

## **MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING JANUARY 13, 2015**

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM in the Senior Center with Mrs. Walter and Mr. Hevy also present. Mr. Smith noted for the record that the meeting was being both audio and video taped.

### **I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- **December 30, 2014**

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

- **January 6, 2015**

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

- **January 8, 2015**

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

### **II. APPROVAL OF WARRANTS**

- **Water and Sewer Warrant #1035 for \$61,988.88**
- **School Warrant #1036 for \$86,954.02**
- **General Warrant #1037 for \$188,476.64**
- **Payroll Warrant #14 for \$289,992.21**

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

### **III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- **The public has the opportunity to briefly comment on agenda items through the Chairman**

Mr. Smith noted that anyone may comment on an item on tonight's agenda through himself as chairman.

### **IV. FINANCIAL REPORT**

- **None**

Mr. Smith noted that the Selectmen gave a very thorough financial review at the last meeting. The next time the Board will review departmental budgets with close attention to the fuel and overtime line items.

### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

- **Town House Advisory Committee update**

Mr. Hevy explained that on January 5<sup>th</sup> the Board of Selectmen opened one proposal for architectural design services from Garofalo Design Associates (GDA). The proposal was referred to the Town House Advisory Committee. On January 8<sup>th</sup> the committee met and evaluated the proposal, and voted to recommend to the Selectmen that GDA

be awarded the contract. Later that evening the Board of Selectmen voted to go forward with GDA. The Town House Advisory Committee will now negotiate a contract and fee with GDA.

Mr. Smith thanked the Town House Advisory Committee for their diligence in getting this process completed quickly and efficiently.

- **Accept donations to Police Vehicle Gift Fund**

Mr. Smith reviewed the list of donations made to the Police Vehicle Gift Fund. (Attachment #1) He noted that the total collected to date is \$11,419.16. Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Hevy seconded, a motion to accept the donations. So voted.

## **VI. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

- **None**

There were no departmental reports.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

- **Board of Water Commissioners re: job posting**

John Thomasian, Tim Nason and Jim Kularski of the Board of Water Commissioners were present to speak with the Selectmen about the upcoming retirement of Superintendent Steve Jones. According to Mr. Thomasian, Mr. Jones will be leaving sometime around the middle of June. The Water Commissioners would like to start the process of looking for the next superintendent. The current water operator is very interested in the position. If the operator does become the superintendent, the Water Commissioners would then be looking for an operator sometime in March. The Water Commissioners would like to advertise internally within the Town for the superintendent's position.

Mr. Hevy asked how many people would apply if the job were posted internally? Mr. Kularski stated that the Water Commissioners are just trying to make this transition as seamless as possible, in his opinion the most qualified candidate is already working there. Mr. Nason stated that hiring the current operator would save the Town money because there would be less training than what would be required for a person that is not familiar with the water plant. Mr. Hevy asked if the current operator has the proper licenses to be the superintendent, and Mr. Kularski stated that he does.

Mr. Nason stated that the operator is now training on the administrative part of the job, such as budgeting.

Mr. Thomasian stated that the goal is to have both positions already filled by the time Mr. Jones leaves mid-June.

Mrs. Walter asked if the current operator was promised the superintendent job when he was hired, and all three Commissioners stated absolutely not.

Mr. Smith stated that even using an open hiring process, the current operator should “rise to the top” as the most qualified candidate. If the Selectmen were to waive the open hiring process and allow an internal posting it could set a precedent. This is not reflective upon the current operator; the Selectmen have to set policy for all town departments. Mr. Smith stated that he would feel more comfortable going with the open process, and then the Water Commissioners would make their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Hevy agreed that he would prefer to post the position and go through the process.

Mrs. Walter said that her preference would be to go through the open process. There are people out there who could do the job.

Mr. Hevy asked how long this will take, and Mr. Kularski stated that the position should be posted on the industry websites for at least a week, then another week or two for applications to come in.

Mr. Smith stated that we have nothing to lose to prove to ourselves that we have the best candidate.

Mrs. Walter asked what the starting salary would be, and was told that it will be the same as Mr. Jones currently makes. Mrs. Walter suggested a lower salary for a certain probationary period before bringing the new superintendent up to the same rate as Mr. Jones. Mr. Hevy agreed that the Water Commissioners should revisit the idea of a lower starting pay. Mr. Nason stated that the training salary that the new superintendent will receive is lower than that of the superintendent. Mr. Nason stated that the current operator made almost \$11,000.00 last year in overtime, when added to his salary that is almost as much as the superintendent makes.

Mr. Smith thanked the Water Commissioners for coming in.

- **Sign Joint Authorization form for CDBG application**

Mr. Smith reviewed an e-mail from Andrew Loew of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission asking for a signature on a form authorizing the Town to jointly apply for 2015 CDBG funds with the towns of Warren and Brookfield. (Attachment #2) Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Hevy seconded, a motion to sign the form. So voted.

- **Memo from Planning Board re: fees**

Mr. Smith reviewed a memo from the Planning Board announcing that they have increased their fees effective December 17, 2014. (Attachment #3) No action by the Selectmen was required.

## **VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Election update**

Mr. Smith reviewed a memo from Town Clerk Sheila Buzzell announcing that the Annual Town Election will be held on Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>. (Attachment #4) Mrs. Buzzell

provided a list of offices up for election, and the current incumbent. The last day to return nomination papers is Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>.

- **CDBG public hearing in Warren**

Mr. Hevy reviewed a legal notice for a public hearing to be held in Warren on January 20<sup>th</sup> regarding the proposed FY2015 CDBG application. (Attachment #5) The proposed application outlines programs and services to benefit residents in Warren, Brookfield and North Brookfield, including housing rehabilitation in each town and design funds for North Brookfield's infrastructure project.

Mr. Smith noted that we are nearing the end of our prior block grant. The Selectmen will be meeting tomorrow with Andrew Loew of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to finalize plans to apply for phase 2 design funds to address drainage and infrastructure problems in certain areas of town.

- **Hearts for Heat**

Mr. Smith announced that the Hearts for Heat organization has funds available to help North Brookfield residents with heat this winter. (Attachment #6) An application or information is available by e-mailing [ellen@heartsforheat.org](mailto:ellen@heartsforheat.org). Donations may be sent to P O Box 44 in North Brookfield.

- **Harlem Superstars**

Mrs. Walter announced that the Harlem Superstars will be playing a basketball game against the North Brookfield Dream Team on Wednesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>. (Attachment #7) This event is being sponsored by the North Brookfield Playground Committee. Tickets are \$8 at the door, or \$7 in advance.

- **Wendmuth Meadow brush burning and sledding**

Mr. Hevy reviewed an announcement from the Friends of Wendemuth Meadow announcing that on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> they will be burning piles of brush that have been cleared from around the property. (Attachment #8) If there is snow residents are urged to bring their sleds. There will be hot dogs and s'mores to share.

Mr. Hevy stated that he had received a call from Rick Bulger of Valley View School inviting residents to attend an open house on Sunday, January 25<sup>th</sup> from 1 PM to 4 PM. People will be able to view the renovations that have taken place since the fire more than a year ago.

## **IX. PENDING/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- **See attached list**

Mr. Smith stated that he would like to talk about a budget workshop at the next meeting.

Mrs. Walter asked who will be negotiating the cable contract renewal, and Mr. Smith noted that Mike Tillotson is an ex-officio member of the Cable Advisory Committee.

Mr. Smith said that he would like to talk about tax-title properties next time.

Mr. Hevy said that he would like to talk about the school sign property.

Mr. Smith added the Finance Committee recommendations.

Mr. Smith noted that the Selectmen have received a question asking why the Water Department has not reimbursed the town for the Horse Pond Dam project. Mr. Smith noted that a 2010 letter from the Department of Dam Safety ordered the town, not the water department, to address problems at the Horse Pond Dam or face a \$500 per day fine. The reason the town paid for the dam repair was because the town owns the dam, not the water department.

#### **X. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- **Executive Session to discuss strategy related to negotiations with non-union personnel.**
- **Executive session to discuss strategy related to collective bargaining.**

At 7:20 PM Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Hevy seconded, a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss strategy related to negotiations with non-union personnel, and to discuss strategy related to collective bargaining. Roll call: Smith, yes; Walter, yes; Hevy, yes. So voted. Mr. Smith 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. Hevy seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton  
Administrative Assistant