

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JANUARY 29, 2013

Chairman Petraitis called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 7:10 PM with Mrs. Walter also present. Mr. Chabot was present remotely via speaker phone. Mr. Petraitis reminded those in attendance that the meeting was being both audio and video taped.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JANUARY 15, 2013

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the aforementioned minutes. So voted.

IA. APPROVAL OF SEWER WARRANT #1038 FOR \$32,581.25 APPROVAL OF SCHOOL WARRANT #1039 FOR \$69,230.77 APPROVAL OF GENERAL WARRANT #1040 FOR \$232,244.18 APPROVAL OF PAYROLL WARRANT #16 FOR \$288,324.47

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

IB. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There was no one present for the Public Comment Period.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. APPOINTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

Mrs. Walter reviewed a letter from the Planning Board (Attachment #1) suggesting five residents to be appointed to the newly created Agricultural Commission. Mrs. Walter noted that the Ag Commission was created when Town Meeting adopted the Right To Farm Bylaw in May. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to establish a five-member Agricultural Commission. So voted.

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to appoint William King, Steve Cummings, and Carl Gustafson to the Agricultural Commission. So voted. The remaining two positions will be filled at the next Selectmen's meeting.

B. CMRPC RURAL 11 PROJECT

Mr. Petraitis reviewed a letter from the Planning Board noting that they voted to support the CMRPC Rural 11 Project, but not unanimously. (Attachment #2) Mr. Petraitis said that the Selectmen discussed this subject previously, and his personal feelings have not changed. Mr. Petraitis feels that the Town would be giving up the ability to make decisions locally if it were to participate. Resident Bill King, who is also on the Planning

Board, read a letter expressing his concern about North Brookfield participating in the project. (Attachment #3) Mr. King noted that “most government carrots are typically followed by onerous requirements or cost sharing that disappears in a year or two,” and that he believes that property rights need to be protected.

Janet Pierce of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) was present, and she stated that 9 of the 11 towns have already voted to participate, and that East Brookfield will be voting at their next meeting. She noted that the project was begun with information from each town’s Master Plan and Open Space Plan. She emphasized that the information is generated at the local level, not at CMRPC. Mrs. Pierce noted that the Town is not obligated to participate on any level.

Mr. Chabot asked for clarification on Mrs. Pierce’s statement that the project is “grass roots” driven. Mrs. Pierce noted that CMRPC will be meeting with the Selectmen and Planning Boards in each town to determine what is important to each town. Mr. Chabot moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to support the Rural 11 Project. So voted, with Mr. Petraitis voting no.

C. DISCUSSION RE: FIRE DEPARTMENT NEEDS

Mr. Petraitis stated that he would like to delay this discussion until the next meeting so that he has time to consult with Fire Chief Gannon.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. FUSS AND O’NEILL PROPOSAL FOR LSP SERVICES

It was agreed to postpone action on this item until the next meeting, as Town Counsel has not yet completed its review of the proposal documents.

B. STODDARD COURT POLE PETITION @ 7:15

Mr. Petraitis reviewed a petition from Verizon and National Grid to place two new utility poles on Stoddard Court. (Available in the Selectmen’s office) Mary Garvin of 7 Stoddard Court was present to ask for more information on the exact location of the poles. Jill Wilson of Verizon stated that the new pole locations were marked by stakes, and are in the public way, not on the Garvin property. Ms. Wilson noted that the poles are necessary to re-route the wires, which currently go over private property, constituting an “aerial trespass.”

Mr. Petraitis asked if there were any rush to approve these pole locations, and suggested putting off the discussion until the next Selectmen’s meeting in order to give the Garvin’s time to get their questions answered by Verizon and National Grid.

C. WATER DEPARTMENT HORSE POND DAM UPDATE

Water Superintendent Steve Jones gave a powerpoint presentation on the Horse Pond Dam rehabilitation project that was recently completed. (Available from the Water Department) The presentation showed many photographs that gave the complete history of the project. Mrs. Walter noted that the project was “perfectly managed,” and she commended Mr. Jones and all of the Water Commissioners on a job well done.

D. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT REQUEST TO DEFICIT SPEND

Mr. Petraitis reviewed a letter from Highway Superintendent Gary Jean asking for permission to operate the Snow and Ice account in the negative. (Attachment #4) According to Mr. Jean, the Vehicle Repair Account and the Salary Account are already in a deficit. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to approve the request to deficit spend. So voted.

E. CORRESPONDENCE FROM NBEMA RE: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Petraitis read an e-mail from Anne Adams, Deputy Director of the North Brookfield Emergency Management Agency. (Attachment #5) Mrs. Adams stated that NBEMA voted against appointing a Board of Directors as requested by the Selectmen. Mr. Petraitis stated that the Selectmen did not request this. He said that he had many questions from NBEMA personnel directed to him, so he attended a NBEMA meeting. Mrs. Walter was also in attendance, but it was not a posted Selectmen’s meeting, and he and Mrs. Walter did not discuss anything, as it would have been a violation of the Open Meeting Law. He alone suggested that for general business purposes, NBEMA might consider a small core group to make decisions and approve bills. The ICS structure cited by Mrs. Adams has nothing to do with conducting general business, ICS is for emergency situations.

Mrs. Walter reviewed an e-mail from Town Counsel Brian Riley which stated that “the Board of Selectmen has the discretion in how to establish the local agency, including how many members it has.” He noted that “the Selectmen may establish a Board of Directors (or other name) that may meet and have the authority to act on agency matters.”

Mr. Petraitis noted that the Selectmen would not be tampering with the ICS structure for emergencies, but he feels that there is merit to having a 3 – 5 member Board of Directors or Executive Committee to conduct business.

Mrs. Walter stated that she firmly believes that the Selectmen need to establish some sort of administrative group. Mr. Chabot stated that he agrees, it can be difficult for such a large group to get a quorum together to conduct general business.

Mr. Petraitis asked that this item be brought up again in two weeks.

F. THE TOWN HAS RECEIVED A GRANT FOR PORTABLE RADIOS THROUGH THE REGIONAL HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mrs. Walter read an e-mail from Mike Dunne of CMRPC (Attachment #7) explaining that New Braintree Police Chief Bert DuVernay and Hardwick Police Corporal Kevin Landine wrote the grant application to provide four radios to each of the seven towns dispatched by the New Braintree State Police, with an additional two radios for the center. The grant included chargers, extra batteries, belt clips and all programming and a two year warranty.

According to Mr. Dunne, when multiple towns get together there are times when public safety personnel cannot communicate with the other towns because the radios were not compatible. These new radios will allow that communication, in addition to communicating with the State Police.

The total grant amount was \$167,899.50. CMRPC was responsible for bidding the project and awarding it to Motorola. According to Mr. Dunne the radios have been delivered, and will be programmed and distributed to the seven towns in the next few weeks.

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to accept the radios. So voted.

G. SELECTMEN'S FY14 BUDGET PRIORITIES

Mr. Petraitis said that he would like to know what the other Selectmen want for FY14 budget priorities, either in the short term or long term. Mr. Chabot noted that it is hard to prioritize because the Town never has any money, but he would consider a new highway garage or fixing the Town House as priorities. Mrs. Walter noted that the Fire Department could take over the old highway garage if a new highway garage were built. She noted that the Town is in the process of completing the replacement of windows at the Elementary School, these projects are listed on the Capital Improvement Plan. Mrs. Walter stated that CIP has done a good job of identifying needed projects, but somehow the Selectmen should be getting involved in funding the Capital Improvement Stabilization Account.

Mr. Petraitis stated that he would like to find a way to replace two Highway Department workers, and also consider ways to bring back the Fire Department weekend staffing program. In addition, Chief Thomasian has stated that he would like to raise the pay rate for part-time officers.

Mrs. Walter noted that the Town needs to find ways of stimulating new sources of revenue because local aid continues to decline, it is down almost 40% over the past decade.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. TOWN ELECTION UPDATE

Mr. Petraitis read a memo from Town Clerk Sheila Buzzell listing the offices and incumbents for the May 6th Annual Town Election. (Attachment #8) According to Mrs. Buzzell, the last day to file nomination papers is March 18th, and the last day to register to vote is April 16th.

B. THERE WILL BE A PUBLIC HEARING ON TOWN FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THREE TOWN-OWNED PARCELS ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH AT 7 PM AT THE SENIOR CENTER

Mr. Petraitis made this announcement.

C. THIRD QUARTER REAL ESTATE TAXES ARE DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST. THE COLLECTOR'S OFFICE WILL BE OPEN.

Mrs. Walter read this announcement.

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Stoddard Court pole hearing
2. Emergency Management Board of Directors
3. FY 14 budgets
4. Fire Department needs
5. Fuss and O'Neill proposal

There being no further business, at 8:25 PM Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to enter Executive Session to conduct contract negotiations with Police Chief Aram Thomasian, Jr. Roll call: Petraitis, yes; Walter, yes; Chabot, yes. So voted. Mr. Petraitis announced that the Board would exit Executive Session only to adjourn.

At 8:45 PM the Board came out of Executive Session. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Chabot seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant