

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JANUARY 3, 2012

Chairman Walter called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 7 PM with Mr. Petraitis also present. Mr. Chabot was unable to attend. Mrs. Walter reminded those in attendance that the meeting was being both audio and video taped.

I. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of December 12, 2011, December 20, 2011, and the Executive Session minutes of December 20, 2011. So voted.

IA. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve School Warrant #1035 for \$49,321.57, General Warrant #1036 for \$155,692.13, Water Warrant #1037 for \$52,544.78, and Payroll Warrant #14 for \$273,708.18. So voted.

IB. There was no one present for the Public Comment Period.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Mrs. Walter noted that a while back Mr. Ken Elstein of Hampshire Council of Governments came to discuss electric aggregation whereby the Town's residents could benefit from purchasing electricity from an alternative provider like the Town government does. Mrs. Walter noted that the Selectmen are eager to share the cost savings with Town residents. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to ask Mr. Elstein to come to the January 31st Selectmen's meeting, and also to the February 3rd Special Town Meeting. So voted.

B. Mrs. Walter reviewed a letter to be signed by the Selectmen supporting the efforts of the Friends of the Town House to obtain funding through the National Trust for Historic Preservation. (Attachment #1) Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve and sign the letter. So voted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mr. Eric Weiss, Sustainability Director for the Hampshire Council of Governments (COG) was present to speak to the Selectmen about solar opportunities. Mr. Weiss reported that all small towns have the same needs, and Hampshire COG is in the process of writing a multi-town RFP for solar projects. Also, Mr. Weiss and his group will help communities achieve "Green Community" status.

Mr. Weiss explained that Hampshire COG is a Massachusetts Registered Broker for Solar Renewable Energy Credits. (SRECS) They only charge 4% of these credits, which can be bought and sold.

Mrs. Walter asked what is the difference between SRECS and net metering credits? Mr. Weiss stated that they are two completely different things; the money from SRECS goes directly to the owner of a system. With net metering, a system that generates substantially more power than it can use will receive net metering credits from the electric company that can be bought and sold. Mr. Weiss also stated that if the Town were to agree to purchase net metering credits, it could not later develop its own projects and receive the SRECS.

Mr. Petraitis asked about up-front costs for solar projects, and Mr. Weiss stated that the way the RFP is being structured all financial risk will be on the developer, not on the towns. Mr. Petraitis asked about the life expectancy of solar panels, and Mr. Weiss stated that it is currently thought to be around 25 years.

Mr. Weiss received information about the North Brookfield schools that would allow them to be listed as potential solar sites. (Available in the Selectmen's office) Mrs. Walter reported that the Town would like to add the new police station as well. Leslie will gather the information for the police station and get it to Mr. Weiss.

B. Mrs. Walter read a letter from the North Brookfield Railroad Corporation asking that Mark Bourgeois III be appointed as a constable for all things related to the railroad. (Attachment #2) Mr. Bourgeois was present, and noted that he will provide the Town with a bond and be sworn in by the Town Clerk before he begins his duties. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to appoint Mr. Bourgeois. So voted.

C. Mr. Petraitis reviewed the Police Department report for the month of November as submitted by Chief Aram Thomasian, Jr. (Available in the Selectmen's office) The Chief reported 13 incidents and 19 arrest/summons for the month. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to accept the report. So voted.

D. Mrs. Walter reviewed a letter from Bob LaFlamme of Crowley Fuel (Attachment #3) calling attention to the plight of residents who cannot afford to heat their homes. He went on to say that he knows the Town can't afford to provide for all of the needs that exist, but he asked the Selectmen to raise awareness and bring citizens together to help the worst from happening.

Mrs. Walter noted that perhaps every option for residents hasn't been identified. She noted that the Senior Center will assist the elderly, and the Hearts for Heat organization is working overtime to be able to help as many residents as it can.

Mr. Petraitis noted that people looking for help should fill out an application for Hearts for Heat. He noted that it is a fully confidential process.

Mr. Petraitis noted that if there is any resident who needs assistance, or knows of anyone who needs assistance, they should contact the Senior Center or the Town Offices.

Mrs. Walter asked that neighbors watch out for their neighbors.

E. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to accept two donations to the Town Clock Fund. The first one is an anonymous donation for \$500, and the second one is for \$501.31 from Mr. Chabot. Mr. Chabot had previously stated that he would donate his Selectmen's salary to the project. So voted.

F. Mr. Petraitis reviewed a letter from the North Brookfield Emergency Squad noting that the squad continues to struggle financially, and asking that a meeting be set up with the Selectmen to make the Board fully aware of the financial reality of the squad. (Available in the Selectmen's office)

Mrs. Walter stated that she would like more information on the outstanding receivables of the squad. Mr. Petraitis stated that he had some questions as well. It was agreed that Mr. Petraitis and Mrs. Walter will put their questions together, and a meeting will be set up between representatives of the squad and the Selectmen.

G. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from John Letchford, Chief Information Officer of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, regarding an upgrade to the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS). According to Mr. Letchford, the state has received funding to develop essential geographic data for use by public safety and other agencies. Mrs. Walter noted that this may prove to be very helpful to Town departments.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Mrs. Walter reminded residents that there will be a Special Town Meeting on Friday, February 3rd at 7 PM in the Elementary School Auditorium.

B. Mr. Petraitis announced that Hearts for Heat will be sponsoring a spaghetti dinner on January 28th from 5 PM to 7 Pm at the Elementary School. The cost is \$7, or a limit of \$20 for a family of four or more.

C. Mrs. Walter announced that Bicentennial Calendars are available in the Town Clerk's office for \$10 each.

D. Mr. Petraitis read an announcement from the Water Department that the cost of Horse Pond Fishing Permits will increase from \$5 to \$10

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Petraitis noted that meeting with the NBEMS is a priority.

Mrs. Walter stated that she wanted to look into the information on GIS.

At 7:55 PM Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy related to litigation, because an open session may have a detrimental effect on the Town's negotiating position. Roll call: Walter, yes; Petraitis, yes; Chabot, absent. So voted. Mrs. Walter announced that the Board would exit Executive Session only to adjourn.

At 8:30 PM the Board came out of Executive Session. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant