

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JANUARY 31, 2012

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

I. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve the minutes of January 17, 2012 as written. So voted. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve the January 17, 2012 Executive Session minutes as written. So voted.

IA. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to approve School Warrant #1040 for \$35,500.51, General Warrant #1041 for \$366,716.32, and Payroll Warrant #16 for \$284,156.58. So voted.

IB. There was no one present for the Public Comment Period. Mr. Petraitis thanked everyone who came out Saturday night for the Hearts for Heat spaghetti supper, where over \$2,500 was raised.

Mrs. Walter noted that Dick Fiske held a thank you dinner on Sunday where everyone had the opportunity to meet those individuals who have been helped by Mr. Fiske's Heart to Heart organization. Mrs. Walter said that it was a very heartwarming experience.

II. OLD BUSINESS

C. Robert Smith, chairman of the Finance Committee, was present to discuss his committee's recommendations for Friday night's Special Town Meeting. Mr. Smith reported that his committee met last Wednesday to discuss the 18 articles on the warrant. The Finance Committee focused on two articles: #9 regarding a new vehicle for the Fire Department, and #14 which requests money towards the engineering of the Town House Bell Tower.

Mr. Smith stated that Article #14 will request \$6,000.00 from Free Cash to the Bell Tower Engineering Account. This will be matched by \$5,200.00 from the Friends of the Town House, and \$6,800.00 from the Town House Gift Account.

Mr. Smith also stated that the Finance Committee is recommending no action on the request for \$36,300.00 for a new SUV for the Fire Department. He noted that when the Fire Chief first approached the Finance Committee about a new vehicle, the cost was \$26,000.00, and now the Chief is requesting over \$36,000.00. The Finance Committee agrees that a vehicle is needed, but would like time to explore less expensive alternatives.

Mr. Smith reported that six of the seven members of the Finance Committee were present for these discussions, and all agreed with these two decisions.

Mr. Petraitis stated that he would like to keep the request for the Fire Department vehicle on the warrant and allow people to vote on it. Mr. Smith stated that if the Fire Department vehicle is funded, there will be only \$696.00 left in Free Cash, with much of the winter left to go. The Finance Committee wants to work with the Fire Chief to come up with a less expensive alternative for the May or June town meeting. Mr. Petraitis stated that he does not think this issue should wait until May or June. Mrs. Walter noted that the Finance Committee is just trying to buy some time to see where the budgets are going, and to preserve some Free Cash. Mr. Smith noted that the Town might be able to get a used vehicle at much less cost. Mr. Petraitis stated that if the article passes the Selectmen could ask the Fire Chief not to spend the funds. Mrs. Walter noted that once the article is approved by Town Meeting the funds can be spent. Mr. Smith reiterated that leaving only \$696.00 in Free Cash is not a good move with a \$13 million budget.

Mrs. Walter noted that with only two selectmen present this evening, she and Mr. Petraitis would have to agree to disagree on this issue.

Mrs. Walter then said that she would like to discuss article #18, which is a by-law proposed by Mr. Petraitis that would require that the School Committee notify the Board of Selectmen of any collective bargaining negotiations. Mrs. Walter stated that her personal feeling is that there is a lot of progress being made on the relationship between the school and the town, and there has not been a problem with the Selectmen participating in School Committee negotiations. This proposed bylaw reiterates what it already written in the state law. Mrs. Walter stated that the Selectmen owe it to themselves to show that the next contract negotiations can be handled in an amicable manner without having to create a new by-law.

Mr. Petraitis stated that he is not sure that it only happened once, and the Town is still dealing with issues created in contracts negotiated with prior School Committees. Mrs. Walter said that she personally would like to wait to see how things go with the new Superintendent and School Committee before deciding that this is actually needed.

A. Several weeks ago the Selectmen received a letter from the North Brookfield Emergency Squad stating that the squad continues to struggle financially. The Selectmen asked for some reports on outstanding billing amounts, which were provided this week. (Attachment #1) Mrs. Walter noted that maybe the Selectmen should receive a monthly update on the squad's finances. Mrs. Walter noted that one way to help would be to bring the Town's contract with the squad back to the original \$25,000.00. Mr. Petraitis stated that he agreed, and perhaps Mr. Holway or Mr. Kiritsy of the NBEMS could come to

the Selectmen's meetings for monthly updates. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to set the contract with NBEMS back to \$25,000.00 for FY13. So voted.

B. Mr. Petraitis reviewed a letter from Senator Stephen Brewer and Representative Ann Gobi written to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in support of the Town's request for emergency funding for the Town House Bell Tower. (Attachment #2)

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mrs. Walter reviewed a letter from Treasurer Anne Jannette informing the Selectmen about the recommendations of the Insurance Advisory Committee. (Attachment #3) Mrs. Jannette reported that the committee was able to achieve approximately \$219,000.00 in savings for FY13. Mrs. Walter noted that the Selectmen are grateful for the efforts of this group. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to accept the recommendations of the committee. So voted.

B. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from Robert Barnes of the Highway Department notifying the Board of his intention to retire in November of this year. (Attachment #4) Mrs. Walter noted that this notification is a requirement of Mr. Barnes' ability to collect payment for 90 unused sick days.

C. The Selectmen reviewed a proposal from Daniel Benoit of Benoit Reardon Architects to provide architectural/engineering services for the Town House bell tower. (Attachment #5) Mr. Benoit's proposal is for \$18,000.00, and includes the design and engineering of the project, construction documents, assistance with bidding, and construction administration. Mrs. Walter noted that this is the basis for an article on Friday night's Special Town Meeting that asks for \$6,000.00 from Free Cash, which will be added to \$5,200.00 raised by the Friends of the Town House, and \$6,800.00 to be transferred from the Town House Gift Account.

D. Mrs. Walter read a letter from the Water Commissioners asking for permission to dispose of surplus property. (Attachment #6) She noted that the Commissioners should declare the items surplus, and follow the proper procedure for disposing of assets. She noted that the Commissioners already have the authority to do this; permission does not need to come from the Selectmen.

E. Mrs. Walter reviewed some paperwork submitted by Town Clerk Shiela Buzzell regarding exemptions from the mandatory education and training requirements for town officials. (Attachment #7) Mrs. Walter noted that this

includes a lot of information, and suggested that it be put on the agenda under the HR category for future discussion.

F. The Board reviewed a draft resolution submitted by Blake LaMothe, asking for the Selectmen to support his efforts to bring rail service to Palmer. (Attachment #8) Mr. Petraitis asked that this be delayed until the next meeting to the full board can discuss it.

G. Mrs. Walter stated that she will draft a thank you letter to North Brookfield Savings Bank for their donation to the town's 200th Anniversary Committee.

H. The Selectmen will put together a list of vacancies on various town committees for the next meeting.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Mr. Petraitis read a memo from Town Clerk Sheila Buzzell (Attachment #9) listing the various positions open for the May 7th Annual Town Election.

B. Mrs. Walter reminded residents that there will be a Special Town Meeting this Friday night at 7 PM in the Elementary School auditorium.

C. Mr. Petraitis read a letter from the 200th Anniversary Committee asking for any organization that wants to participate in the celebration contact the committee. (Attachment #10) Mrs. Walter noted that the Town's official birthday is February 28th, which happens to fall on a Selectmen's meeting night. She invited residents to come and enjoy some birthday cake.

D. Mrs. Walter announced that the Friends of the Playground will be having their annual Valentine's Spaghetti Supper on Saturday, February 11th at the American Legion hall. There will be music and dancing afterward, the cost is \$8.00 per person.

E. Mr. Petraitis informed residents that burning permits are available at the Fire Station on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 8 AM to noon. The cost is \$20.

F. Mrs. Walter announced that bicentennial calendars are available in the Town Clerk's office for \$10.

V. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. Mrs. Walter noted that the Town's 200th birthday will be celebrated at the Selectmen's meeting on February 28th with birthday cake, and everyone is invited.

B. Mr. Petraitis asked when the contract with Charter Communications will be renewed.

C. The Selectmen will discuss the financial problems at the North Brookfield Emergency Squad in the future.

At 8:10 PM Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy related to litigation, and to discuss strategy related to collective bargaining, because an open session might have a detrimental effect on the Town's negotiating position. Roll call: Walter, yes; Petraitis, yes; Chabot, absent. So voted. Mrs. Walter noted that the Board would exit Executive Session only to adjourn.

At 8:50 PM the Board came out of Executive Session. Mr. Petraitis moved, and Mrs. Walter seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant