Cote said is that something we are going to put out so that people know. Mr. Eldridge said yes. Mr. Therriault said probably on your website is a good place to put it. Councilor Bowie said we could do mail.

Mrs. Fitzgerald said shouldn't he be using the microphone so everyone can hear. Councilor Bowie said what our attorney said is that we cannot change the time period for your ability to go through the abatement process and the time period is 185 days. It starts from the date of commitment. The commitment date was right around September 1. So it is 185 days from September 1. You have that timeframe to question your taxes. Council, and what I believe Mr. Cote is asking for, is for us to set some sort of time limit on it. I was looking at something around 2 weeks to try to get through this. Councilor Cote said I just don't want to have any of our citizens looking to file a form to adjust their taxes and not be able to do it because they went over a deadline. I mean that would just be an extra slap in the head that they don't need.

Councilor Lunt said I think that we should have a meeting at the school. Councilor Bowie said yes, we will do that. When Council discusses taxes from now on we will hold them at the school. Mrs. Fitzgerald said at the high school not at the new elementary school because the acoustics in there are very bad. Councilor Bowie said we can look into that.

Councilor Lunt said what does it cost to send out a mailing if you want to send out a letter to everyone in town. Mr. Eldridge said pretty expensive. Not quite \$1,000, I think it's more like \$600. We have it in our budget.

Tom Evertsen said one thing I haven't heard tonight is why, in the first place, are our taxes so high. Mr. Cote at a previous meeting made a motion to have the taxpayers vote on the budget. Let us have input on where our money is being spent. I do believe that it was insinuated that the townspeople don't have enough intelligence to make that kind of decision. There were other people. Mr. Cote brought that up and it was just like a wind tunnel going in one ear and out the other. You guys have absolute control on where our money goes. We don't have any control on what's being spent and where and on what. The power needs to go back to the people and not just up in a few chairs up there.

Councilor Bowie said I want to remind people that the order on the floor is the tax interest rate, so I would like to keep our discussion focused on that. There is a section in our agenda for additional audience participation. If your comments or questions are based on the tax interest, I'd like to keep our comments to that matter.

David Blake said I heard the Assessor was fired today because of this issue. It always seems when there is an issue like this that comes up, somebody is walked out the door, that's the fall person. I've known what's been going on for a long time. I think that it should come down to what somebody mentioned earlier, the ones responsible should take the burden. If you have a bill or anything else, you punch the computer out and get it all straightened out, and I don't even like them, if your check isn't there when you want it at the end of the week or the end of the month, they can write you another one, they can punch in another one and get the hours that you wanted and your money. Why is this such a difficult issue to get straightened out? What's wrong with all the politics and stuff that comes and goes here that nobody even hears about? I think it's time the Council and the Town Manager ought to be held responsible for a lot of these problems that have been going on. Most of them are right next door with the big budget they've got. I'm just waiting to see them bring in their helicopters. Councilor Bowie said you're straying from being on tax interest.

Bob Cielinski said I wasn't going to speak tonight because I spoke last night, but after talking with the Town Manager to find out where we made a mistake for taxes, I'm talking about taxes. He told me that Dingley was assessed at a decrease of \$11 million from \$32 million. They had the personal property assessed for the first time. They'd never had it assessed before. A depreciation was given to them of \$11 million, that averages about 32%. They paid \$285,000 out of that cut. I don't know who authorized that. He said the computer did it. For your interest, your property went up 31%. That is the figure they used. You multiply your property by 31% you would find that's what your taxes went up. At the same time Dingley went down 32% on their personal property that they never had inventoried before and they did it in house. I called somebody I know that does this kind of appraising. He does it for all of the towns. He said to do this equipment you can't do it in house. You have to go to the business. They have upgrades on materials that you don't know about. I know you said you had the date on when they bought the material, but they have updates of materials there. You have to go there, you can't do it here. They got a decrease of \$285,000 by the Assessor. I talked to you yesterday. I left here at 2:40, at 10:10 Mr. Cote called me and said your tax assessor was fired. I thought that was very strange. I talked to you about it and you said he was a good guy and an hour and a half later he's gone. Bang! What happened?

Councilor Bowie said there is a motion on the floor to eliminate the tax interest for the next fiscal year and penalties. We did have a comment suggesting we change that to June 30 based on our end of the fiscal year. I'm not sure what Council feels about that. Councilor Larochelle said I couldn't say that as well as Mr. Mains, but that's what I was asking if it was just through this billing cycle, meaning that it stopped when the next tax commitment came forward. Councilor Bowie said right, it would be only for this current tax commitment.

Councilor Cote said if somebody is having a real hardship, I would hope that would be considered even if we stopped the deadline at that particular date. If we're going to have hardship case, we should be continuing it beyond that date. Councilor Bowie said I don't dispute that. Mr. Eldridge said we always do.

Councilor Bowie said do we want to amend the motion. Councilor Pomelow said I think it needs to be restated. Councilor Cote said because a new Council will not want to be dealing with that in the future.

VOTE (2010-156A) Councilor Crafts, seconded by Councilor Lunt moved an amendment to set the deadline to June 30, 2011. **Amendment vote passed - Vote 7-0.**

VOTE (2010-156B) Main motion as amended: to eliminate the interest on all tax bills through June 30, 2011. **Order as amended passed - Vote 7-0.**

OTHER BUSINESS

A. ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Councilor Bowie said we are going to move that item because we are not prepared to discuss that item tonight.

B. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Jessica Maloy said this is the first report you have in front of you that you're obtaining for this year. At this point there is not a lot of information on it as we are just beginning the year. Within the Finance Department we've been busy wrapping up the year end work with the auditors. Pending any follow up items with them, we should be looking to get draft financial statements soon. Given

the duration of the year end work, we're still in the process of entering what has come in for this year to date, which is reflected in the packets that you have.

Mrs. Maloy said having said that, we are on the tail end of the September collection of taxes. At this point, we have collected 84% of taxes, or \$4.1 million of the September portion of the tax commitment. Compared to last year at this time we were 91% collected so the funding is coming in. Revenue sharing is coming in; we have 22% collected which isn't bad, but it certainly isn't at the level it's been in years past. We're still very early in the game for collection on that.

Mrs. Maloy said we paid out our county tax which was \$580,000. The current reports in front of you do not reflect the carry forwards as we've been going through the year end work. Those have been entered this week. They will be reflected in your September reports. Other than that, we are looking to be on track for where we should be.

C. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Eldridge said as you can see when you came in tonight and yesterday, our Public Works department is fixing the drain out front, which will be done soon. It has been a problem every since the building was built that every time we got a hard rain, it couldn't drain well. We expect that to be done by tomorrow.

Mr. Eldridge said as you probably have noticed, Rosie Bradley our Economic Development director, has given me her letter of resignation. She's been offered another position closer to home. I'd like to thank her for her 2 ½ years of service. We are advertising for that position. We will put together a committee and I'm sure Councilor Mason will be a part of that since she has been so active with that office. At this time, I'm not so sure we are going to fill that position. We will evaluate it when the applications come in and we'll do the interview process and see what we have.

Mr. Eldridge said the well contamination issue. We were out to Mr. Upham's this Monday, trying to validate the gallons per minute. We haven't heard about that but we expect to hear this week.

Mr. Eldridge said the Public Works department. The insulation work is almost completed. This is from our efficiency grant from the PUC. Hopefully the boiler will be in before winter; I'm not sure what's holding that up, but it's been ordered. After that whatever we have left will be done with the MTM Center. We'll be replacing some of the windows there to make it more energy efficient.

Mr. Eldridge said there's been a lot of conversation about dispatch over the last year and a half. The PUC has been pushing to get some input on consolidating their PSAPs to get it down to 16 if they can. Mike Bowie and I attended a meeting at the Commissioner's office last Wednesday. **The county voted to present to the PUC.** The county will become the PSAP for this region. We're also making a proposal to consolidate all of the dispatch as long as it is economically feasible for all of the smaller communities and efficiencies will be found. The deadline was given for 2012 to have that completed as long as everything goes as fast.

Councilor Cote said one thing I'd like to bring up is the fact that under the strained times we are under and the other issues that we have to deal with, I'd like to see this replacement for Rosie to be put off for at least 6 months to a year to see if we can't work through some of our other financial issues first. We cannot put a burden on our taxpayers next year as we did this year. We've got to find ways around it. I think eliminating that position for 6 months to a year and give it some thought and see how the economy goes I think would be something that would be appreciated by the taxpayers.

Councilor Mason said a lot of hard work has gone into that department. I know there are several here in this audience that do not agree with Rosie's position. I've worked very closely with Rosie. We are currently working with a Downtown Network program. It is a very successful program.

Over 2,500 communities in the United States use the program. If we were to completely end the position, I'm not saying we have to keep it full time, but if we were to completely end it, we would lose any momentum that we have gained. We have several people that are looking at developing the mill. We have several other people who have been here looking at other opportunities here in this town. I understand we have a heavy tax burden right now but economic development is very important in this town. For us to totally ignore it as if it doesn't exist would be doing ourselves more harm than good. It's something to consider. I understand your concerns, but you are going to lose a lot of what you've gained if you do that.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Mildred Rider, Route 9, said I've lost part of my land. I've done no repairs on my house. I'd like to know why my taxes went up. You have proof that I have less land now than I had last year. Why'd they go up? Councilor Bowie said I couldn't answer that. I would think the same way you did. If you lost property, then your land value would go down. Ms. Rider said it should go down. It went up.

Councilor Lunt said I am in the same boat you are. I live on Route 9 and the State took a slice out of my land and the tax bill went up. I understand where you are coming from. I think they took the existing data and multiplied it. It wasn't an actual revaluation. We have to wait for an abatement. Ms. Rider said I sit on a cement platform. I don't even have a cellar. My taxes on my land and my house both went up. I think somebody should come check my property and house. It should go down, not up. You said to keep it on the tax thing. If we would lower the police force and their toys, I think our taxes would go down considerably.

Ed Cornell, Lisbon resident, said I hope we can come to an agreement tonight on a couple of items. Our Economic Developer, do we pay for her school? Mr. Eldridge said no. We did not pay for her school. Mr. Cornell said we didn't pay for her school? Mr. Eldridge said absolutely not. She's paid her own way. Mr. Cornell said with the money that we pay her. Mr. Eldridge said yes, that's her salary for all of the work she does. Mr. Cornell said so this wasn't in addition to her salary. This was what her salary sign on was. Mr. Eldridge said she got paid wages like everybody in this audience who works gets paid. Mr. Cornell said this was her sign on salary. Mr. Eldridge said this is her salary. No money from your budget paid for her education. She has paid for her own education out of her own pocket. I don't know how that rumor got started, it is not true. Mr. Cornell said okay, that's good. I appreciate that.

Mr. Cornell said does our Town Manager still accept a paycheck in any form for gas mileage per diem above his contractual award to be the Town Manager. Mr. Eldridge said no. I actually, a year or so ago, I reduced my contract amount for gas mileage. I also did not take the increase that was in my contract. I took 3% that year like all of the other employees. I took a \$2,500 cut in my pay that was in my contract. Councilor Crafts said I would like to add that he volunteered to do that. Mr. Cornell said he volunteered to do that. Okay. You deserve that. The rumors floating around are that you are taking an extra \$2,500 a year out of our pockets for gas mileage per diem. Mr. Eldridge said that is not true. Mr. Cornell said to go back and forth to work in addition to your pay. \$80,000? Mr. Eldridge said I couldn't tell you. Mr. Cornell said you should be able to tell me. I know what my amount is. You don't know how much you make? Mr. Eldridge said I make around \$82,500 but I'd have to look. Mr. Cornell said \$2,500? That \$2,500 is the gas mileage per diem

Mr. Cornell said we're going to get a little tough and when the going gets tough all of a sudden we have Councilors in workshops making decisions for us. Councilor Crafts said at all workshops the public is invited. Every workshop we've ever had the public is invited. Mr. Cornell said make the public workshop right here in the public then. Councilor Mason and Councilor Crafts said we do. Mr. Cornell said you go off to a separate room. Councilor Mason said that's executive session.

Councilor Crafts said that's never happened. Mr. Cornell said that's never happened. Mr. Eldridge said and they can't take votes.

Mr. Cornell said I want to refer back to our purchasing. I understand we needed a certain device, probably a year or so ago. Our lawyer said it's okay, you can go ahead and buy it in pieces and then assemble it and then it costs over \$100,000. If an item costs over \$100,000 and we're to purchase it, aren't we supposed to vote for it before it's purchased?

Councilor Larochelle said I can explain that a little bit. The purchase that you're talking about is a part for Public Works. In the past, we've had dump trucks that after 3 or 4 years the body would usually rust out before the truck wasn't any good, which is a waste because unfortunately we couldn't use them any more. When I came on that was one the first things we were going through. Charlie Smith was working with Public Works to purchase a stainless body that would go at least 3 to 4 lifetimes if not beyond. We were looking into buying a body that would live through many trucks, which only makes sense. It was a smart decision to make. When the purchase was made, you actually bought a cab and chassis. You actually bought a piece of equipment like a snow plow or a body. At the end of the day it wasn't all one purchase. That body was bought to go on many trucks, not that particular one. It's one of those things that you can look at it in many different ways. It wasn't a piece that was going to be bought at one time, used on one piece of equipment, then go away with that one piece of equipment.

Mr. Cornell said that's exactly what I said. You purchased it in pieces and then assembled it altogether. When you purchase all those pieces, the payment was above \$100,000, which, aren't we supposed to vote on that? Councilor Crafts said what he's trying to say is the body of that truck doesn't stay together for the lifetime of the truck. We buy bodies all the time, a second body. Per individual item, that's how we purchase them. The ordinance says if it's an individual purchase over \$100,000 it has to go out to the public in a vote. My conscience is completely 100% clear on the process we took on purchasing it. We looked out for the best interests of the town in replacing equipment. We also stepped up and bought stainless steel so that we would get a longer lifetime out of it, which also drove the cost up, so that the taxpayer would get a bigger bang for the buck. Mr. Cornell said well, when it went over \$100,000 it was supposed to go to the residents. Councilor Crafts said no, that's not true. Mr. Cornell said it was not purchased in the appropriate manner. You cannot purchase bits and pieces.

Mr. Cornell said my last item is as our mil-rate went down, that was nice, but the valuation went up. Did we know, as the public, that you were going to approve that valuation? Was that something that was put out to us to approve the valuation? Councilor Bowie said no, not to approve because the Tax Assessor is the only one that changes valuation. We did have public hearings and public meetings in discussing the whole revaluation process and what was the best approach for us to take as a community. It came through that the best approach was to look at, because we did try a number of times as has been mentioned earlier tonight, to try to do a complete revaluation, which is really the true, fair, and equitable way to levy taxes across the community. However, every time we went, this is the old town meeting form of government; we went for that money which was \$3 -400,000, it was always voted down. The taxpayers of this community never wanted to do a complete revaluation.

Councilor Bowie said in order to try to get to a fair and equitable approach, Council said let's try to do it in phases. That was the approach we took. We've done a land piece. We've looked at doing land valuation change only. Then we were going to apply that this year. In discussions with the individual who did it and Council as well as some people from the public who had input, they said that really wasn't fair because you really needed a true revaluation. But the taxpayers are losing some money out of not getting additional homestead reimbursement, tree growth, and potentially veteran's reimbursements. The thought process was, if nothing else changed, just pretend nothing else was going to change in the entire process of how we set and commit taxes, if we raise everybody by the 30% that's being referenced, that would bring everybody up to 80%, which is just

slightly above what the State would like to have you at. Then that allows us to get additional homestead. If you look at your tax bills this year compared to last year, your homestead was probably-it was at 56%, now last year your homestead was worth \$13,000 roughly, that's what the State said homestead was worth. But we only got 56% of that because that's what the valuation was. So we got about \$6,500-6,600 of that \$13,000. This year the State reduced the \$13,000 to \$10,000, so they took money away from us which the State is good at, but because we went to 80% valuation, you're going to get \$8,000 for homestead, which is about \$1,400-\$1,500 more than you got last year. That's what bringing up your land value helps do, it gives you some other things.

Councilor Bowie said the true, fair, and equitable way is to do a total revaluation. It costs a lot of money. So far the town hasn't wanted to do that. Council has tried to take steps to do it in a phased approach. Mr. Cornell said we jumped from our 56% level, which is how much higher than what the State wants us to be at. Councilor Bowie said the 56% is lower than the State wants us. The State wants us at a minimum of 70% for valuation. Mr. Cornell said and now we're at 80%. Councilor Bowie said the reason we went to 80%, to help explain that, we went to 80% because it is going to give us time to complete the phases. Each year we are going to continue to go down again until we get the full valuation done. Until we can get out to measure all of the buildings and talk with you and look at the cards, as Dale explained you have hardwood floors, you have this, you don't have the fireplace, etc, and go through all of that, measure everything, that's going to take some time to do, especially doing it in a phased approach. As that approach goes on, that 80% next year could be 78 or 75 or 77%. Now you are going to lose more homestead, so it's a whole timing issue of how we can get this all done so that it's really fair and equitable. The best way to do it is to go out and have a whole revaluation done within a year, but that costs \$300-400,000, and so far the 3 or 4 times we've gone to the citizens we've heard that they don't want to invest that kind of money to do it. Mr. Cornell said that's because we don't have that kind of money to do that. Councilor Bowie said so that's why we're trying to do it piecemeal and gradual.

Councilor Crafts said while we were talking about a lot of rumors and they got clarified, I just wanted to tell you how rumors spread. I got called this morning. I had a call this morning from a prominent businessperson in town that informed me that she was told the night before from her daughter that she heard that Dale Crafts doesn't pay any property tax in the town of Lisbon. I wish that was true. Just to clear it up because this is public information: between Topsham, 1 property, and Lisbon's 4 properties, I pay \$32,200 every year. If you hear the rumor that I don't pay taxes, here's the bills to show you. I'm just saying, we just listened to a bunch of rumors that weren't true. You know when you sit up here for \$1,500 a year and spend hundreds of hours of time up here and then rumors float around like that it makes you want to quit the Council and go back to having fun. All the things you are upset about and I am, too, with my tax bill, we do good things up here. Most of this Council tries to look at the taxpayer and tries to keep the cost down. We did that through the budget process. We got blindsided. We're all taxpayers, too, that got blindsided. My taxes went up \$2,300 in one year. I know you are mad at us and you have the right to be, but we're trying our best and there are some problems that we need to get to the bottom of. We're asking for the next couple of weeks to bring some professionals in to get to the bottom of this. Please, don't believe every rumor that you hear. If you hear a rumor about us? Please call us and ask if it is true.

Larry Fillmore said I have several questions. First of all, the Tax Assessor was fired today, is that correct? Mr. Eldridge said yes, he was, yesterday. Mr. Fillmore said that indicates that he did such a good job over this tax assessing that we let him go. Is that what we're saying? Or are we acknowledging that there was something in his manner or his professionalism that caused him to be released? Because if there was, then we have a problem. We need to get with the lawyer over here and find out if we can fix this. Now, I know you said once it's etched in stone, it's etched in stone. I heard you loud and clear. Because of all the inconsistencies in what's been said here and throughout Friday night, we have to have some kind of relief in a government form that has checks and balances to prevent things like this from happening. If the process is fine, I don't care, he did it, if it works, fine, okay, but if you've got problems, and I'm sure you do, then we need to have some kind of relief for us here in the audience. That can't be just a closed issue.

Councilor Bowie said I don't think you've heard from Council that it is a closed issue. I think you've heard from Council tonight that we're trying to get the correct information together tonight and go through processes to resolve this situation. Whatever comes out of that, whatever relief is available, will be done. Mr. Fillmore said I understand that you said you are going to look at it and do all that. But you said also that's in the future, we need relief now and you said there's nothing you can do once the Assessor etched this in stone, it's case closed. You said that. Councilor Bowie said I did say that because it depends upon what the issue is. Council needs to come through what is really driving this issue. I talked about it earlier and I don't think people really want to hear me repeat myself. We talked about this earlier. If we can get to the bottom of this and find out where, if any, problem exists, then we can make a decision based on whether it is legal or not, what things we can do going forward. We need to get to that first.

Mr. Fillmore said I understand. You're not going to tell this audience or anyone else that what's done is done and you can't unscrew it, is that right? Councilor Bowie said no, the only thing I'm going to tell you is, what's done is done is we can't change the commitment if it has been done correctly. Mr. Fillmore said that's fine, I don't have an issue with that. The second thing is that we went from 56% to 80%, that's 24%. Personal property. Did every department in the town of Lisbon take a 24% cut in all of their operating accounts, or whatever accounts you want to say they are sitting in. Did we get a 24% cut on every department, not just us on personal property tax? The last thing is, if you say this is Phase 1, what can we expect for Phase 2, because I'm not looking forward to Phase 2.

Michelle Swatsworth-Turmelle said the information that was put into the system was based on what has been on our cards, cards that have been around for awhile, unless the town was notified of any changes in the property, etc, you wouldn't know that to update the card unless we told you, therefore what went into the system with what was on the card, which is all we have currently. Is that correct? Mr. Eldridge said that is correct. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said just so that's clarified so that people understand. It wasn't a drive by, not that I didn't see him out and about, trust me he was in my neighborhood several times sitting in his truck. The other thing I'd like to point out for people to understand, you've let somebody go. It wouldn't matter who it is, if we let somebody go within the town, then it is a personnel matter. We have to be careful of what we say because if you let somebody go for conduct, do you really want to pay him more than what we already did because you're going to open us up to a liability lawsuit if we are not careful about what we say. I think we've paid people to this point enough, I think we need to be careful about what we are talking about. I think if you need to know why we can't have answers to the questions that we have, that's part of it. I don't want to pay anybody more who hasn't done a good job. I think we need to leave it at that.

Mrs. Swatsworth-Turmelle said the other thing I'd like to know are additional cuts going to be looked at. Are we going to start looking at the budget now rather than waiting until February or March? Are we going to look at some things and be pro-active now? I understand. I work for a major company and we've had thousands of jobs cut, I'm always glad it wasn't me, but I understand you can't look at this at a personal level when it comes to cutting jobs. There's too many people here and in this town to look at 10 people that might lose their jobs. I understand we have to look at services as well. You're going to have to find a happy balance. To get half a service versus none, you're better than none. I think we need to be pro-active and start looking at it now instead of waiting until budget season. It's just my own comment to start to be a little bit prudent about it.

Mrs. Swatsworth-Turmelle said Mr. Upham. At the last meeting on September 7, I know you talked about the gallons per minute because he was questioning that and the fact that his well has to take care of two residences. What was not known at that point, that had not come back, was the actual water quality test. Has that come back because the gallons per minute is useless if the water is of no value. Mr. Eldridge said no, the town engineer has not heard from the lab yet.

Mrs. Swatsworth-Turmelle said the other thing I'm going to say is something personal. To not point somebody out, I would say Facebook is a huge network and it is within this community as well as nationally. Whether it's a Councilor's spouse or a Councilor but in this particular case a spouse, I would say please be careful about what your spouses are saying because it is being implied and being looked as jokingly that we could go to McDonald's and clear McDonalds. I was very offended when I saw the comment. I have it with me. Mr. Eldridge said could you repeat that. Mrs. Swatsworth-Turmelle said there was a comment on Facebook. It was a Councilor's spouse actually, implying about some of the comments that were being made at one of the local town restaurants. It was jokingly made that she and her spouse were going to go down and they expect the restaurant to clear. I don't find that a joke. I think we are in despair. People are distraught. People are financially impacted by this. I don't find anything funny about it and I was extremely offended when I read this comment. I did forward it on to at least one person who sits up there because I found it very offensive. I just would say, in these sensitive times, please be very careful of what people are saying because that's the perception that's going to come back on each and every one of you.

Donald Stein, 6 Douglas Street, said was the man fired or laid off. Mr. Eldridge said he was fired. Mr. Stein said fired. Thank you.

Rick Graham, Budget Advisory Board, said I would like to take a second to answer a portion of Michelle's question about cutting the budget next time around. I don't have any interest in entertaining a budget that doesn't address this tax problem.

Frank Hogan said I am a lifetime resident of Lisbon Falls, my family was raised here. We all live here. We have houses. Jump back to the budget, the Council that you closed at a 2% increase or whatever it was. Councilor Bowie said 2 or 3 %. Mr. Hogan said I hate to see any increase. My taxes are ridiculous. We probably pay around \$4,700 for our home, an acre and a third. I feel about \$2,500 would be where I would feel very comfortable and I think probably everybody would. The large increase that was found, the shortfall, drove my taxes up \$470 this year. Is that going to be every year? Is this shortfall that we came upon, is that in my taxes every year now? Mr. Eldridge said unless we find that something was done wrong in the system and the system is wrong that may be the increase, but it depends. It depends on what we do with the budget the coming year. It depends if we add any valuation. It depends if we lose valuation. We know coming into next year, we anticipate through depreciation that we are going to lose another \$1.7 million in value, that's with a lot of different people whose equipment is depreciating. The State program has changed so they aren't reimbursing us for some of that. Many things come into play here. It also depends on the school budget. Mr. Hogan said how about today's values on everything. Isn't everything, aren't the country's homes worth's declining? What's going on with Lisbon? Why are we always paying taxes like Vegas? Why are we always adding so much? We're Lisbon. Ten thousand people. We've got a little town here. A fire department. What's the deal?

Councilor Bowie said that gets to the phased approach that we are taking. We've done an assessment on the land values. The land values haven't been implemented into the system yet. I don't know how they are going to change. They may go down based on the way the economy is. I don't know how they are in there. The next piece is to do that whole building measure so that you've got both pieces together to make sure things are done fairly and equitably. The question becomes now, I mean Council is talking about a phased approach, but now with the shortfalls we are seeing, the question will become how much money can we put into next year's budget that doesn't impact us any further that allows us to go do this measure.

Mr. Hogan said we're raising money and raising money, we always need a lot of money. You are running a business. I've run 3 businesses in my lifetime. They've all been successful, I think. I guess we've done alright. But, you're running a business and I feel you're searching for money all the time to run your business. I feel we need to make some cuts. I feel we need to restructure. We're paying so much now it's unbelievable. I have a son and a daughter who own homes in Lisbon. They can't even scratch the surface to start paying taxes like this and live comfortably. I think we should

restructure the town government and do it with a committee of people, 25, 30, 50 people, a lot of input and downsize on some things, consolidate some things, get rid of some buildings, group things up, bring some departments to reality. Some departments need more help. We're not blind. I know some departments that need more help. I know some departments that are blown out of proportion, like we all do. I hear it every day. We're searching for large money all the time. Where do you draw the line on that? Let's restructure.

Councilor Larochelle said I couldn't agree with you more about consolidating and trying to be more efficient. Let's face it, we have our expenses and we have our revenues, and when revenues start going down, somehow you need to get more efficient. The hardest thing is. I work every Saturday and one of my customers that I've had forever, came over and said I don't pity you the job at all. He said he was at a football game like all Lisbon people do on a good Saturday morning. He said one guy walked up to me and used a lot of 4 letter words talking about the town, how bad it is, overtaxed, the buildings are falling down, and the school's really bad, just really speaking his heart about the town. Unfortunately, to fix all of that, what do you need? Unfortunately, money. It's a balance. Within a few minutes later, he was saying how Lisbon really deserves football field lights so we can be a real school and we really ought to have a nicer field, and we ought to fix up the school and the gymnasium. So, it's really hard to have the balance of we need to fix something but we don't have the money. On the other hand wanting more.

Mr. Hogan said that's maintenance of what we have. It's all about maintenance. When you construct something, there's new maintenance. We put in the new bus stops. Has anybody looked at them? A woman could walk in there with high heels and break her leg. The cement is all gone on the bases. They look terrible. We put them in, but there's maintenance for all of that. Councilor Larochelle said the downfall is that there's not a line on our budget to fix those problems. Our budget has been cut so much. Mr. Hogan said they really probably shouldn't have been there. Just put a sign: bus stop. Councilor Larochelle said you're right. Mr. Hogan said let the ladies sit there like our grandmother's did with an umbrella. Probably would have saved us a bunch of money.

Councilor Larochelle said one thing I encourage people to do is through the budget season come in and take a good hard look at the budget. To me it was offensive when I came in, and you know these buildings when you work down at the bowling alley, if you have a bowling alley the size of the high school and you only have the maintenance of \$10,000 for everything, that's improvements and repairs. You look at it and say there is no way you can do it. Same thing, you've got to invest in what you have and at the end of the day there's easy things to cut and those things get cut and it's not always fair. The idea of consolidation I totally agree. This is where we get back to the idea of, since I have been on the Council I learned more about the town the first year I was on the Council living in town all my life. I had no idea how this town worked. I thought I did, but at the end of the day I really didn't. It is the idea of coming together and trying to figure out how to make it as good a town as we can. Since all of this has been going on, I've had people stop over and say, you know what, I really like this town and I love to complain, but I'd like to do whatever I can to keep it this town. We don't want to see Lisbon turn into a place where none of us desire to live. I think if people come into the budget season and look. As Dale said, when I was coming up to an interview with the Council, Dale said do you really know what you're getting involved in, this isn't just a one night a week or 2 nights a week, he said this week we've been here every night.

Mr. Hogan said I appreciate what you do, but we've got to restructure. We've got to downsize the business a little bit. I hear a lot of good ideas. I'm always out in the public as you know at Hogie's hot dog stand. If this one merged with this one. This one makes money, if this one merged with this one it would take the burden off this one. I didn't want to get into politics until maybe I was 60, because I wanted to peruse through this awhile, but I'm willing. Councilor Larochelle said you ought to come on Council night. Mr. Hogan said they want to put something together where they look at the future. This isn't a quick fix for what's going now. I don't know how you are going to resolve this. I couldn't figure it out. This is the future what I'm talking about. If people want to talk

about it, come down and get a hot dog. We'll see if we can get a committee together and talk about restructuring.

Mr. Eldridge said I would like to point out that this Council has been restructuring the budget. Just to give you some numbers, in 2008 the town municipal budget was \$7.3 million. Last year we dropped it by 9%, it was \$6.7 million. It went up again this year a little bit, 3%, to \$6.9 million. They've lost 15% of their workforce. That's just on the expenditure side. Let's talk about the revenue side. In 2008, you went from \$3.4 million coming in total revenue, the bigger amounts coming in from the State of Maine. It dropped 3% from the prior year. 2009 that revenue went down to \$2.7 million, a 21% drop in revenue that the town takes in from other sources not taxes. This year we've pretty much kept the revenue flat. Luckily, we saw a bit better on excise tax than we expected. You keep dropping your expenses, which is a good thing. The problem is that we keep losing revenue every year from the State. They are doing their job in trying to present a balanced budget and live within our means. As I said Friday, you're still seeing people waiting in lines out here because we have fewer people. You see the same thing at the Transfer Station.

Mr. Hogan said I don't mind standing in line 5 or 10 minutes to register my vehicle. Downsize a little bit. I'd like the old buildings in town that we still owe paper on that maybe we should let go. Mr. Eldridge said we got rid of one of our buildings. Two of them. Mr. Hogan said we may have more. Look them over, if we don't need them, the economy's so bad, the times are so bad across the country, let's let them go. Mr. Eldridge said the money we've invested in our buildings over the last few years that I can speak to now, is grant money. We got an \$85,000 grant from Efficiency Maine. We're insulating the garage and that's another project that nobody wanted to pay for. It's falling apart. We fixed the concrete work last year. We're insulating the building this year with federal money. We're replacing the boiler with federal money. We're going from there to the MTM Center with whatever money we have left over to replace windows. Mr. Hogan said if we were a fine tuned business we'd have maintenance in already to take care of those. Mr. Eldridge said it wasn't done before but we're trying to do that now. Mr. Hogan said you stay with stuff, you keep maintenance going. I'm looking at this brand new air system we've got here and has anybody been up to change the filters. Do you know if there are any filters up there? Do you have an air handler up there? Mr. Eldridge said we have an outfit that does that, Mechanical Services. Mr. Hogan said they're not doing their job. I've been an air handler for a few years and I pick up on that stuff. I'd like to see restructuring, get things fine tuned. A nice town to live in. We're here for the long term.

Councilor Cote said I'd like to bring something up that a lot of people are missing right now. We have an issue right here that is very dear to us because it hit us in the wallet, so the room, so the room is pretty full, but at a regular Council meeting we haven't had anybody here, maybe 3 or 4 people. We've had some issues where we've brought people, you know, with the school we brought their budget to you people and wanted you people to come in and look at it and give your opinion. We had six people show up. We can't have involvement only when it costs us in the wallet. If we want a town that works, we've got to work with our town. We have boards. We can't find people to get on our boards. The Appeals Board, Planning Board, there's always vacancies. We need people to get involved. We don't only get involved at tax time. We've got to get involved all year long. I just beg of you people to step up and help us out. Maybe some of these good ideas will come about and this town will come in the direction we want it to. We can find fault with this Council but we've also got to have the support of the people. You people have got to come out and help us out and give us your opinion. Tell us what you want. Let it be known what you want. If you don't, you're leaving it up to Council and if it isn't the decision you want, then who's really to blame for it? The only thing that I ask is step up, get involved, make the changes you want and you will have the town that you chose to have. Absolutely we'll listen to you. We want to do what we can for the people of this community because it is our town. I've been here 55 years, I've got a little bit of interest in it. I'd like to see this town be what I want it to be, but unless we get involved and work together to get what we want, we're never going to have it. It takes more than a couple of weeks during tax time.

Councilor Bowie said you're not a resident of town Mr. Sampson. Councilor Crafts said I'm going to request that he speaks. Councilor Bowie said I'm not going to let Mr. Sampson speak.

VOTE (2010-156C) Councilor Crafts, seconded by Councilor Cote moved to allow Jerry Sampson permission to speak at the Council meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Councilor Bowie said what happened Friday night is that Mr. Sampson set out some numbers which Council has had no opportunity to look at. I would prefer Mr. Sampson to come in and talk with the Town Manager and everybody and review this information. Councilor Crafts said I know he has additional information, that's why I asked for him to speak for that additional information. Councilor Bowie said I would prefer for him to come work with our tax assessor. I'm not afraid of the truth. Councilor Cote said I say we let him speak. Councilor Bowie called for order.

Order passed - Vote 6-1. (Opposed: Bowie)

Mr. Sampson said first of all I want to say Bill Van Tuinen is very capable. I'm sure he can get to the bottom of it. The only other thing I'm going to say tonight and I've offered to come to talk to the Council or whoever wants to talk to me, I don't have an issue with that. As far as why this happened, you can't raise more money than the budget. It doesn't go person to person because some people's values are different, but every person in this room taxes went up. Just as many people had to have had their taxes go down, because the overall couldn't have changed. If you've gone up a third on one end, some went down a third. The people who didn't get factored up, in effect went down a third. If you had a \$100,000 business, last year based on \$25.50 you paid \$2,550. If you didn't get factored up, then this year you're paying \$2,160. If you did get factored up, it would have gone up. If every account in town were factored up to 80% like it was supposed to, it would be a zero effect in the budget.

Councilor Larochelle said do you feel, Jerry, that the direction that we are going with Mr. Van Tuinen is the correct way to resolve this? From what you've said, you feel that he is a capable person to do the job? Mr. Sampson said yes. What can happen and I think will happen is they will find that not all of the town was factored up. Once you do that, next year the people who's taxes were way up this year, won't go down. They won't go down as much as they went up because the budget is going to go up next year. There are always ins and outs. They went up 2 mils more than they should have. They might go down next, the overall tax bills should still be lower for these people than they were last year. If the other people go up, they will just be paying the same amount. It shouldn't have been such a swing. It can't be just one individual company. It's got to be tens of millions of dollars to do this. It has to be like \$70 million value that was not factored up somehow.

Don Fellows said Roger, I don't always agree with what you said, but you said something pretty strongly that we need to get the community involved. I agree with all of the Council 100%. The participation last year in the budget process, which I am currently chairman of the Budget Advisory committee, so I'd like to see people get involved, too. We particularly have a position on the Advisory board that is now open and not being run for. If the town is really involved and cares about how much money we are spending, and where it's all going, and valuation, and all of those things, I would think we could at least find one person who could get it together and either get it written in and let's find somebody else on our Advisory board.

Robin Tupper said how often on average is a reval done to keep it fairly current. Mr. Eldridge said it varies with each town. Some people say every 10 years, but it depends on many things. If you see a huge economic shift and the value of property like the big bubble we had change, then it might be prudent to do that. I was saying when I first got here that it would probably be a good time to do a reval because the bubble burst and values were all over the place here. The last time you did a reval here from what I understand was in 1988, that's a long time ago and values have changed

considerably. You really need to do a reval and we were able to do it this year we had it in our budget. It was around \$60,000 if we did it in house. We would hire part time people, pay them per household that they visit so it was an incentive to get the houses done and do it right, enter it into the system. We felt we could get it done, along with Mr. Van Tuinen having done the land value. When Mr. Van Tuinen comes on board, I will ask him he would participate next budget season because he does do revals. We hire college students or anybody who can read a tape measure and fill out a piece of paper with what is on there and validate what is on the card. You haven't done it here since 1988, that's a long time.

Mrs. Tupper said I understand that we're going to need to do it because it's been that long. Knowing that we're never going to have a \$300,000 or \$400,000 chunk to do this and it needs to be done every 10 years, is there a way to put it into the budget so that we are putting \$30-40,000 away a year, so every 10 years we have the money to do that. Councilor Bowie said we could do that. Councilor Larochelle said we have talked about that at great lengths that every department ought to have a pay as you go program where you are putting aside money every year so that when you have that big expense you can do it. The downfall is to start putting money away, you have to have extra money to put away. If you make \$1,000 and you spend \$1,000, it's really hard to put money away at the end of the month. Mrs. Tupper said I realize if you do it the first year, you are going to have \$330,000 or \$340,000 that first year when you have that first installment as well, but we have to start looking because we are never going to have that \$300,000 or \$400,000 chunk to do this. Ten years from now, who knows? We could be in worse shape than we are now. Councilor Bowie said excellent point.

Mildred Rider said my son Darren Rider has his own business, roofing and construction. He's come in and registered all of his vehicles, paid everything he's supposed to. Why are they trying to tax him again for his equipment? Does everybody that has their own business get retaxed? Councilor Bowie said businesses get taxed on what's called personal property. I don't know what is considered personal property, but I guess that it's ladders for supporting his construction job would have some sort of tax on it. What you end up doing is you fill out a validation form that you get from the tax assessor and you put in there that you have these pieces of equipment which were purchased in x year and they are worth x dollars when purchased. The tax assessor takes that information and it goes through a depreciation process. There are special tables that they use based on the year and the value. It gets depreciated over time so they get taxed on what for the current year you're in, what's the value. It's required by the State.

Mrs. Rider said so you have to pay every single year on the equipment. Councilor Bowie said each year he would pay on his equipment, but it will depreciate so the tax would go down each year if he didn't buy any more new equipment. If he bought a new bending machine, for instance, that would be a new investment for him for that year that probably wouldn't have much depreciation because he bought it that year. He would get taxed on that but the rest of his equipment would continue to deescalate. Mrs. Rider said I have my own business. Are they going to retax me on my car to get back and forth to work? Mr. Eldridge said you pay excise tax. Councilor Bowie said no, you pay excise tax on your vehicle. Councilor Crafts said you don't have a mop or scrub brush do you? Mrs. Rider said I do. Councilor Crafts said I hope you depreciate it. Mrs. Rider said so he is going to get taxed every year on his ladders and trailer and stuff. Councilor Bowie said based on a depreciation schedule. Mrs. Rider said is there any way we can do away with that. Councilor Bowie said as Mr. Crafts pointed out, if you can get state legislation passed. Mrs. Rider said how do we go about getting that started. Mr. Eldridge said talk to Dale.

Michelle Swatsworth-Turmelle said I was here in April for that property tax meeting. Could you clarify something for me because I was here for that property tax meeting in April when a lot of the businessmen came in and spoke. It was put out there that it is out there as far as state guidelines, but it is not a required tax, you don't have to take it. That had come out and I never heard any clarification as to whether or not it is something we do have to do or not since, up to this point not everybody has been.

Councilor Bowie said I think it gets to an equity issue. We cannot charge personal property tax, but it's across the board. That means Dingley doesn't pay any of the businesses. Council could elect to say nobody is going to pay personal property tax. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said you're saying it is a voluntary thing. Councilor Bowie said it is not a one person- Mr. Crafts over here we don't want him to pay tax, but we want this man over here to pay. It's across the board. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said that's not what I'm asking. Councilor Bowie said it's across the town, either everybody pays or nobody. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said that's what I asked. It's a voluntary thing. The town doesn't have to do it. Up to this point some had and some hadn't and you're doing it across the board, is that correct. Councilor Bowie said yes. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said that's what I was asking because up to this point that was something that came out at that public hearing and I never heard an answer as to do we have to do it or is it a voluntary thing. Yes, I understand it's out there in the state, it's up to us as a town to do that.

Councilor Larochelle said Jerry could probably tell us how much money we could lose. I'm not sure that Jerry has actual numbers, but he could probably tell us there's enough money to lose that when we all get our next tax bills. Ms. Swatsworth-Turmelle said no, I'm not saying that. I just wanted clarification for a follow up to that meeting because it was raised and I never heard any answer to it and I just want to be clear because I'm like Dale, I'm done with the rumors. I'm pleased tonight to say that I'm seeing you guys come together more so than I have in the 3 years I've been coming. Granted, some of the seats are a little different, but I've been coming here and you guys know I've been after you for 3 years, good, bad, and ugly, asking for answers to questions. I feel disheartened but maybe it takes something like this to collaborate, that's the sad part, and I would love to see this room fill up like this, not just because I like everybody else has been hit in the pocket, I'd like to see everybody here because the town is important to come not just your tax bill.

Frank Hogan said we definitely need to be like that lady right there and participate more. I'm glad to hear that personal property is voluntary. You just said the town can do it or can't do it. What I mean again by restructuring is if we ran a leaner business and our expenses were a lot less, as an example right there we could drop that for everybody.

Councilor Bowie said I don't know the exact numbers, but I believe that the personal property tax within the town is \$30 million. There is \$30 million dollars worth of personal property taxes with all the businesses in town. Our budget between the school and the town is \$14 million. If you eliminated. You could consolidate to \$7 million, if you could get everything to \$7 million, if you eliminated personal property tax, I don't think we could stomach this. Councilor Larochelle said that's the heartbeat of the town right there. Councilor Lunt said that would be a huge tax break for Dingley, Miller Hydro and would move all the burden to the regular taxpayers.

Mr. Hogan said so the small businessman, someone just decided that we're going to start [to tax] the small businessman, too, because this is all new to me. Councilor Larochelle said that's the law. Either you are going to tax everybody or no one. Mr. Hogan said it just started applying this to the smaller businesses. Councilor Bowie said it just came out because it was identified in the changeover that we weren't doing this correctly. Mr. Hogan said that's what I'm saying, it's new to people. I hear it all over town. People are trying to hide stuff. They're moving it to Bowdoin.

Councilor Mason said a couple of points to that; we never paid personal property tax until this year. Ours went up \$1,400. That's a new tax for us. Also, there is a State program that will reimburse you up to 90% up to your tax dollars. So, when I go in and pay my \$1,400 willingly, I can get as much as 90% back. I have to list and do a bunch of things to get the State that figure, but they will give it back. So, tell me if that makes sense. Once again remember that a lot of these problems go right up to Augusta. So, what you need to do is call your sitting legislator and ask him to (inaudible). A lot of what has been said is turned back to Augusta. And who has been in control up there for a long, long time; need I say more.

Councilor Bowie said to get any of that information all you need to do is see the Assessor and they will provide you with the forms and help you fill out the information so that you can submit it for your rebate.

John Wierzbicki said one thing that I found out quite recently and it was mentioned earlier, a possible veteran's discount on taxes. I checked into it. If you are a veteran and you are over 62 ½ years old, you fill out your form and next year's taxes will have a 10% reduction. Real simply, come in and see Mr. Van Tuinen if you are a veteran and you are over 62 ½, that will help you on your taxes. The second one, and I want to veer a little bit from what Councilor Crafts said, if you hear a rumor and my job at the post office, I talk to a lot of people, I heard this about this person. You need to think about what you're hearing. If you have a rumor, ask about it. If you don't ask and you just pass it on, one of the people that is going to hear about it, is possibly a business that is going to come into this town. If they hear negative things about the town, they might start thinking second or third thoughts about coming here. Talk about Facebook. I heard a very negative thing about the Androscoggin - and that's where all the scum comes, right into Lisbon. If a business sees that, are they going to want to come into town? We need to be very careful about what we say. Don't just pass on a rumor. Ask about it. Otherwise we're just shooting ourselves in the foot. I like this town. I've only been here 12 years, but I've become very attached to it. I want to spend the rest of my life here. I want it to be a better place. We can't do it if all we're doing is passing out negative stuff.

Mildred Rider said instead of putting the whole load on Dale, if everybody who had a small business went to Augusta, would that help? To put in a complaint about this tax? Councilor Larochelle said Dale has broad shoulders. Councilor Crafts said the process really is to go through your legislator, that's my job. Sure, come on up and come rally with me.

A woman said why do we always want to grow. We have a beautiful small comfortable town. All I ever hear about is how we need to get more businesses in town. You talk about the tax base so we have more money in the budget. Why is we're never happy with what we have? Embrace our tax dollar the way it is. It's always like you have to get bigger and bigger. What are we going to do, move Wal-Mart in, Kmart is going to come down the street. It will be easy for us to walk to the store, but is that what we want. Do we want Kmart? It matters what kind of jobs you bring in.

Councilor Crafts said I would like to try to answer that. Probably, just take health insurance that goes up every year in this town. It's an astronomical number. If we don't have some growth, and I agree there has to be a balance, we won't be able to keep up. Taxes will keep going up. Unfortunately, we have to grow a little bit and bring revenue in to keep up with inflation, the cost of health insurance; it's just the nature of today. The woman said who's health insurance are you talking about? The town employees? What about mine? I don't have health insurance. How's it going to help me? Even though we work, we can't afford health insurance. I hear all this about growing and us paying more, it's not helping us at all. Councilor Crafts said I hear what you are saying and I agree, but there's more factors than just health insurance-the salt that goes on the road goes up every year. The cost of fuel goes up every year. Electricity. It just goes on and on, all these things we have to pay for to run this town. If you don't bring in more revenue, we either cut it out completely, which is where we need to head anyway, or we raise your taxes, which is why we are sitting here tonight. There's not enough revenue. The State cuts you, you wait until next year. I don't like being negative, but we've got a bigger cut coming in this budget than we had last year. It's a \$1.3 billion shortfall in Augusta coming. It's not a good picture.

Councilor Mason said just a couple of things. I like to approach growth. The chances of Wal-Mart, or Kmart or Target coming here are pretty slim. They would have to be pretty desperate to come to the town of Lisbon. I'm not trying to be funny but it's the truth. Generally when any of the big chain stores look at an area, you have to have a certain populace in that area and we don't have that. We haven't grown a lot in the last 10 years. Business, and I've harped on this for many years, just like Dale said business needs to come to this community because when business comes to this community they improve buildings. They bring in, and I know we just got done talking about

personal property tax, but they bring in things with their business that help the town to receive revenue. Maurice Bonneau, I don't know if any of you have been into his business, but he put a lot of money into that business. It brings in people from all over the state. He does mail orders. He ships to Hawaii. Wouldn't it be great if those people in Hawaii decided to come visit Lisbon, Maine. What do we have to offer them? We have Moxie, which is great, but you have to understand economic development and businessmen that sit in this community, and I see some here who are nodding their heads that agree with me. I remember downtown when I was just a little girl. I remember we had Dunton's and Rosenberg's and all those fun little places that weren't big box businesses. They were the place we went on Christmas Eve when my father always ran out of flash bulbs, that's where we went on Christmas Eve. What did you do, you went to Tina's Bakery and you got a cake for your kid's birthday. Those are the kind of things we are looking at, trying to improve local business, local people that are here and they're mad just like you are because they're taxes went up. The more we ignore that, the more we are going to lose it. The more it is not going to come.

Marcel Doyon said Rosie didn't bring anything to town. Councilor Mason said I don't agree with you Mr. Doyon but that's fine, we're going to continue on with what I have to say. I do have the floor, sir. You can put down whoever you want to put down, but business is important. We have the Furniture Superstore that's on Lisbon Road. We have Floor Systems. We have several other big businesses in this town. They chose to come to Lisbon. Floor Systems gets asked all the time why they came to Lisbon, Maine. You know why they came to Lisbon, Maine? Because Gilles Veilleux is from this town and he chose to bring his local owned business to this town because he wanted to help his community. So, don't shake your head and say business isn't important because it is. I look around this room and many of you tonight own businesses here and your families have been here forever. That is a revenue source for us; you may not understand it, you may not see how it is going to help one bit, but it will. That's why what Frank said and what we've all tried to say tonight is we need to work together and we need to stop putting down what others are trying to do. It's very important to this town.

Councilor Cote said one thing I'd like to bring up to everybody here. I don't mention this very often, but we did cut the police department this year, two positions, but the price that it costs us went up, because the cost of contracts, insurances and everything that goes with it. In order for us to cut that budget hard we're going to be losing services. Is everybody ready for that? Is everybody ready for a smaller fire department? These are things we are going to have to look at next year. When we come out and tell you people we're going to be cutting these, I'm sure we're going to be getting calls-why are you cutting our police department or why are you cutting our fire department. This is the reason. These are the decisions we are going to have to make.

APPOINTMENTS

BOARD OF APPEALS REAPPOINTMENT (1-Term Expiring 2013)

&

RECREATION COMMITTEE REAPPOINTMENT (1-Term Expiring 2013)

&

PLANNING BOARD REAPPOINTMENT (1-Term Expiring 2015)

&

LIBRARY GOVERNING BOARD REAPPOINTMENT (1-Term Expiring 2013)

VOTE (2010-157) Councilor Mason, seconded by Councilor Crafts moved to reappoint Miriam Morgan-Alexander to the Board of Appeals, Steve Curtis to the Recreation Committee, Jeffrey Ganong to the Planning Board, and Richard Golden to the Library Governing Board.

Councilor Mason said all of these names are familiar to us. They are people who have lived in town for many years and I think they are all very qualified. We thank them for coming forward. Councilor Larochelle said thank you. Councilor Cote said thank you for participating. We need everybody that wants to get involved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

Order passed - Vote 7-0.

COUNCILOR COMMUNICATIONS

Councilor Crafts said I want to thank everyone for coming. I think that sometimes we have frustration due to lack of knowledge. There are things that we are still investigating that's caused part of this problem. By you coming and listening and understanding and being patient with us, we're all going to get through this. Lots of times it is lack of knowledge and understanding of how government works. It's very complicated. My first term in Augusta was a straight up learning curve and I still have a lot to learn because government has grown and the way they do things, no business would do it that way. The complication of our tax system here took me years to start to understand and to be on this Council. For the public to come and be involved, it's almost impossible to understand it. I understand the frustration. Knowledge helps you to do that. Thanks for coming and listening and being patient with us tonight.

Councilor Larochelle said thank you very much. One of the things that's really hard as a Councilor, I had someone stop in at the shop the other day and said it's kind of too bad you're there but we voted you in and now you have to serve the people. It's your duty, which is right and we're here to do it. As a Councilor, I would like to apologize for not having all the answers, we wish we had, but unfortunately we don't. We hope you give us the respect of trying to work really hard, to give us time so that we can get the answers. I think Steve and at the request of many of the Councilors is moving forward to work with well respected people to give us the right answers and it's not just my opinion or Dale's opinion, or someone's opinion. Opinions don't really move us forward. We really need facts. I thank you for giving us the time for getting those answers for you. That being said, I think we are just trying to do the best we can. We're all townspeople like everybody else, we all want good for the town. Tonight I appreciate the respect you've given us to move forward and try to solve these problems.

Councilor Larochelle said one of the things I want to mention. I stopped at Mike's house the other night and mentioned this to him. I said what scares me the most is if we find that these are true and we find that several thousand dollars are missing, it's going into next year's budget and it's not really a place I want to be. It's going to be a difficult year and not just on our side. I communicate with the school board, that is one of the roles I took on the Council. Just giving them the heads up saying you cut a lot of teachers this year. They said yes, we should be good next year and I said it will only be good if we can make this budget work. If we have to eliminate another dozen teachers, it's going to be a tough road. I think we have to be really careful when we start looking at the budget.

Councilor Larochelle said we have to be careful when we start talking about cutting service. We have a volunteer fire department in this town. If you don't remember, we have a volunteer fire department. If you say you are going to cut the volunteers, you are going against everything you are talking about tonight about people coming together to help. Be careful saying where you want to cut and where you want to slice because you've got to do it with some practicality. You've got to be careful on who you are picking on. If anybody in this town has been volunteering for years, you won't find anybody as faithful as the volunteer fire department. Hopefully they don't have a

meeting tomorrow night and say no one in this town supports us, they want to cut us. It's really hard to cut volunteers and feel good about it. We'll do what we can and move forward cautiously.

Councilor Cote said we've got a pretty good crowd here tonight. I want to thank you for coming out and participating. I have a question I'd like to ask all of you. Would you like to vote on your municipal budget next year like you do the school budget? The Council can see it. I fought for it hard last year and I was told nobody would want it. I just wanted to see.

Councilor Mason said if that is what the people want. According to the Charter there is a process to do that. If it is something you really want to do, you need to get a copy of the Charter. You need to read the Charter and understand what needs to be done to do that. It is not something the Council is allowed to vote on and allow to happen. There's a certain process. There's a petition that needs to be signed by so many people. It needs to go to vote and then it can become the law. Just so you know, there is a process for that.

Councilor Cote said it can be done by the Council. Councilor Mason said okay, you need to look at the Charter and be sure what needs to be done, Roger; we've talked about it in the past. It needs to be voted on, so there's a process. Councilor Lunt said the Charter is up on the website.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

VOTE (2010-161) Councilor Larochelle, seconded by Councilor Crafts moved to go into executive session at 8:55 PM per 1 MRSA Section 405 (6) Consultations with legal counsel. **Order passed - Vote 7-0.**

ADJOURNMENT

VOTE (2010-162) Councilor _____, seconded by Councilor _____ moved to adjourn at PM. **Order passed - Vote _____.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth French, Assistant Clerk

These Council meeting minutes were transcribed and proofed by Beth French.