

MINUTES OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING FEBRUARY 10, 2015

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order in the Senior Center at 6 PM with Mrs. Walter also present. Mr. Hevy was not present. Mr. Smith reminded those in attendance that the meeting would be both audio and video taped.

Mr. Smith thanked all of the Town's emergency responders, the Police, Fire and EMS workers who remain ready to respond to any problem in North Brookfield. Mr. Smith also offered thanks to the men of the Highway Department, who have been under siege for the past two weeks. Two sanders were out of service during the most recent storms, one has been repaired, but the other has serious problems. There are almost 80 miles of road in North Brookfield, and the men have had very little sleep and have been working around the clock. Mrs. Walter agreed, noting that the Highway Department has been short-handed and short on equipment.

Mr. Smith urged residents who live near a fire hydrant to shovel it out; it might save a life. Mrs. Walter noted that there have been serious fires in other locations with inaccessible hydrants, it is everyone's responsibility.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **January 29, 2015 minutes**

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

- **January 29, 2015 Executive Session minutes**

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

II. APPROVAL OF WARRANTS

- **School Warrant #1040 for \$83,944.19**
- **General Warrant #1041 for \$234,964.62**
- **Payroll Warrant #16 for \$297,202.12**

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith 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 reminded those in attendance that they could briefly comment on any of tonight's agenda items through himself as Chair.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT

- **Review of Snow and Ice Account**

Mr. Smith noted that the Snow and Ice deficit now stands at \$33,000.00, which does not include any of the storms from this past weekend.

V. OLD BUSINESS

- **Town House Advisory Committee update**

Mr. Smith noted that the Town House Advisory Committee recommended that Garofalo Design Associates (GDA) be hired to oversee the Town House project. The Selectmen will be signing the contract between GDA and the Town later in the meeting. In addition, Mrs. Walter has confirmed that the \$500,000.00 state appropriation for the project will not be affected by the Governor's budget cuts.

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

Mr. Smith reviewed a list of donations to the Police Vehicle Gift Fund. (Attachment #1) Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to accept the donations. So voted.

Brandon Avery was present to thank everyone who has donated, and showed a graph indicating that the goal is to collect \$40,000.00 in donations. He urged residents to keep the momentum going and donate. Mr. Smith noted that area businesses are welcome to donate as well.

- **Job descriptions**

Mrs. Walter noted that the Selectmen did receive some feedback from Mr. Hevy about the new job descriptions. She would like to take his comments under advisement, and get the job descriptions back to the town departments for their comments.

- **Tax Title properties**

Mr. Smith noted that last week the Selectmen discussed auctioning some town-owned properties. None of these properties are owner-occupied. Mr. Smith met with Treasurer Anne Jannette and told her that the Selectmen want to accomplish this before June. She is going to contact an auctioneer for a date, and determine which properties will be the first to be auctioned.

- **Budget workshop date**

Mr. Smith suggested holding a budget workshop for department heads sometime mid-March. Either the 11th or 18th are potential dates. It was agreed to put this on next week's agenda to finalize the date and review a draft notification.

- **Finance Committee recommendations**

The Selectmen reviewed some recommendations from the Finance Committee on ways to increase revenue. (Attachment #2) Mr. Smith noted that these have been discussed a few times by the Board. He has spoken with some members of the Finance Committee and asked for help from them, and also members of the community. Some of the items discussed include the following:

Mr. Smith said that some towns receive fees from Enterprise Funds, we are looking into that.

The Finance Committee feels that the debt from the Horse Pond Dam project should be borne by the Water Department, not the Town. Mr. Smith pointed out that the repair order was to the Town, not the Water Department. The Town owns the dam.

The Finance Committee suggested eliminating the third shift at the Police Department, and relying on mutual aid and the state police. Mr. Smith said that he personally is not willing to support this idea. Mrs. Walter agreed, saying that presence is everything, it wouldn't take long for people to find out there is no coverage in North Brookfield at night. Mr. Smith called this a vital community resource and vowed to continue 24 hour protection.

A suggestion from the Finance Committee to collect donations from tax-exempt properties was also not a good idea. Mr. Smith noted that PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) has not worked. Religious institutions are exempt.

Mrs. Walter noted that we are pursuing the idea of a solar farm at the landfill, but have not had a lot of interest. There is nowhere to send electricity that would be generated; other solar facilities have consumed all of the capacity of the transformers. In addition, the state has determined that towns cannot sell electricity.

Mr. Smith noted that these are complex items, and it has taken some time to research them. If they are feasible the Selectmen will pursue them.

- **Police Chief screening committee**

Mr. Smith asked residents who are interested in serving on a screening committee for a new police chief to send a letter of interest to the Selectmen's office. Mr. Smith and Mrs. Walter agreed that the committee should have five people on it.

- **Server proposals**

This information was not available.

- **School sign property**

Since Mr. Hevy was the one who requested this item, it was agreed to postpone this to next time.

VI. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

There were no departmental reports.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- **Water Commissioners re: Superintendent choice**

The Water Department asked to postpone this item, since they needed to postpone their own meeting because of the weather.

- **Sign contract with GDA**

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to approve and sign the contract between the Town and Garofalo Design Associates, Inc. for oversight of the Town House project. (Available from the Selectmen's office)
So voted and signed.

- **Website policy**

Mr. Smith reviewed a request from Webmaster Pricilla Johnson asking for direction on what links should be posted on the Town's webpage. (Attachment #3) Mrs. Walter responded to the e-mail (Attachment #4) and said that in her opinion any public event that is open to anyone in town is ok to post, but anything related to advertising, referrals or marketing for private enterprise not be allowed. Any link offering helpful access to state websites or to answer frequently asked questions should be allowed.

Mr. Smith agreed that there should be no private commercial solicitation or advertising.

Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to approve the terms of Mrs. Walter's January 29th memo to the webmaster, and to make the official policy effective immediately not to endorse commercial solicitations. So voted.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Election update**

Mrs. Walter read a memo from the Town Clerk listing offices up for election and the current incumbent. The Annual Town Election will be held on May 4th. The last day to file nomination papers is March 16th, and the last day to register to vote is April 14th.

- **Hearts for Heat**

Mr. Smith reminded residents that help with heating bills is available through the Hearts for Heat organization.

- **Planning Board hearing notice**

Mrs. Walter reviewed a hearing notice from the Planning Board regarding a public hearing to be held on Wednesday, February 18th at 7:20 PM on the application of Thomas Waugh for a zoning change on North Main Street from Grove Street to Route 148. The hearing will be held at the Senior Center.

- **Tyler Wolanin from Senator Gobi's office will hold office hours in North Brookfield at the Town Offices on Wednesday, February 25th from 2 PM to 3 PM**

Mr. Smith made this announcement.

- **Announcement from Charter Communications**

Mr. Smith reviewed an announcement from Charter Communications regarding several changes to the channel lineup. (Attachment #5)

IX. PENDING/FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Selectmen reviewed the list of pending items.

X. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no Executive Session.

There being no further business, at 7:30 PM Mrs. Walter moved, and Mr. Smith seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Scott Burton
Administrative Assistant

PENDING/FUTURE SELECTMEN'S ITEMS

Wendemuth Meadow
Murphy Road Bridge Project
Solterra Agreement
NBDDP/Aztec
Gilbert Street Stormwater issues
Changes to health insurance tiers
Cable license renewal Oct 2015
Water Superintendent retirement
PDA Study
Purchase Orders
Vacancies on town boards
Creation of Financial Advisory Committee