

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JUNE 5, 2012

Chairman Petraitis called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 7:05 PM with Mrs. Walter and Mr. Chabot also present.

I. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of May 29, 2012 as written. So voted. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the Executive Session minutes of May 29, 2012 as written. So voted. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of May 31, 2012 as written. So voted.

IA. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve School Warrant #1065 for \$56,217.69, General Warrant #1066 for \$376,923.32, and Payroll Warrant #25 for \$282,126.51. So voted.

IB. Steve Cummings of 18 Ayers Street was present to ask the Selectmen to consider several issues when the subject of a Frisbee-golf course at the old Town Park is discussed:

1. parking
2. bathroom facilities
3. trash
4. liability issues

In addition, Mr. Cummings noted that the Planning Board must review any plans first to see if such a use is allowable on that property.

Eric Hevy of 18 Oakham Road noted that he is on the committee that is working on plans to refurbish the Town Park, and the committee has yet to have its first meeting. The committee is just beginning to lay out potential areas for different activities. He stressed that plans are in the beginning stages, and no decisions have been made, but the committee will speak with everyone before making plans.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve and sign the warrant for the June 22nd Special Town Meeting. (Available in the Selectmen's office) So voted.

B. John Lane was present to ask if the Selectmen would be interested in a land swap in which he would trade a parcel of land on the corner of Oakham Road and New School Drive for a parcel of town-owned land behind his house on Hillside Avenue. Mr. Lane currently has a written agreement with the School Department to allow their electronic sign on his land. He asked if he and the Selectmen could walk the property together sometime. Mr. Lane will do some

more homework and perhaps have the land surveyed, and get back to the Selectmen.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. School Superintendent John Provost was present to update the Selectmen about the FY13 School Department budget, and his plans to address the issue of declining enrollment at the schools. After beginning his job with North Brookfield last summer, he set out to become more familiar with the issues of the district. What he found was that there are fewer students attending school in North Brookfield, the state's portion of the school budget is declining, and that property values in Town are declining. In addition, the poverty rate in the Elementary School is increasing, and is currently in the neighborhood of 40%. All of these issues combined indicate a bleak outlook for the entire community. Hopefully by increasing enrollment and increasing funding, we can change these trends. He has proposed making North Brookfield a unique educational program that will have parents choosing to send their children to North Brookfield schools.

Superintendent Provost has five objectives:

1. to increase the pre-school program, which currently has a waiting list
2. to expand learning time at the elementary school
3. to expand foreign languages into grades 4, 5, and 6
4. to expand art and music programs at the high school
5. to increase athletic opportunities

Programs being implemented include:

1. a credit based college transfer program with Mount Wachusett Community College
2. a career and technical program focusing on environmental science
3. a program to attract international students

In addition, Superintendent Provost hopes to develop a grant writer position. In order to implement these initiatives, he needs support for the school budget. He believes there is a trend toward increased enrollment; the enrollment district-wide for next fall is up 4%.

The Selectmen thanked Dr. Provost for his presentation. Mr. Chabot noted that he has heard from several parents and residents, all of whom seem excited about Dr. Provost's ideas.

B. Finance Committee Chairman Bob Smith was present to update the Selectmen on the FY13 town budget. Mr. Smith presented a budget worksheet (Available in the Selectmen's office) that shows that the budget is \$198,656.61 over Proposition 2 ½. Mr. Smith noted that overall, the Town budget is up 2.4%. This includes fully funding the School Department budget. The Finance

Committee is recommending that the \$198,656.61 shortage be transferred from the Stabilization Account.

Mr. Chabot asked how much of a difference would it make if the School Department is able to reverse the downward enrollment trend? Mr. Smith replied that it could be a money-making scenario for the North Brookfield schools.

Mr. Petraitis asked if the \$198,000.00 is taken from Stabilization this year, how much will be needed next year? Mr. Smith stated that he isn't sure, but he is confident that there will be some success in the School's initiatives by next year.

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to accept the Finance Committee recommendations. So voted.

C. Joe Holway and Patrick Kiritsy of the North Brookfield Emergency Squad were present to speak to the Selectmen about their financial problems. Mr. Holway called it a "cash flow" problem, noting that the squad has \$23,000.00 outstanding in bills, but only \$6,000.00 in the bank. He said that most communities spend considerably more than North Brookfield on their emergency medical services. He reported that in the last fiscal year, the squad had \$291,000.00 in income, but \$330,000.00 in expenses.

Mr. Kiritsy noted that the squad does over 400 runs per year.

Mr. Holway stated that the squad's contract with the Town needs to be raised in order for the squad to survive. He noted that the squad could return whatever funds are not used back to the Town.

Mr. Chabot noted that there is a small amount of money left in Holden Hospital Funds, and asked if the Selectmen would authorize transferring these funds to the squad. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to give the remaining Holden Hospital funds to the squad. So voted, with Mr. Chabot abstaining because he serves on the squad's Board of Directors.

Mr. Petraitis asked if everyone could meet to discuss these issues some time next week.

Mrs. Walter noted that there had been a suggestion made that the squad approach their bank about an account to get them through their times when cash flow is a problem. Mr. Kiritsy said that the bank won't consider loaning the squad any more money because they already owe on the two ambulances.

Mr. Kiritsy noted that several years ago when the squad first approached the Selectmen about a contract, the original request was for \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00, but the squad agreed to do it for less.

Mr. Chabot asked if the squad has an audit done every year, and Mr. Holway answered that an audit is done annually by the same firm that audits the Town.

Mr. Petraitis said that he will try to set up a meeting with everyone sometime next week.

Mr. Smith of the Finance Committee said that a meeting would be a good idea, as there are many questions to be answered. He pledged that the Finance Committee would do everything possible to help.

F. Fire Chief Brad Gannon was present to deliver his report for the months of April and May. (Available in the Selectmen's office) The Chief reported 16 outside fires in April, an unusually high number. Mr. Chabot moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to accept the Chief's report. So voted.

II. OLD BUSINESS

C. Mrs. Walter noted that there will be an informational public forum on the removal of beavers near Tucker Road on Monday, June 18th at 7 PM in the High School Kiva Room. Letters will be sent out to abutters.

D. Mr. Petraitis signed a letter to the Massachusetts School Building Authority asking that North Brookfield be allowed to finish the Elementary School window project under the Accelerated Repair Program. (Available in the Selectmen's office)

E. Mrs. Walter noted that the lease between the Town and the Quabaug Corporation for winter parking on Grove Street expired on May 1st. The Town has not received payment from Quabaug for this. In addition, when remediation activities begin at the Downtown Development site this area will be used as a staging area, and Quabaug employees won't be able to park there. Quabaug will need to be notified of this. Mr. Petraitis stated that he would call Mr. Rosen at Quabaug and let him know, try to collect the \$1 lease payment, and also ask what Quabaug officials want to do about the recommendations of the Quabaug Building Study Committee.

III. NEW BUSINESS

D. The Selectmen reviewed four transfer requests: one from the Town Accountant for \$1,050.00 from the Treasurer's Banking Account to the Accountant Expense Account to purchase a new printer, one from the Town Clerk to transfer \$650.00 from her Clerk Account to the Election and Registrars Salary Account to pay for additional hours, one from the Town Collector for \$389.89 from the Tax Title Account to the Supplies Account to purchase real

estate forms, and another one from the Collector for \$36.29 form Collector Software Expense to the Collector Postage Account for postage. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve and sign the transfers. So voted.

E. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from the Planning Board asking that the Selectmen to consider the elimination of the farm animal tax. (Available in the Selectmen's office) Steve Cummings of the Planning Board was present. He noted that the Planning Board feels that the amount of money that is collected is minimal, but the impact to small farming operations is great. The Planning Board feels that this is a good thing for the community. It was agreed to ask the Assessors office for more information on this and discuss it again at a later meeting.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Mr. Petraitis announced that dog licenses are now overdue. There will be a \$25 late charge after September 1st.

B. Mrs. Walter reviewed the list of events scheduled to celebrate North Brookfield's 200th Anniversary, including a Family Fund Day to be held June 16th on the Town Common.

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Farm animal tax
- B. Police Chief's contract
- C. John Lane land swap

At 8:45 PM Mr. Chabot moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant