

Minutes of the Board of Selectmen Meeting

This meeting of the Board of Selectmen was called to order at 6:00PM on Tuesday, October 10, 2023. Jason Petraitis, John Tripp, and Brooke Canada present.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 9/12 and 9/13. So voted. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the minutes from 10/3. So voted.

Approval of Warrants: Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the following warrants: Payroll 8 for \$334,181.01, School 1023 for \$257,787.98, General 1024 for \$252,198.43 and CDBG/NB21 1026 for \$25,039.45. So voted.

Financial Items:

Parks and Recreation Request-Mr. Petraitis explained that Parks and Recreation is looking to spend \$509.00 on crushed stone. Brandon Avery said this will be for the Town Forest Park, they acquired free timbers for edging. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve this request. So voted.

Highway Request-Highway is requesting to spend \$400.00 on a muffler. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the request. So voted.

ARPA Discussion: Mr. Petraitis said there's money that was approved, \$50,000.00 for catch basin work, but that another funding source was found. Mrs. Canada moved, and Mr. Tripp seconded, a motion to rescind the \$50,000.00 for catch basin work from the ARPA funds. Discussion: Mr. Tripp asked if we could reallocate the money to highway. Mr. Petraitis said that is up for discussion, the Board is the appropriating body. All in favor: Aye.

ARPA Recommendation: Mr. Petraitis read a letter from the ARPA Committee asking the Board to approve \$30,000.00 in ARPA funds to remove hazardous trees. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve \$30,000.00 in ARPA funds for Tree removal. Discussion: Mr. Tripp said that Patrick Gustafson went to ARPA and asked for \$45,000.00 which would cover \$1,500/day for 30 days to take care of 100 trees. With the reduction to \$30,000.00 they won't be able to do as much work. Mr. Petraitis said that National Grid used to take care of trees over the wires, now they wait until it falls and then do clean up. Doing this work will be a proactive move. Mrs. Canada was also wondering why the committee voted for \$30,000.00 and not \$45,000.00. Mr. Tripp said that Patrick told ARPA anything they could give for tree work would be appreciated, so ARPA knocked it down \$15,000.00 but they could really use more money. Mr. Tripp said we're giving \$50,000.00 back to ARPA and he'd like to reallocate those funds to the tree. Mr. Petraitis said we have to vote first, Mr. Tripp asked if we could amend the \$30,000.00 to \$45,000.00. Mrs. Canada wondered if the Board could approve the \$30,000.00 and have the Tree Warden approach ARPA for more. Mr. Tripp said ARPA is not the governing body, the Board of Selectmen is. Mrs. Canada said she understands that, but with the budget, she's not sure what requests are going into ARPA, and she's like their input since they are monitoring the funds and sending us recommendations. Mr. Tripp said the requests should come to the Board of Selectmen first, not ARPA. ARPA should only tell the Board if it falls under the guidelines, the committee was put in place as an advisory committee, not to hold the reins on the money. Mrs. Canada said she'd like their advice. Mr. Petraitis said this is the way it has worked. Originally there were a lot of stipulations, but they've been

relaxed. It is still illegal to use the funds to balance the budget. Requests go to ARPA as they are advisory, then come to the Board of Selectmen. How much is in the account is irrelevant to the task, they are deciding if the request fits the criteria, then the Board decides yes or no. Ray Baillargeon asked why no one from ARPA was present to discuss the reason for reducing the request. Mr. Tripp said they recommended \$30,000.00 for the tree work, Ray said that Mrs. Canada is asking why, why is no one here to answer questions. This should be tabled. Mr. Tripp said ARPA is advisory. Mr. Petraitis agreed it would be nice if someone was present to answer questions, but the Board can make decisions on their own, it is in their purview. Ray asked why ARPA dropped \$15,000 from the request, they said 100 trees need to be cut now saying no, only \$30,000.00, winter is coming, out of those 100 trees you can't cut 20, they fall on a wire, someone should be here to say why. Mr. Petraitis said the Board will ask ARPA. Ray said this should be tabled. Mr. Tripp asked about amending the motion. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mr. Petraitis seconded, a motion to amend the motion to original \$45,000.00 requested by Tree Warden. Discussion: Mrs. Canada said to keep \$30,000.00, then go back for \$15,000.00, we should talk to ARPA, she'd rather check in with them first. The Tree Warden can get started with the \$30,000.00 and add \$15,000.00 later. Mr. Petraitis said with winter coming a lot of trees need to come down, we did just put \$50,000.00 back. Mrs. Canada said the budget is tight and she'd rather wait. All in favor: Mr. Tripp, yes; Mr. Petraitis, yes; Mrs. Canada, no. So voted.

Mr. Petraitis said there was a request for money for water department to fix the water tank. The water department has been given over \$400,000.00 in ARPA funds. They made increases to rates years ago to make repairs. As of June 30th, they have over \$200,000.00 in retained earnings, final numbers will be more. Mr. Petraitis thinks the water department should pay for this with retained earnings. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to deny the Water Dept's ARPA request. Discussion: Mr. Tripp said the water dept has to keep money in retained earnings for emergencies. Mr. Tripp said that Jamie Flamand said he would take \$50,000.00 from retained earnings and \$50,000.00 from ARPA, so he won't have to raise the water rates. Mr. Petraitis said they don't have to raise the rates, ARPA covered repairs and they will have more in retained earnings after the numbers are finalized. Mr. Petraitis said until the revenue is finalized, he sees no reason to give them more ARPA money. All in favor: Mrs. Canada, yes; Mr. Petraitis, yes; Mr. Tripp, no. So voted.

Mr. Tripp said that Highway had put in a request for ARPA for a water main at the Donovan Rd building for \$80,000.00. Mr. Petraitis thought it was included in the money borrowed for the project, Mr. Tripp said it was absolutely not included. Mr. Petraitis said it was included in the original plan, Mr. Tripp said no it wasn't. Ashley confirmed it was in the original list from Tecton, Mr. Tripp said no that was Tecton/Colliers, they've been doing stuff the whole time. Ashley explained that's what we based our borrowing on, and Mrs. Canada agreed the water main was included. Mr. Tripp said we're not going to have it because the money isn't there for it. Mr. Petraitis said we'd do more research on that and put it on for next time. Mr. Tripp said it's \$80,000.00 just for piping, Highway and Water will do the work. Mr. Petraitis asked if the line would run from East Brookfield Road up Donovan Road. Mr. Tripp said there is a hydrant on the corner near Country Auto, they would extend the line up Donovan to near the salt shed, put in a hydrant, and run two water lines into the building, one potable water and one to fill the street sweeper.

Old Business:

Ray Baillargeon from 6 Conroy Ave said he has an ongoing issue with drainage lines on his property date back to 1900, the water flows from streets to his property then back to the street, there was a broken pipe and now there is a big hole and a lot of flooding. He is still waiting for Highway Superintendent; he saw him and was told he'd get a phone call but never heard from him. Mr. Petraitis said if you look at old maps, dating back to late 1800's there's a brook behind his property, later the Town filled in the Brooke and piped it all the way to the common. He said Highway is looking into scoping out the line to find breaks and they need to look at easements. The previous owner had an abatement (a value reduction) due to the flooding but it doesn't seem to have transferred to Ray, but he can apply at the assessor's office. Ray said he found out a month after he bought his house about the lake behind it, a neighbor told him and gave him a tour of flooding in the neighborhood. He just wants it fixed. He's got 4 catch basins that are just dirt holes. Mr. Petraitis said they are going to scope out the pipes. At this point several people were talking at once. Ray said the pipes in his yard are illegal. Mr. Petraitis said the Board is going to do what they can to help him and urged him to see the Assessor's. Ray said 3 Highway Superintendent's ago someone said they were going to fill with rocks and make a retaining pond. Mr. Petraitis and Ray disagreed on which Superintendent said this. Mr. Petraitis reiterated that there is a plan to scope out the lines. Mr. Tripp said we don't have the camera, we have to wait for the guy to come out, and there must be a blockage. Ray said it's old pipes, trees and roots are the enemy of pipes. Ray said he's still got a hole in his yard from when a pipe was dug up in 2018. Mr. Petraitis said that's all he's for Ray tonight. Ray said last time Mr. Petraitis mentioned private property and wondered what that means. Mr. Petraitis said we have to make sure we have easements and we are looking into it. Ray said he gives permission to go his property.

BSC Group Bidding Contract: Ashley said Town Counsel looked at it and saw no issues. Mr. Petraitis asked if the designs were reviewed. Mr. Tripp said he didn't get them, Ashley said she emailed them a few weeks ago. Mr. Petraitis said they look good to him. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign the bidding contract with BSC Group. So voted.

One Day Liquor License Amendment: Still Hart's is holding a fundraiser for the Playground but continue to postpone the event due to rain. They are requesting the one-day license for October 21 from 12-9. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the amended one-day liquor license. So voted.

Still Hart's is also holding a fundraiser for the Police Department on 10/22 from 11-3 and is requesting an additional one-day liquor license for this date. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to approve the one-day liquor license for 10/22. So voted.

East Brookfield Town Beach Letter: Mr. Petraitis explained that over the past few years, about 6, we've been trying to work with East Brookfield on the Town Beach. We share the beach with East Brookfield and it's only for North and East Brookfield residents. North Brookfield is trying to share the burden, and wants to keep non-residents out. East Brookfield has ignored our requests. Mr. Petraitis read a letter written to East Brookfield Board of Selectmen and East Brookfield Parks and Recreation Committee terminating our agreement to share the beach and stating they will have to pay taxes on the property beginning January 1, 2024. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to sign and send the letter. Discussion: Mrs. Canada stated she was bummed they couldn't come to an agreement, Mr. Tripp interrupted stating that since he's been on the Board, they've tried to work together but can't come to an agreement. Mrs. Canada agreed with Mr. Tripp and said even since she's been on they've tried

multiple times. Mr. Petraitis noted that the Town Beach is in North Brookfield but the property is owned by East Brookfield. All in favor: aye. So voted.

New Business:

Accept Donation for Fire Department: Mr. Tripp read a letter from the Lutz family looking to donate \$1,800.00 to the Fire Department in the name of David R Lutz. These funds will be used to purchase much needed hoods. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to accept the donation in the name of David R Lutz. Discussion: All Board members thanked the Lutz family and said the donation is very appreciated. All in favor: aye. So voted.

Winter Parking Ban: Mrs. Canada read a letter changing the winter parking ban from 1am-6am to 9pm-6am. This change will better enable Highway clean the downtown area during snow storms. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to accept the change. Discussion: Mr. Tripp said the change in time was for downtown, they have to come in with a payload and dump truck, it's hard working around vehicles. He also said if Vibram employees park in their lot downtown will be empty. Mrs. Canada had a question about the Vibram parking, Mr. Tripp said Vibram assured the Planning Board that they had enough parking in the lot for their employees. Jason Benoit is talking to someone at Vibram to follow up on this. It is in the minutes of the Planning Board meeting. Mrs. Canada wondered about shift changes, Mr. Tripp said they don't have three shifts anymore, and Vibram employees are taking up the spots for Town Office employees. All in favor: aye. So voted.

Resignations: Mr. Petraitis read a letter from Stephanie LaChambre on NBHelps, and Mr. Tripp read a letter from Mary Catherine Byszek on NBHelps, both resigning from the committee due to family commitments. Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to accept both resignations. So voted. The Board thanked both women for serving on this committee.

Public Comment:

Ray Baillargeon said he's gone to different towns and has seen they put out pictures of their Veterans, why can't North Brookfield do that? Mr. Petraitis said it's probably a money issue. Ray said the pictures can be re-used, and that its nice to represent our veterans. Mr. Petraitis said he loves the idea. Ray said because our graduating high school class is so small, we should put out banners with the kids' names on them. Mr. Petraitis said he should bring that up with the School Committee. He also said Ray could contact the VFW and Legion and ask about the signs for Veterans. Ray said it would be nice to put the kids names on Main Street. Ashley tried to explain that Tara Hayes does put their information on the Town sign but Ray talked over her. He said he doesn't want to wait on Main Street waiting for his kid to show up on the Town sign, that's his opinion, but he doesn't have kids at the school or know any Veterans.

Brandon Avery wanted to remind groups that Parks and Recreation has a policy and procedure manual on the town's website. Regardless of the new policy, the request for resources form has always had to go through the Board of Selectmen first. Brandon said they are trying to be accommodating as this is their first year but some people aren't aware of the new committee or policy. Mr. Tripp asked Ashley if Katie Griffin had brought in a Request for Resources form for Trunk or Treat. Ashley said no. Mr. Tripp said it was a month or two ago, Ashley said she never received it. Mr. Tripp then said it was brought in before the Parks and Rec Committee was formed. Ashley said that would have been in the Spring, and she did

not receive any request from Katie. Ashley said that Katie would need to put in a new request from, Mr. Tripp said she already did. Ashley said even if Katie had brought in a form in April, she wouldn't have saved it for an agenda item in October. Mr. Tripp said Katie would come in and see Ashley.

Joanne Carey said that using ARPA funds for a Town Administrator is a gross misuse of the funds, the guidelines say to invest in water, sewer, and storm water, it's not for recurring expenses, a Town Admin is recurring. Mr. Petraitis said it hasn't been decided yet, and guidelines have changed numerous times. Mr. Petraitis said he was told by a State Rep to spend the money on whatever, which is maybe not the best advice. Joanne said they want you to spend on non-recurring things, we all have flooded basements. Mr. Petraitis said they are still looking into it. Joanne said the Town would have to come up with the money. Mrs. Canada said the Town may realize a savings if we have a Town Admin. Joanne said we may not. Mr. Petraitis and Mrs. Canada said no final decisions have been made, the job description and requirements are still being worked on. Joanne said there are so many water problems. Mrs. Canada said there's a lot of grant opportunities available for that but not a lot of grants for employee's salary. Mr. Petraitis said we may not be able to hire due to economy. Joanne said congress is going to rescind the unobligated ARPA funds and it must be obligated by December 2024. Ray asked if the money would be returned if we don't spend it by December 2024. Mr. Petraitis clarified that the funds must be earmarked by December 2024 and spent by December 2026.

Vaughn Schlegel questioned the winter parking ban, is it for all residential streets? The Board confirmed it is. Vaughn asked if 9pm was a little early, if residents have a holiday party their guests can't park in the street? Mr. Petraitis said if there's no storm it won't be an issue. Mr. Tripp said the ban wouldn't be enforced unless there's a storm.

Announcements:

Mrs. Canada read an announcement that Tucker Road is now closed due to flooding, people can't drive down there. Mr. Tripp said concrete barriers are going up tomorrow. This section of Tucker Road (between Tucker Cross Road and Bates Road) has been closed for a while but people keeping moving the barriers and stealing the road closed signs.

At 7:00PM, there being no further business, Mr. Tripp moved, and Mrs. Canada seconded, a motion to adjourn. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Barre