

MINUTES OF THE SELECTMEN'S MEETING

December 27, 2013

Selectman Walter called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Office at 10:00 AM with Selectman Robert Smith, School Superintendent Dr. John Provost present and Highway Superintendent Gary Jean participating remotely via cell phone.

- **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 3, 2013**

The minutes were reviewed and briefly discussed. Mr. Smith moved and Mrs. Walter seconded a motion to approve the minutes as written. So voted.

- IA. **APPROVAL OF SCHOOL WARRANT #1031 FOR \$2,662.27**

APPROVAL OF GENERAL WARRANT #1032 FOR \$238,038.88

APPROVAL OF PAYROLL WARRANT #1 FOR \$316,027.45

A motion was made by Mrs. Walter and Seconded by Mr. Smith to approve the three warrants. So Voted.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

- **DISCUSSION OF SIDEWALK PLOWING AND PROCESS WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS** (The Police Chief and Sgt. Ryan Daley were requested to attend, but were not present for the meeting.)

Mrs. Walter stated that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the process by which the school and the highway coordinate school delay vs. closing during snow and ice events and the events that occurred during the morning of December 16, which caused a delay in plowing the sidewalks.

Comments by the Highway Superintendent

The Superintendent stated that his crew plowed through the entire storm which began on December 15th until the snow subsided at approximately 3:00 AM on Monday the 16th. This storm followed a storm which occurred on December 14th. The Highway crew was rested for less than three hours when the snow intensified and plowing commenced to assure the status of the roads for commuters and school buses. Mr. Jean stated that he felt that the roads were in excellent condition during that time. The Superintendent further explained that he did not have anyone available to put on the sidewalk plow due to a lack of manpower, the intensity of the snow fall and the necessity to keep the roads in good condition. The Highway employee who was dedicated to the sidewalk plowing resigned late in the fall, and the lack of manpower is explained by the loss of three retired and experienced part-time plow drivers, who were available 24 hours a day for plowing. The loss of these drivers meant that the entire full-time crew and the superintendent had to do all of the plowing. While there are currently three new part-time plow operators, they are only available when they are not working their full-time jobs. The sidewalk plowing could not be accomplished until after the start of school, at which point plowing was done and the sidewalks were clear prior to the end of the school day.

Comments by the Superintendent of Schools Dr. Provost

Mrs. Walter asked the Superintendent if there were any complaints called into the school regarding the condition of the sidewalks. The Superintendent stated that a crossing guard reported that a crosswalk was in bad condition, and that the Highway Department was contacted and the matter was immediately resolved.

Dr. Provost also indicated that his first hearing of a problem with the sidewalks was Friday afternoon from a member of the North Brookfield Police Department who came to his office and wanted a meeting between the superintendent, himself and the Highway Superintendent. Dr. Provost asked if the Police Chief had approved this request. The officer stated that the Chief was in favor of the meeting, Dr. Provost was asked to contact the Highway Department to notify the Highway Superintendent of the meeting.

Comments by the Selectmen

At approximately 8:30AM on December 16th Mrs. Walter stated that she and Selectmen Smith were approached at the Selectmen's office by a member of the North Brookfield Police Department who reported that "the kids had to walk in the street to school because the sidewalks were not plowed". Mrs. Walter asked the officer if he had spoken to the Highway Superintendent and he

stated that he had not. Mrs. Walter instructed the officer to speak to the Superintendent. Mr. Smith stated that he would speak to the Superintendent and get a status on the sidewalk work. Mr. Smith further stated that when he went to the Highway garage the work was already in process and he was assured that it would be completed before the end of the School day, which it was.

Mrs. Walter asked Dr. Provost what he does to determine whether there will be a delay or cancellation of the school day. He stated that he calls Director of Buildings and Grounds, Peter Shipman to be advised of the conditions and his recommendations. Director Shipman's assessment is based on his progress plowing the grounds and his communication with the Highway Department between 4:00 and 5:30 AM when the school must notify parents of delay/closing through various electronic media.

Conclusion:

It was agreed that the sidewalks would be specifically mentioned during the delay/closing conversations between the Highway Superintendent, the School's Director of Buildings and grounds and the Superintendent to determine the impact on the school day.

The Selectmen will work with the Highway Superintendent to find the manpower to dedicate to the sidewalk plowing either through a dedicated part-time employee or by adding an additional full time employee to the Department during this fiscal year rather than waiting until the fiscal 2015 budget.

- **STATUS OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE TOWN'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Mrs. Walter stated that she confirmed with Attorney David Felper on Thursday, December 26th and the Selectmen's Administrative Assistant that a second copy of the agreement was sent to the Union's Business Agent, who claimed that he had misplaced the document. Attorney Felper sent the additional copy to Union Steward Officer Chris Donais who forwarded it to the Business Agent. Officer Donais confirmed that the document was now in process for ratification.

- **ENGINE 3 FIRE TRUCK REPAIR**

Fire Chief Brad Gannon advised the Selectmen that a major repair rendering the vehicle out of service was in process at an approximate cost of between five and six thousand dollars. The Finance Committee Chair is aware of the problem. Chairman Hevy will call a meeting as soon as the final cost is known. Finance Committee Reserve funds will be used to pay for this repair.

- **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- **TOWN EMPLOYEES JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

Mrs. Walter reported that the period for comments has ended and that there will be a review of those that have been received. Employees who have not commented or made suggested changes will work with the descriptions as written.

- **FY15 BUDGET UPDATE**

Budgets were due on December 16.

Determine:

- Who has not submitted
 - Check for explanation of increases
 - Return budgets that do not explain increases

- **MEETING WITH THE POLICE CHIEF REGARDING THIS MEETING**

There being no further business for the meeting Selectman Walter moved and Selectman Smith seconded a motion to adjourn at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully recorded by:

Mary Walter