

Minutes of Selectmen Meeting

Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on January 14, 2020 at the Town Offices at 5:30PM. Dale Kiley, Jason Petraitis and John Tripp present.

Anne Janette and Lisa Taylor were present to discuss the interviews conducted for the new Assistant to the Treasurer and Collector position. Anne placed the add and then extended the deadline to get more applicants. They received 5 applications and conducted 3 interviews. 2 interviews went well. The first person they offered the position to was looking for more money, hours and benefits. Anne explained to the applicant that this is a starting position to get experience in the field and see if they'd be a good fit to advance when the time comes. The second person they wanted to offer the position too was experienced and someone they thought would do a good job with the position, but was not looking to advance in a career. She will do what she's asked, pleasantly. Dale asked Anne to speak with first candidate again and explain about the possible advancement. John said he'd be willing to go up one dollar an hour but can't go up on hours. The Selectboard spoke with Anne and Lisa about hypothetically giving a good faith review in 6 months and discuss a raise at that point, but can't make any promises regarding hours and benefits. Anne touched briefly on the fact that health insurance costs are increasing quite a bit this year so we need to be careful with who we offer benefits too.

Chief Mark Smith and Jason Benoit were in to discuss the applicants to their shared new position of Administrative Assistant to Police and Highway. John asked how many applicants they received, Mark said 8. Mark said they have one person who is well qualified but it comes down to money. Jason said this person goes above and beyond, she's currently in a similar position in another town and continuously brings in grant money, no other applicants were nearly as qualified. She's had over 20 years' experience. Dale asked where the money to pay the new position is coming from and explained that Anne expects insurance costs to go up. No clear answer given.

Dale stated that it troubles him that the PD doesn't have an admin, paying the chief to do paperwork is a waste of money. Dale asked if the new admin needs to physically be at the highway department. Jason said yes, sometimes she will need to be there to do payroll, answer the phone, ect. Mark said his big thing is having someone at the PD during the day to answer calls, print reports, ect. Sometimes they get a call and there is no one in the building.

Dale said that essentially they're getting 2 part time employees for the price of one. John asked if it would make more sense to hire 2 part time employees with no benefits? Jason B stated that you wouldn't get the caliber employee they need for 18 hours a week.

Dale said the individual does have value with her grant experience, she could potentially bring in a lot of money for the Town. Jason stated her grant experience is proven. We're fortunate to have her interest. She wants \$20/hour, she's losing built up vacation, sick, and personal time and taking a pay cut. Candidate says the job needs 40 hours to be done properly.

Dale asked Mark and Jason to give them some time to think about the position and how it will be funded.

Jason Benoit had a pay increase request for his part time snow plow drivers from 18 an hour to 20 an hour. This make the position more attractive, it's been very difficult to get plow drivers because surrounding towns are paying between 22 and 25 an hour. Dale asked how the pay increase would be

funded. Jason explained that plow drivers are paid out of the Snow and Ice account. Jason Petraitis moved, and John Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the pay raise from 18 to 20 dollars an hour for the part time snow plow drivers. So voted.

Jason Benoit also discussed joining a co-op program run by the Town of Brookfield. Several surrounding towns are in this co-op and North Brookfield was recently invited to join. This co-op shares equipment and resources with each other and receive grants for new equipment. Jason stated that in the past everyone involved with the co-op received brand new communication radios, which North Brookfield Highway Department is now in desperate need of, as theirs are out of date and no longer supported. Drivers have been relying on their cell phones for communication.

Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to allow the North Brookfield Highway Department to join the co-op in Brookfield. So voted.

Jason Benoit and the Board discussed a few issues around Town. No Littering signs were requested as the trash has been getting bad. Jason asked where to put them. The Board suggested at all main routes into Town. Jason said that by joining the co-op he can get the signs made at cost. Dale asked that the signs state the \$300 fine for littering.

John Tripp brought an issue with Town Farm Road and wondered if putting it back to dirt would be beneficial. Jason said he could grade it down but would need money to grind the pavement which would be about 4-5 thousand dollars. John also mentioned that Ayer and Stoddard are in horrible condition, does it make sense to go to dirt with those as well? Jason said it would, as he spends quite a bit of money on cold patch and the plows end up ripping it all up. John also asked about Cider Mill Bridge, which will be done this year, and about the 2-hour parking sign in front of Hair Mechanix. Jason has the sign but needs to put it in.

Dale stated he's going to send letters to a few land owners that have land-locked properties near the rail trail and Town Forest to see if they'd be willing to sell it to the Town, as they owners are paying taxes on property they can't access. The properties would be beneficial to the Town for more recreation area.

Jason Petraitis moved, and John Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 1/7/20. So approved.

Dale, Jason and John discussed the Rail Road Lease with property owners in East Brookfield. Dale had adjusted the lease. Removal of Fruit trees was discussed. John wants to walk that area of the trail to see exactly which trees need to be removed and which can stay. Jason Petraitis moved, and John Tripp seconded, a motion to approve and sign the lease. So voted.

Brandon Avery was in to discuss the trash issue. Dale suggested we put up trail cams near the worst areas (by the Orchard). John stated that Highway has 2 cameras they can install. Brandon also mentioned opening the Town House to residents sometime in May to raise money, but wants to make sure the paper is out of there. Dale said it would be taken care of by then. We'll get pricing for a bulk shred truck to come out.

Next off camera night we will sign the NBES contract. Ashley will update the copy with the correct dates.

Ashley asked about becoming a certified procurement officer, Dale approved and said they'd find the money to send Ashley to the classes.

SPED request-A SPED request form was submitted by the school. There was no invoice or explanation. Ashley will get the requested information and the Board will approve next week.

Doug Blood was in and requested a copy of the letter that was sent to him. He asked if the Board wanted a resignation letter from Doug, they said no. Doug was wondering why NEBMA was being reorganized. Dale explained a few issues like not paying the bills, not returning emails, not communication with the Selectmen, and not getting money for grants. Dale asked if Doug understood where he was coming from. Doug said he's got a stack of grants but didn't go for any competitive grants. He explained he's been director of NBEMA for 28 years with no pay. Gary McComas was in as well and explained that he's shows up when he can and that's he's got more availability now. Gary was worried about training a new director. Dale explained that the Boards hope was the Doug would stay on NBEMA to help Chris (new director) get acquainted, and that this reorganization will see NEMA get more grants, better equipment, and more resources. Doug said that Chris is a good kid, but is not interested in being replaced. Dale stated multiple times how much he appreciates Doug and everything he's done for the Town, and that his change is not a reflection on Doug. Dale said he knows Doug cares deeply, but this is all about getting more money for NBEMA and getting them better trained.

Gary stated he's been spending a lot of time at the Fire Department and realizes that NBEMA members are woefully undertrained. Dale stated that Chief Joe Holway plans on appointing someone from the FD as liaison to NBEMA.

There was a discussion about Doug not being Harbormaster. That was a miscommunication, as Dale put Ryan's name on the list but never verified. Doug no longer lives in Town and is no longer on the NBPD so Dale thought it better to have a resident and NB officer appointed as Harbormaster. Doug also had an issue with being taken off Town Beach Committee. Dale explained that a past Board member indicated that Doug was no longer interested, but Doug said that was a mistake. He is still on the East Brookfield Beach Committee. Discussion of paying EB for Lifeguards-Doug indicated the East Brookfield did not hire Lifeguards last summer even though North Brookfield paid them to do so. Dale asked if Doug has been attending the East Brookfield meetings, Doug said not since last year.

Dale again apologized for not calling Doug, and said how much he respects and appreciates him. Doug said he's never missed an incident. There was a short discussion about communication improvements. John said that Chris is hoping NBEMA members will stay and help with this transition. Doug said he's at an age where volunteerism is out.

Dale signed a final approval for Resource Request for East Brookfield's 100th Anniversary Bonfire.

At 8:42 PM there being no further business, Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre