

## Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00PM on Tuesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the North Brookfield Police Department. Dale Kiley, Jason Petraitis, and John Tripp present.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 3/16 executive session. So voted.

Approval of Warrants: Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the following warrants: Payroll # 25 for \$421,550.43, Debt warrant # 1064 for \$21,286.80, School warrant # 1065 for \$165,430.06, CDBG warrant # 1066 for \$17,378.03, and General warrant # 1067 for \$269,541.60. So voted.

### New Business:

John Tripp Park Announcement: Mr. Tripp spoke about an article in the New Leader about the Town Park, Kevin Flanders did an interview, there was not enough space to list all donors so Mr. Tripp wanted to be sure everyone was recognized. Mr. Tripp read a lengthy list of individuals and businesses that have donated their time, material and money to the park. Mr. Tripp said the park is now complete, grass is coming up and flowers have been planted.

John Tripp spoke about the Rail Trail. He and his crew worked tirelessly for 2.5 years and have just about 4 miles of trail done. Gates are being put in, they will be removeable and painted with safety yellow, reflective stickers, Fire Department, Police Department, Highway, NB Emergency Services, and National Grid all have keys to remove the posts as need be. The posts were made locally, Mr. Tripp painted them himself and the stickers were donated. 6 posts are in now and the rest will be installed over the next few weeks. Each post is marked to indicate where you are on the trail, and no unauthorized motor vehicles are allowed on the trail.

Mr. Tripp said there was a question about a police cruiser that is not being used, how much is it costing the Town? The cruiser is not costing the Town anything, it is not in use and is not registered or insured, it is sitting there for parts.

Mr. Tripp spoke about the budget issues; we have not made any decisions about shutting down anyone or anything. We're asking people to make cuts; we work with everyone to get the budget ready. For people to tell residents to call Ashley and send letters and emails, and start a GoFundMe is out of line at this time. Mr. Kiley reiterated that at this point no decisions have been made, we need to wait for Free Cash to come in the Fall. DOR said we could use a 7.3-million-dollar budget, 2.5% over last year. They will tell us how much we have to reserve in October. We'll have a Special Town Meeting at the end of October or beginning of November, if our Free Cash doesn't cover the budget shortfall, we'll have to make cuts. BOS/Fin Comm will make a priority list.

There was a discussion among the Selectmen and Board of Health about the closing of the Recycling Center. BOH was unaware that the recycling center was potentially getting closed, the first they knew about it was at the AATM. The BOS restated that no decisions have been made. Trevor Brusco said a heads up would have been nice. Mr. Kiley said that FD/PD/HD were not told about potential cuts either. The BOH said that the recycling center does not cost the Town anything, Mr. Kiley suggested an enterprise fund, but in past years BOH has resisted that idea. Trevor said they can explore that option

and look at surrounding Towns. Trevor said if we close the center the Town would lose money as they'd have to pay for trash removal for all Town departments. Mr. Kiley said that fees need to be raised, in all areas of Town. Trevor said the new billing system allows for people to cheat; landlords can get away with not buying multiple stickers for their rental properties. Mr. Kiley said we can hash out those details later.

#### Fire Department Appointment:

Deputy Fire Chief Darren Anderson was present to discuss the appointment of Keith Marshall to Assistant Fire Chief. Darren said the position has been open for years, but there were no qualified candidates. They've been pushing officers to get trained and they ended up with 3 applicants, Keith Marshall being the most qualified. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to appoint Keith Marshall to Assistant Fire Chief. So voted.

Tina Floria asked Mr. Kiley if the budget was still in process. He said yes, until about November. He also explained that BOS/FinComm and the Accountant meet regularly to discuss the budget numbers, Shiela has been great and vocal at meetings. The State will only allow you to budget up to the recap number. We always try to go into the Fiscal Year balanced, and we are hoping to get enough Free Cash to balance out. If we continue to dip into our Stabilization accounts the State can come in and take over the running of the Town, if our financials aren't looking well. The budget is almost \$400,000 upside down, we're not inclined to continue to pull from stabilization so we'll have to make cuts if need be.

Mr. Petraitis said the budget goes through next May/June, we had to take money out of General Ins. Last year, we need to make sure there's enough money to insure all eligible Town employees, some people don't take the insurance so we usually end up with extra. Mr. Kiley said the extra will sometimes be used to cover other insurance deductibles. We put a spending freeze on about 2 months ago.

FY20 CDBG amendment: Because of COVID, our associates at CMRPC have realized there won't be enough grant funds to cover the cost of the projects at the Senior Center. They've made an amendment to our grant to take some funds from the Housing Rehab portion and add it to the Senior Center portion. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to approve the amendment. So voted.

Town Beach: Mr. Petraitis said there've been issues at the Town Beach (Lake Lashaway). A lot of out of Towners were at the Beach over the weekend, close to 300 people. East Brookfield and North Brookfield are having difficulties agreeing on issues. East Brookfield doesn't feel the need to limit the beach to just North and East Brookfield residents. We don't have the means for the Police to cite people that don't belong if East Brookfield allows it to be open to the general public. There was discussion of a by-law change to help the police patrol the area (no trespassing after dark ect). We've not received any complaints about Brooks Pond recently, but Kim Bent did say it was packed over the weekend and cars were parked everywhere, making it difficult for traffic to get through.

#### Public Comment:

Sue Lewandowski asked what other methods are available to raise funds for the community. Mr. Kiley said people can always donate, but it's an ongoing cascading problem. This year we're short \$383,000, next year we could be short \$700,000. Towns are limited by what the State says we can spend. We have other revenues but they're dwindling. John Tripp has done a lot of work to get donations. Sue said it's

important that we take initiative rather than complain on Facebook. We need to heal the gap. She said she's got time and has worked with FD and PD, she can't watch these cuts happen.

Tina Floria said things will settle once the pandemic is over.

Mr. Kiley discussed the potential for ARPA funds, possibly up to 1.4 million dollars. It can only be used for certain things and the guidelines have not been released.

Tim Canada said there are people working hard with State Reps to get the formula for small towns recalculated, the current formula is not sustainable for us with all the mandates.

At 7:02PM Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to enter Executive Session to conduct collective bargaining sessions with the Highway and Sewer unions. Roll call: Kiley, yes; Petraitis, yes; Tripp, yes. So voted. Mr. Petraitis noted that the Board would exit Executive Session only to adjourn.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:31PM. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre