

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00PM on Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at the North Brookfield Police Department.

Mr. Petraitis announced that Elizabeth Brooke Canada was elected as the new Board member and welcomed her.

Mr. Petraitis stated that Mr. Richard "Dickie" Batchelor passed away on September 6, 2022. The 2001 Annual Town Report was dedicated to him when he retired from the Town after serving it for 41 years as Water Superintendent, on the Fire Department, Highway Department, and Police Department. Mr. Petraitis asked for a moment of silence for him.

REORGANIZE BOARD: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to keep Jason Petraitis as Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, John Tripp as Vice-Chair of the Board, and Elizabeth Brooke Canada as Clerk. So voted.

- I. Approval of Minutes
 - a. 6/28
 - b. 6/28 exec
 - c. 8/30

Mr. Tripp moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 6/28 and 6/28 executive session. So voted. Mrs. Canada pointed out an error in the 8/30 minutes. Ashley will revise.

- II. Approval of Warrants

Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the following warrants: Payroll #6 for \$339,727.66, General # 1011 for \$274,402.24, and School # 1010 for \$43,365.92. So voted.

- III. Financial Items
NONE

- IV. Old Business
 - a. ARPA Committee Appointment-Mr. Petraitis stated there were two candidates recommended by the ARPA Committee: Patrick Wimberly and Lene Guertin. Mr. Petraitis asked Patrick and Lene to give us a brief statement on why they want to serve. Patrick stated that he grew up in North Brookfield, has banking experience, and wants to serve the Town. Lene said she's been a North Brookfield resident for 25 years, she wants to contribute to the Town, she's done research on the ARPA guidelines, she works in finance, she's a realtor and a Town Assessor, she feels she could add knowledge to the committee. She's also taken some web classes on the do's and don'ts of ARPA funding and thinks she could make good decisions. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to appoint Lene Guertin to the ARPA Committee. So voted. Mr. Petraitis thanked Patrick and Lena for their interest in serving North Brookfield.

- b. Final Approval for Request for Resources-Brookfield Garden Club requested use of the Town Forest Park on Saturday, September 24, to hold their Annual BBQ. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to give final approval. So voted. NBHelps requested to hold Trunk or Treat on the Town Common on October 31, 2022 during Trick or Treat hours (TBD). Fire, EMS and Police have all approved the request. The Playground Committee will be meeting Friday to vote on the request. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to give final approval. So voted.
- c. Accept Salem Trust gift for Walnut Grove-Mr. Petraitis explained that the Board of Selectmen must vote to accept donations or gifts. The Robert T. Salem Trust gifted \$30,000 to the Cemetery Commission, \$15,000.00 of which was received a few years ago, they are now receiving the balance of \$15,000.00. There are no limitations on how to use the funds. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to accept the gift. So voted.

V. New Business

- a. Sign North Brookfield Farms Liquor License-Mr. Petraitis read the Liquor License approval from ABCC, Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign license and give final approval for North Brookfield Farms to have a Wine and Malt Off premise liquor license. So voted.
- b. Pole Hearing 6:15PM Rufus Putnam Rd.-Mr. Petraitis opened the pole hearing at 6:15PM. National Grid representative read the petition. 1 new pole on Rufus Putnam Road. Mr. Petraitis asked if there were any abutters. Jamie Flamand, Water Superintendent, said this petition is to help with a new aeration system for the water department. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the placement of the pole according to map provided. So voted. Mr. Petraitis closed the hearing at 6:20PM.
Mr. Petraitis noted the next hearing would open at 6:30PM, we will take up other business in the meantime.
- c. Pole Hearing 6:30PM Bell Rd-Mr. Petraitis opened the pole hearing at 6:30PM. National Grid representative read the petition, 2 new poles on Bell Road for new customer. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the placement of poles according to map provided. So voted. Mr. Petraitis closed the hearing at 6:33PM.
- d. Regionalization Committee update-Michelle Petraitis was present to give an update on RAAC, potential to regionalize with Quaboag School District, Warren and West Brookfield are current towns in that district. Michelle said they've been meeting with Quaboag for 15 months to go over the feasibility of North Brookfield joining them. They've had grants to help with studying the issue, they've reviewed growth, decline, and finances for each Town before and after the potential regionalization. They voted 2

meetings ago to pursue the investigation and are putting together information for future meetings. Michelle said there will be additional public meetings and all three towns involved will have to vote at their Town Meetings on the regionalization. Michelle said she doesn't have specific details yet but is happy to answer questions. Mr. Petraitis said the questions will go through the Selectboard Chair.

Bob Locatelli asked for a time frame, Michelle said if all towns agree to move forward there would be a bridge year and they believe 2025 will be the first full school year.

Bill King asked if there would be a presentation at Town Meeting, Michelle said they'd like to have the vote at the Spring Annual Town Meeting, but there will be presentations prior to that with experts to answer questions. She also noted that the Regionalization Committee will not agree to change the elementary school.

Mr. Tripp asked if we will accept students from other Towns. Shiela LeBlanc said that Warren, North Brookfield, and West Brookfield will all maintain their own K-5 students, they will use our high school for 6-8, and Quaboag high school for 9-12. Michelle said they would still accept school choice students not from our district.

Jackie Black asked if they had considered Quabbin Regional, Michelle said the committee originally considered Quabbin, Spencer/East Brookfield and Quaboag. There was a 17-member panel and Quabbin was ruled out in the original panel. Jackie asked if we'd get more money for arts and sports, ect. Michelle said based on the model it may be possible to keep the budget for elementary. Shiela LeBlanc asked for clarification on the question, Jack said she heard North Brookfield doesn't have sports. Shiela stated that students are eligible for sports in grades 7-12, Quabbin has a football team and offer a lot more sports than North Brookfield. She said we don't have enough students to field teams.

Kathy Crevier asked how many students are opting out of North Brookfield for school choice. Sheila said over 100, Tim McCormick said they'd have real numbers by October 1st. Kathy asked if the majority opted for Quaboag, Shiela said it's split between Quabbin and Quaboag. Michelle said according to DESE 120 kids choiced out of North Brookfield in 2021, Jackie Black asked how many students are in the NB Schools, Michelle said 540. Kathy asked if students gave a reason for opting out of NB, Shiela said some do, some don't, some are for sports, and last year a lot opted for Quaboag in anticipation of regionalization. Shiela also noted that once a student opts out there's no obligation for the parents to respond to questions as to why the student left.

Michelle said all meetings are public, posted and minutes are available to view. All are welcome to come to the meetings. Mr. Tripp asked where the meetings take place, Michelle said so far all have been at Quaboag, but information for North Brookfield will be in North Brookfield.

Mr. Petraitis thanked the committee for the update.

- e. Electronic Sign Usage Policy Update-Mr. Petraitis read a letter from Tara Hayes, Town Clerk, regarding the Electronic Sign Usage policy-she received a request to place advertisement for a political candidate and assessed this could potentially be objectionable. Mr. Petraitis agreed that the Town sign should not be used for political candidates. Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to add a guideline to the policy stating no partisan or political content on the sign. So voted.
- f. Assistant Collector position rate change recommendation-Mr. Petraitis read a letter for the Town Collector requesting the hourly rate for the Assistant to the Collector be raised to \$18.50 per hour. Mr. Tripp asked if the money was available in the budget, the Town Collector made note in her letter that the funds were available. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the request. So voted.
- g. NBHelps Liaison Appointment-NHelps requested John Tripp be appointed to their Committee as a Board of Selectmen Liaison. Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to appoint John Tripp as Liaison to NB Helps. So voted.
- h. Mr. Petraitis read a request from Plumbing and Gas Inspector Troy Allen to appoint Robert Wall as Emergency Interim Assistant Plumbing and Gas Inspector. Robert is currently inspector in Spencer and Brookfield. North Brookfield's Assistant Inspector is out due to surgery and Troy Allen needs his own work inspected so homeowners can move forward. Robert Wall agreed to help Troy until Jim Bergeron returns and is not looking for compensation. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to appoint Robert Wall as Interim Assistant Plumbing and Gas Inspector. So voted. Ethan Melad stated he was under the impression that people needed to attend the Board of Selectmen meeting in order to be appointed, Mr. Petraitis explained that this is an emergency situation and was requested by the Plumbing and Gas inspector.
- i. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from the Town Clerk regarding submission of minutes by committees and boards, with an attachment of open meeting law. Mr. Petraitis said he doesn't know which boards or committees are not submitting their minutes. Mr. Petraitis read the guidelines for posting minutes. Sue Lewandowski stated she puts minutes online and asked if she should print them and submit them to the Town Clerk, Mr. Petraitis said she could email them.
- j. Request for meeting in Town Offices-Mr. Petraitis said there are several places in Town where private groups can hold meetings: Police Department, Library, Senior Center, but when it comes to meetings in the Town Offices, they have been strictly for town appointed committees and boards. The Board will work on a policy to request use of Town Offices by private groups which will require approval by the Board of Selectmen.

VI. Public Comment Period

- a. The public has the opportunity to briefly comment through the Chairman, with a two-minute limit
Kathy Crevier asked about the NB Helps liaison and if it is Town appointed. Sue Lewandowski explained that she was on Decorate Our Town for years and stepped up to keep it at bare bones: flags, flowers, holiday décor ect. In 2016 she was awarded \$2,500.00 to donate to a non-profit, NB Helps arose at that time. Mr. Petraitis noted

that D.O.T. (Decorate Our Town) was not a town appointed committee, but NB Helps is.

Ethan Melad spoke about the Johnson and Johnson Opioid Settlement-we will be getting money over the next 16 years totally \$740,000.00. The payments will start with larger portions and then vary, there are restrictions on the use of the funds but if we pool money with other towns, we should be able to do something bigger such as hiring a substance abuse prevention coordinator and fund programs and resources in the area. Mr. Petraitis asked when the money would come in, Ethan said soon. Mr. Petraitis asked who administers the money, Ethan said the Board of Selectmen and Board of Health can work together to figure out how to spend the money, he is looking to get bigger towns to get involved as well. Mr. Petraitis said he's looking forward to more discussion on this.

VII. Announcements
None

At 7:02PM, there being no further business, Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre