

## MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING NOVEMBER 8, 2011

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

I. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the October 25, 2011 minutes as written. So voted. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the October 25<sup>th</sup> Executive Session minutes as written. So voted. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the November 2, 2011 minutes as written. So voted.

IA. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve School Warrant #1023 for \$46,618.34, General Warrant #1024 for \$47,911.92, and Payroll Warrant #10 for \$274,013.94. So voted.

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

Mr. Petraitis noted that Friday is Veterans' Day, and everyone should thank at vet.

### III. NEW BUSINESS

F. Harbour Hodder was present to ask the Selectmen to appoint Suzanne Nagle of 137 Summer Street to the Cultural Council. Mrs. Nagle was on the Cultural Council for many years, and would like to work with the Council again. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to appoint Mrs. Nagle. So voted.

Mrs. Hodder reported that the final three programs in the "Rewilding the World" program sponsored by the library will be held this week and next. Tomorrow night at 7 PM Dr. Thomas French of the Massachusetts Fisheries and Wildlife division will speak on the restoration of larger wild animals in Massachusetts. Saturday evening at 7 folksinger Sara Arthen will give a free concert n behalf of the East Quabbin Land Trust, and next Wednesday at 7 Beth Lambert will speak on restoring rivers in Massachusetts. All events will be held at the library.

B. Ken Elstein of Hampshire Power was present to inform the Selectmen about electrical aggregation. Mr. Elstein reported that all expenses for this program are borne by Hampshire Power; there is no cost to the Town.

Mr. Elstein explained that in the late 1990s when the state abolished the county system, the 60 towns of Hampshire County banded together as a Council of Governments. The Hampshire Council of Governments was formed in 1999, and

is self-funded by providing better services at a lower cost for the towns. Hampshire Power was created in 2006, and it now supplies electricity to over 100 towns and school districts. They have saved their members of \$1.4 million since then.

In 1997 when the state deregulated electricity, most residential customers stayed with their default provider; in North Brookfield the default provider is National Grid. Most large businesses, however, have changed their providers. With “aggregation,” the Town can provide a better electric rate for residents who have stayed with the default provider. Customers may “opt out” of aggregation if they don’t want to change from National Grid. Mr. Elstein reported that Barnstable and Dukes Counties have been doing this for 11 years; they are now the default provider on the Cape and Islands.

Making this move would require a Town Meeting vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to act. The Selectmen would then file with the state Department of Public Utilities with Hampshire Power’s help.

Mr. Chabot noted that he changed the electrical provider at his business to Direct Energy, and has seen significant savings. Mr. Elstein stated that Direct Energy would be one of the companies that Hampshire Power would be talking to about pricing; right now Direct Energy does not sell to residential customers.

Mr. Elstein presented the Selectmen with sample language for a Town Meeting article. The Selectmen thanked Mr. Elstein for his time. Mrs. Walter noted that the Selectmen should discuss this again at the next meeting.

## II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from Louise Woodard (Available in the Selectmen’s office) asking the Selectmen to waive the Town’s right of first refusal on 16 acres of land at the Brookfield Orchards. Mrs. Woodard reports that the land will be used as a solar power facility. Mrs. Walter reviewed an acknowledgement from the Conservation Commission, and reported that the Planning Board as well had no objections. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve and sign the Chapter 61A waiver for this land. So voted.

B. Mr. Chabot reviewed a letter of support for the Friends of the Town House (Attachment #1) stating that the Board of Selectmen fully supports the efforts of the Friends in securing funding for the project. Mr. Chabot moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to approve the sign the letter. So voted.

C. Mr. Chabot gave an update on the North Brookfield Railroad. He reported that last week’s storm has made surveying the railroad property very

difficult. The principal of the railroad is looking at land along the rail bed that would be good for development. There are several large businesses that have expressed interest in relocating to North Brookfield when the railroad is reactivated.

Mr. Chabot reported that the Selectmen, as the railroad's Board of Directors, are waiting for final contract language from the attorneys before signing with the North Brookfield Railroad Holding Company. Having the railroad active in town again will be a real boon for North Brookfield. There will be additional tax revenue created by the redevelopment, there will be jobs, and the Town will benefit from tipping fees and per-car fees. Mr. Chabot stated that it is hoped that the railroad will be up and running by next summer in time for the Town's 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Mr. Chabot also stated that all railroad abutters should be sent another letter reminding them to remove all of their property from railroad land.

D. The Selectmen reviewed the proposed FY13 Budget Guidelines. (Attachment #2) Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve and sign the guidelines. So voted.

### III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mrs. Walter reported that National Grid has said that everyone in North Brookfield has had power restored. Mrs. Walter stated that she was in contact with National Grid on a daily basis, and at times every four hours, in the storm's aftermath. She thanked all of the Town officials for their efforts during last week's storm, especially those who worked at the town's Emergency Operations Center and shelter.

She noted that the big topic now is what to do with the large volume of brush in town. She explained that we are waiting to hear from FEMA as to whether or not there will be reimbursement money coming for the cleanup. The Highway Department is removing some debris in order to make snow plowing less difficult. She asked residents to please be patient until a decision can be made on the storm debris.

Mr. Petraitis noted that enough can't be said about the police, fire, EMS, Emergency Management, and Highway workers during last week's snowstorm. They really worked very hard, and should be commended.

Mr. Petraitis noted that the people at Hannaford have gone out of their way to help out with this storm, and with the June 1<sup>st</sup> tornado that hit western Massachusetts, and also the 2008 ice storm. He said that he would like the

Selectmen to recognize them in some way. Mr. Chabot agreed, stating that they have always been very generous.

Mr. Petraitis then stated that it has been over one year since Robert Filipkowski was recalled. He was not reappointed to NBEMA in June in accordance with state law, but he is now eligible to be reinstated. He asked that the Board consider appointing Mr. Filipkowski again.

Mrs. Walter stated that the request should come from proper channels, i. e., the head of NBEMA. Mr. Chabot stated that if NBEMA Director Doug Blood were to request the reappointment of Mr. Filipkowski he would be ok with that. Mr. Chabot stated that NBEMA needs as many volunteers as possible.

Mr. Chabot read a thank you letter from Phil and Barbara LeBel of Brookfield saying that they spent three days and nights at North Brookfield's shelter and were most appreciative. (Attachment #3)

### III. NEW BUSINESS

C. The Selectmen discussed the possibility of having a Special Town Meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Walter noted that there were two topics that were proposed for this meeting: a 5% wage increase for employees and a new SUV for the Fire Chief. At this point it does not appear that the necessary information for the raises will be ready in time for that meeting. She stated that later in December would not be a good idea, because it will be too close to the holidays. She suggested postponing to January. Mr. Chabot and Mr. Petraitis both agreed to postpone until early January.

Mr. Petraitis noted that the Selectmen should contact Attorney David Felper on the steps that need to be taken to reopen contracts with the Police and highway unions.

D. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from the Spencer Board of Selectmen (Attachment #4) inviting the Selectmen to a public hearing on November 21<sup>st</sup> at 6 PM to discuss the needs of Seniors. Mrs. Walter wondered if the COA Director and COA Chairman should be invited? Mr. Petraitis stated that he would be attending.

E. Mr. Petraitis read an e-mail from Julie McCarthy (Attachment #5) asking that Sheila Buzzell, Louis Grace, Trish Miller, Nancy Nykiel, and Mary Walter be appointed to the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. Mr. Petraitis so moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded. So voted.

I. Joe Holway was present to ask for permission to investigate the possibility of creating a town park at the Town Forest land off of Route 148. He

stated that he has been looking for a project to occupy his time, and he would like to see what can be done to restore this site. According to Mr. Holway, some 40 years ago it was used as a park, there was fishing in the pond there, and there were fireplaces and picnic tables. Mr. Holway would like to research the project over the winter, and contact various people such as the Boy Scouts or the Playground Committee who might be able to do some work. He would like to come back to the Selectmen in the spring with some plans on how to make this happen. He stressed that there would be no cost to the Town, the work would be done with volunteers and donated materials. The Selectmen had no objections to Mr. Holway's request. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to give permission to Mr. Holway to do some research and develop a plan to create a park at the site. So voted.

G. Mrs. Walter reviewed the Police Report for the month of October as submitted by Chief Thomasian. (Available in the Selectmen's office) The Chief reported 26 incidents and 18 arrest/summons for the month. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to accept the report. So voted.

H. Mrs. Walter reviewed two letters from the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC) informing the Board that Dane Falardeau and Christine Morrison have successfully completed training to become certified Conservation Commissioners. (Available in the Selectmen's office) Mrs. Walter offered the Board's congratulations, and noted that Ann Hicks is also certified, and the North Brookfield Conservation Commission now has three certified commissioners.

#### IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Mr. Petraitis announced that all veterans are invited to attend a special dinner on November 10<sup>th</sup> at the Salem Cross Inn. This is sponsored by the Town of West Brookfield.

B. Mrs. Walter announced that the Selectmen will hold the annual tax classification hearing on Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at 10AM. This will determine what percentage of the tax levy to be borne by each class real and personal property for FY12.

C. Mr. Chabot announced that the Police Association's Toys for Joy program is now accepting applications from needy families, with toys to be picked up by December 7<sup>th</sup>.

D. Mr. Petraitis announced that an informational session on wetlands bylaws will be held at the library Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> at the library. This is being sponsored by the Conservation Commission.

E. Mr. Chabot announced that there will be a national test of the Emergency Alert System tomorrow at 2 PM. (Attachment #6)

F. Mrs. Walter announced that there will be a public hearing on Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup> on the Town's intent to apply for another \$200,000.00 EPA Cleanup grant. The hearing will be at 7 PM in the Senior Center. Everyone is urged to attend to show support for this project, and to offer comments or questions.

G. Mrs. Walter noted that the state will be replacing the bridge at Hines Bridge Road, and the road will be closed until further notice.

## V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. The Selectmen will be renewing all alcohol, car dealer, and common victualler's licenses on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Petraitis noted that according to state law, the chairman of the Selectmen can attend negotiating sessions with the School Committee. He would like the Town to accept a by-law that would make it mandatory that the School Committee schedule their sessions with the Selectmen. This would require a Town Meeting vote, and would probably need input from Town Counsel. Mr. Petraitis agreed to draft a proposed by-law.

Mr. Chabot noted that according to the state, North Brookfield was \$243,000.00 over net school spending last year. Mrs. Walter stated that she wanted to commend the new school superintendent for his willingness to work with the Town to resolve the school's financial issues. He will be delivering a preliminary budget sometime in December, and he will be inviting the Selectmen and Finance Committee to attend.

There being no further business, Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to adjourn at 8:30 PM. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton  
Administrative Assistant