

## Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen meeting was called to order on Tuesday, April 27, 2021 at the Police Department. Dale Kiley, Jason Petraitis, and John Tripp present.

Approval of Warrants: Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the following warrants: School # 1055 \$181,876.20, General # 1056 \$276,510.47, Payroll # 22 \$363,312.86. So voted.

Cares Act-Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the school's request to pay \$15,094, out of CARES funds to pay for an outside classroom shade structure. So voted.

Purchase request: Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve BOH request to purchase laminating sheets, at a cost of about \$40. So voted. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve BOS request to purchase stamps at about \$55. So voted.

Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to sign the revised CDBG contract. So voted.

Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to sign the revised 61A release for Carl Gustafson property. So voted.

Downtown Development Committee:

Bill Paille and Jef Fasser from BSC Group did a presentation on Downtown North Brookfield with proposed changes to sidewalks and parking. They stated there are many issues including unsafe sidewalks, no access to buildings for handicap, abrupt changes in grading, utilities poles in the middle of sidewalks, on street parking, steep and blind driveways, and the retaining wall in front of the church is falling down. They identified 3 potential projects and showed images of what the sidewalks, roads, and parking would look like. The project would include resetting/adding curbs, more parking, curb extensions to cross walks, adding ramps for ADA compliance and decorative lighting. Bill went over a potential schedule to get started on the project which includes grant deadlines from MassDOT, which give \$400,000 grants twice a year for this type of project.

Ann Gillette was present and asked about the plan to block access to her building-in the images it showed her driveway area being taken over by public parking. Bill said they are still working with Ann, if she's accepting her private property would become sidewalk and public parking. Her employees could then park on North Main or Maple Street. Ann said deliveries will become a problem, and with the new gas station, foot traffic will move to the other side of the street.

Mr. Kiley said that we are reserving Maple Street for an unloading zone for deliveries, so the design would need to include that. Bill said this design is conceptual and they can modify it. Mr. Tripp pointed out that the design also took away 2 parking spots for Jim's Pizza. Sheila Orsi said we are trying to fix crosswalks to make it safer for pedestrians, but we can look at that area again.

Ann Gillette stated there is already nowhere to park, businesses fight over spots.

Michelle Petraitis asked what are the contingencies? Bill said they will add 10-15% on estimate for contingencies. Looking to spend \$400,000 for construction and oversight, but that would not include design fee or police details. Michelle asked if we would need to have contingency, as Town, if the project went over \$400,000. Bill said to account for replacement of water service pipe, but won't

replace water mains. Sheila said she wants to get this done now, not wait 10 years for water mains to be replaced before fixing sidewalk issues.

Brandon Avery asked about speaking to Vibram about swapping parking around, their lot on Main Street would be great for public use.

Mr. Kiley asked what the next steps in the project would be. Sheila said they plan on submitting an application by May 1<sup>st</sup> for the Hannaford to Maple Street (East Side) part of the project. They're also looking a few other grants unrelated to this project. Michelle asked when we would apply for the next step, while we're in the middle of this one? Bill said municipalities can apply during each cycle, but all money from grant must be spent before you can apply again. Towns typically only apply once a year, however there are other grant opportunities available for these types of projects. Bill mentioned a MassWorks grant and a Strap Grant.

Bill King asked about the sidewalk in front of the church, wondering if that would make the road narrower through that area. Bill Paille said they've approximated the measurements and they are fairly confident they can fit everything within the Right of Way, but it will be tight in front of the library.

Mr. Tripp asked how to plow with all the bump outs. Bill said it is a challenge, plow drivers will need to be aware of the curb lines, signs, ect. It will take more time and snow storage will be a problem, we will need to purchase a bobcat to clear out the curb bump outs.

Cider Mill Bridge-Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to sign the contract for the extension. So voted.

One day liquor license: Brookfield Orchards requested a one-day liquor license for multiple dates over the Summer. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the one-day liquor license. So voted.

Town Collector is receiving calls about making exceptions to Water bills, she felt exceptions to late water payments should be made by the Water Department. The Board discussed and agreed it falls to the Water Commissioners to make exceptions, not the collector.

Jason Petraitis read the Fire reports for January, February and March of 2021. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to accept the reports. So voted.

Public Comment:

Mr. Kiley went over the rules of Public Comment-residents can only speak when recognized by the Chair, 2-minute time limit, don't repeat yourself-MGL Chapter 30, Section 20: No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.

Maria Byter Tucker expressed the School Committee's deep dismay that the proposed budget show's a one million dollar cut, 16%, which will devastate the school. Maria invited the BOS to a tri-board meeting with School Committee, BOS, and Fin Comm to explain the Town's budget. Maria showed

support for Superintendent Lind and staff during this difficult year. Maria referenced the plans for the Town House and said if the Town doesn't support education people will not move to North Brookfield, and that the plans to regionalize the school will not save the Town money.

Mr. Kiley responded, saying that there have been tri-board meetings in the past but the School Committee sets the budget and the BOS and FinComm have no say in it. The school came to the Town and asked for an 8% increase. Mr. Kiley explained that we can only raise revenue by 2%, and that money out cannot exceed money in. If we have 15 million dollars, we cannot spend more than that. Mr. Kiley explained net school spending, cherry sheets, and that other departments in Town need to be funded. Maria said the school understands they don't get everything they want, but they need at least 11% increase. Mr. Kiley and Maria discussed the budget a bit more and Tim Canada mentioned that the reason they came to the BOS meeting was to question the 16% cut, that puts the school in a bind. Mr. Kiley said that the cut is closer to \$500,000 now, not 1 million, we're still waiting on information from the State, and this is why we continue the May meeting until June, so we have more information on revenue and the Cherry Sheets from the state. Tim Canada said that Maria is emotionally invested and that enrollment numbers will go up if the Town invests in the school. Mr. Kiley said that in 2018 the Board asked the School Committee to find out why students were choosing to enroll in other schools. The School Committee did not find out.

Matt Grant said that Superintendent Richard Lind doesn't take the time to find out those answers. Matt also stated that Mr. Lind took a pay increase at the very end of the school committee meeting, and that his communication skills need to be improved.

Mr. Kiley said that you can't say you are transparent and not be transparent. Every year teachers get a 4% pay raise, and up until recently, Town Employees would only get an increase in pay every 5 years.

Matt Grant said there are less than 40 students per class and asked why the Superintendent is making almost \$200,000 a year. Mr. Kiley said the Superintendent of Tantasqua makes \$110,000 a year and has her doctorate. Mr. Kiley did quick math with estimated numbers, at Tantasqua each child "pays" about \$30/ year for their Super, in North Brookfield that number is about \$350/student/year. In 2018 the school added an administrator for \$100,000, which is about the Police departments entire budget. We don't have a large tax base.

Matt Grant stated that Mr. Lind cancelled a meeting with Quaboag to talk about regionalization and Quaboag was not happy about it. Matt stated that he believes Mr. Lind is out of line.

Mr. Kiley said the choice out numbers go up when the students enter High school and it's been blamed on bullying.

Michelle Petraitis stated that her problem is that North Brookfield teachers are paid a lot more than teachers in surrounding towns.

Sheila Orsi said both her children graduated from North Brookfield and are successful, she suggested bringing in more academic programs to entice school choice in for those students more focused on academics. She stated in the past when she served on the committee with Mr. Evans, they were very close to getting Chapter 74 passed. We need to find a way to recreate/remarket the school.

Mr. Kiley said that when students choice out, the money is taken from the general budget, but when students choice in, that money goes directly to the school. The transportation costs are about \$700,000 a year and are not reimbursable. Kim Bent asked if we had paid for transportation that we didn't use, Mr. Kiley said he didn't know.

Mr. Kiley said at Town Meeting you can do a suggested vote, non-binding, it will have no effect but will show displeasure. A question on auditing the school came up, Mr. Kiley said we go through an audit yearly, and a GASB audit every 2 years, but not sure if they look at the school during that.

Tina Floria asked what happened to the money when the schools shut down in March 2020. Mr. Kiley said everyone still got paid, it was contractual. All Town Employees continued to get paid. Kim Bent asked who sets Mr. Lind's pay, Mr. Kiley said the school committee votes on that.

Brandon Avery said it always comes down to money and it's time to look in a new direction.

Mr. Tripp said every year we go through budget issues, Fire/Highway/Police ask for more money and don't get it. The money isn't there, you can't get blood from a stone. Don't blame the Selectmen or Finance Committee.

At 7:40PM Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to enter into executive session for reason #6, to consider the purchase of real estate. Roll call: Kiley, yes; Petraitis, yes; Tripp, yes. So voted. Mr. Kiley announced that the Board would exit Executive Session only to adjourn.

At 8:12PM the Board came out of Executive session. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre