

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING
DECEMBER 17, 2013

Mrs. Walter called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 6 PM with Mr. Smith and Mr. Chabot also present.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 3, 2013

Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of December 3, 2013 as written. So voted.

**IA. APPROVAL OF SCHOOL WARRANT #1029 FOR \$83,152.03
APPROVAL OF GENERAL WARRANT #1030 FOR \$76,737.94
APPROVAL OF PAYROLL WARRANT #13 FOR \$355,875.58**

Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the aforementioned warrants. So voted.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. VEHICLE NEEDS

Two weeks ago the Selectmen reviewed requests for vehicles from several town departments, including police, fire, and emergency management. Mrs. Walter noted that she has spoken with Cemetery Commissioner Kirk Burnham regarding their need for a truck. Mr. Smith stated that he also spoke with Mr. Burnham, and asked that he put into writing exactly what type of vehicle the department needs. According to Mr. Smith, Mr. Burnham is open to the concept of sharing a vehicle with another department. Mrs. Walter suggested putting all of the vehicle needs into a spreadsheet to be used in the FY15 budget process.

B. PVPC CONTRACT

The Selectmen reviewed an e-mail from Tom McEnaney of Kopelman and Paige regarding a draft contract between the Town and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). (Attachment #1) Mr. McEnaney suggested inserting language that would allow the town to terminate the agreement at any time by providing a 30 day notice. The document will now be sent to PVPC for review and signatures.

C. TOWN HOUSE UPDATE

Mrs. Walter noted that she attended a recent meeting of the Friends of the Town House where the contract with the Architectural Heritage Foundation was discussed. Some questions were raised, which will be directed to Architectural Heritage Foundation, and the contract will be discussed again at the next meeting.

Mrs. Walter went on to say that on Wednesday representatives of the Friends will be meeting in Boston with an attorney regarding creation of an LLC that is needed in order to apply for federal tax credits.

D. RESCHEDULING OF 12/31 MEETING TO 12/27

It was agreed to reschedule the New Year's Eve meeting to December 27th at 10 AM in the Selectmen's office. Mr. Chabot will be on the road to Florida at that time, but he expects to be available via his cell phone.

E. WENDEMUTH MEADOW UPDATE

Mr. Smith read minutes of the December 1st meeting of the Wendemuth Committee, a group of residents who are trying to raise funds to assist the East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) in the purchase of a 30 acre parcel of land on Bates Street known as the Wendemuth Farm. (Attachment #2) EQLT will purchase the property, and the town will purchase a conservation restriction. The Wendemuth Committee will raise the \$50,000.00 needed to purchase the restriction. No taxpayer dollars will be used for the purchase.

III. NEW BUSINESS

B. MASSWORKS GRANT AWARD

Mrs. Walter announced that the Town has received a \$500,000.00 MassWorks grant for the replacement of the Murphy Road Bridge. According to information from the state, this was a very competitive grant process, with only 33 projects funded out of 108 applications. Mr. Smith and Mr. Chabot praised Mrs. Walter for her efforts in obtaining this grant. More information should be coming within the next week or so.

C. POLICE DEPARTMENT K-9 GRANT

The Selectmen reviewed information supplied by Police Sergeant Ryan Daley regarding a grant to secure a K-9 dog for the Police Department. (Attachment #3) The grant would cover the cost of having a K-9 dog for three years, and the Town would have to commit to keeping the dog for another two years. Mr. Smith stated that he would like clarification on the 14 week training requirements. Would this be full-time or part-time? It could be expensive if the Town has to pay the officer for training and then pay for another officer to cover his shifts.

Mrs. Walter stated that she was told by a former K-9 officer that the person running the training is very good. However, only five dogs will be awarded. Also, we will need a dedicated cruiser for the K-9 officer and dog.

Mrs. Walter wondered how this would affect the current collective bargaining agreement with the police officers. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act the officer would receive one hour per day to care for the dog.

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to know how Chief Thomasian feels about this grant. Is he in favor of it?

Mr. Chabot stated that he worries about the implications of this on the budget. He would rather spend the money on another cruiser for the department.

Mrs. Walter said that in her opinion a dog is a great deterrent to crime, but would North Brookfield have enough use for a dog? Perhaps this would be better for a regional group.

On another subject, Mr. Chabot suggested contacting the Town of Brookfield to see if they would be interested in sharing our police station instead of building their own, subject to Chief Thomasian's endorsement. Mrs. Walter said that maybe West Brookfield would be interested as well. Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to have Mrs. Walter contact the Chairman of the Selectmen in Brookfield to discuss this. So voted.

D. SUPPORT LETTER FOR TOWN HOUSE TAX CREDITS

Mrs. Walter noted that the Selectmen have signed a letter of support to the Mass Historical Commission regarding the Friends of the Town House application for federal and state tax credits. (Attachment #4) Mrs. Walter stated that the Friends were recently awarded another \$200,000.00 in tax credits for the project. The Friends will begin a capital campaign to raise funds for the Town House restoration sometime in the second quarter of 2014.

E. NOVEMBER POLICE REPORT

Mr. Chabot reviewed the police report for the month of November as submitted by Chief Thomasian. (Attachment #5) The Chief reported 15 incidents and 23 arrest/summons for the month. Mr. Chabot moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to accept the report. So voted.

F. BAY PATH ANNUAL REPORT

Mrs. Walter read the annual report from the Bay Path Regional Vocational School explaining that North Brookfield has 40 students at that school, 9 of whom are receiving special services. (Attachment #6) The report stated that the current enrollment at the school is 1,111 students. Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to accept the report. So voted.

G. ENGINEERING FOR LITTLE CANADA STORMWATER ISSUES

Mrs. Walter noted that she met with Scott Mederios of Woodard and Curran regarding the services offered to assist the Town with infrastructure issues. Currently the Town has \$153,000.00 in CDBG funds to be used for planning in the Little Canada area. She asked Mr. Smith and Mr. Chabot to review some information Mr. Mederios provided about Woodard and Curran and the services they could provide. Further discussion will be taken up at a future meeting.

H. CDBG GRANT FUNDING

This was covered under the previous item.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. CHRISTMAS ON THE COMMON TO BE HELD 12/21

Mr. Chabot announced that the Playground Committee is holding their annual Christmas on the Common this Saturday, December 21st from noon to 2 PM at the Elementary School. Each child will receive a stocking filled with goodies, and there will be chances to win a bicycle or other prizes.

B. HARLEM SUPERSTARS TO RETURN ON 01/10

Mr. Chabot announced that the Harlem Superstars will be returning to North Brookfield on Friday, January 10th at 7 PM. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$8 at the door.

C. DICK FISKE PHILLIPINE ISLANDS HURRICANE RELIEF FUND RAISER 12/20

Mrs. Walter announced that the Heart to Heart Foundation will be holding a fundraiser for the benefit of victims of the recent hurricane in the Philippine Islands on Friday, December 20th from 6 PM to 9 PM at the Elementary School. Tickets are \$10 and include a spaghetti dinner, music, and raffles.

D. GEORGE M. COHAN WAS HERE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Mr. Smith announced the availability of the book George M. Cohan was Here: North Brookfield's Past, Present, and Future by Marilyn Borst. The book makes a great Christmas present and costs \$10.

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. EMPLOYEE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

B. FY15 BUDGET UPDATE

C. K-9 grant

At 7:15 PM Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to recess until the Murphy Road hearing at 7:30 PM. So voted.

At 7:30 PM Mrs. Walter called the meeting back to order.

A. MURPHY ROAD PAVING HEARING @ 7:30 PM

Mrs. Walter called to order the hearing to discuss the feasibility of paving Murphy Road. According to the sign-in sheet there were 10 residents in attendance. (Attachment #7) She noted that the meeting was being audio taped, and explained the rules of the hearing. First, arguments would be heard from those in favor of the paving, followed by questions from the Selectmen and then the residents, and then speakers opposed to the paving will speak, followed again by questions from the Selectmen and then residents. She said that the purpose of the hearing is to gather information to be used as input to determine if the road will be paved. Mrs. Walter explained that the Highway Superintendent lays out his plans for work in the spring. Chapter 90 funds from the state are used to reclaim and resurface existing roads. Murphy Road may not be eligible, and may require Town Meeting approval.

Mrs. Walter informed those in attendance that the Town was notified last week that a \$500,000.00 grant to replace the bridge on Murphy Road has been awarded. This news was met with a round of applause from the residents.

Ken Amons was the first resident to speak in favor of paving the road. He said that he does not believe that the Town does an adequate job of maintaining the road; it is riddled with potholes and creates havoc on his vehicles. He admitted that he has mixed feelings about paving the road, there might be more traffic if the road were to be paved.

Joe Balzano said that he does not believe that the road can be properly maintained the way the Town does it.

David Woods stated that Murphy Road is always the last to be plowed. He said that he picked up a rock with his snowblower and sustained some damage.

Mrs. Walter asked why these residents chose to buy property on a dirt road?

Mr. Amons stated that he built his home there in the 1980s because it was a beautiful location, but hoped that eventually the Town would improve the road.

Mrs. Walter asked if the dirt road were better maintained would Mr. Amons be happy, but Mr. Amons stated that no, he wants the road to be paved.

Mr. Smith pointed out that the current Board of Selectmen has responded to resident complaints; perhaps other town officials have not responded in the past, but this Board has spent a lot of time and energy trying to alleviate this situation.

Mr. Chabot noted that perhaps the Town could put down trap rock and stone dust and roll it. That makes a very hard surface, and this might satisfy both sides.

Mrs. Walter asked if anyone wanted to speak against paving the road, and Greg Sinner stated that he and his wife live at the other end of the road and have no problems with the conditions of the road. They feel that the road has been satisfactorily maintained, and they have had no problems with their vehicles. Mr. Sinner stated that they bought their home on a dirt road because they like it that way. In his opinion the wildlife management area should be on a dirt road. He said that he would prefer to keep his end of the road unpaved.

Jean Underwood stated that she loves the dirt road, they just drive slower and have no vehicle problems either. She suggested that the Town invest in a grader for the road instead of paving it. She said that it has been a joy to have the wildlife area there, and she can't understand why anyone would buy land on a dirt road and expect the Town to improve it. She said that she remembers when Murphy Road was closed every winter. She noted that the dirt road keeps the vehicle traffic down. If the road were paved it would become a one mile straightaway. Larry Underwood stated that the nearby Sportsmen's Club likes the dirt road.

Mrs. Sinner said that there are very few kids with dirt bikes now, and she thinks that a paved road would change the value of her property in a negative way. She said that they have no complaints about the Highway Department, and frequently call and tell them that.

Mrs. Walter asked everyone if they had noticed any instances of vandalism on the bridge? She noted that since the bridge was closed on August 5th there have been multiple instances of vandalism. Mrs. Underwood stated that someone destroyed the beaver dam, and she believes that the release of water from that is what damaged the bridge.

Mr. Amons asked if the Selectmen would consider just paving the south end of the road instead of the entire thing?

Mrs. Walter asked if anyone wanted to submit a written statement, and several people did so. (Attachment #7)

Mr. Smith noted that the Selectmen need to discuss the results of this hearing with Highway Superintendent Gary Jean and have him cost out the options for the road.

Mrs. Walter informed the residents of this, and said that Mr. Jean would probably bring in Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) for advice. Mr. Jean will then present his list of work to be done in the spring.

The Board thanked everyone for coming, and at 8:30 PM Mrs. Walter closed the hearing and reopened the Selectmen's meeting.

The Selectmen briefly discussed the contract for Water Superintendent Steve Jones, and agreed to inform Mr. Jones that the Board would discuss his contract in the spring after the Water Department budget has been submitted.

There being no further business, at 8:40 PM Mr. Smith moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant