



Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, February 3, 2015 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room

The meeting was called to order at 7:00PM by Chair, Stu Sklar in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Selectmen Lucy Wallace, Ron Ricci, Leo Blair and Ken Swanton were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet.

MINUTES

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 1/13, as presented.

On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 1/20, as presented.

ROADWAY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Fiscal 2015-2019

DPW Director Rich Nota presented the board with an updated five year road management program. He explained the plan has been modified to include \$170,000 in additional Chapter 90 funds released by the Governor. Nota revised the program by spreading out the additional funds eliminating the need for any supplemental funds through the capital plan. He is optimistic the additional funds received will continue in the future allowing enhancement of the program. Nota is optimistic the current Governor understands the funds necessary to provide satisfactory maintenance for roadway infrastructure and will be committed to providing these funds to cities and towns in the future. On a Blair/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the updated plan as submitted.

SNOW STORM RECAP

Sklar began by asking how long the large snow piles will be in place. Nota answered for the foreseeable future. He commented on the unprecedented amount of snow we have received over the past week acknowledging the havoc it is wreaking havoc on roadways and mailboxes throughout town. Nota told the board his equipment is also taking quite a beating with four large pieces in need of repair. He explained the older equipment once it gets wet and very cold can become unreliable. He is confident the equipment can be fixed by his staff but it may take some time. He added it is not uncommon for equipment to have issues during the winter season. Ken Swanton pointed out the last 10 days are a good advertisement for Nota's request before capital for a heavy duty dump truck. Sklar asked about the snow and ice budget but Bragan said until a payroll is processed they will not know the full impact. Also, Nota explained his crew spends a lot of time treating the road surfaces besides just plowing them. Wallace wondered if snow fences could be effective against snow drifting. Nota answered probably not considering the amount of snow we received. Additionally, he said it is time consuming and expensive to put up. Sklar asked Nota to address Harvard's use of salt relative to other towns. Nota said we use half the amount of salt other communities use. His main reason for this is to protect the private wells in town. Nota said neighboring towns Littleton and Ayer have public water supplies so they do not have to worry about this. He uses more sand than other towns because with the very narrow

and hilly roads in Harvard this helps tremendously with traction for the plow trucks. His method of 50/50 (salt/sand) saves the town a lot of money.

Ron Ricci recognized the hard work and many hours put in by the DPW staff. He expressed concern the staff and equipment are getting worn down. He asked if the town should consider backup resources. Nota said it is not unusual for equipment to breakdown. He did admit he runs a lean department however it has been done this way for over 20 years. He explained hiring independent contractors can be tricky as they will go where the work is. It is difficult to hire them on a case by case basis. He said in a typical winter this system works but over the past 12 days with the amount of snow we received you begin to see the flaws in our program. He does not suggest changing the program mid-stream but maybe a discussion in the future.

Wallace made a good point by saying we all need to have patience and realize right now we cannot travel at the pace we are used to and ultimately public safety comes first. Sklar had spoken with one of the Ambulance Directors who stated during the storm he did not encounter one roadway he was uncomfortable taking the Ambulance down which is a testament to the hard work put forth by the DPW department. Blair agreed with Nota that now is not the time to talk about making changes. He said we have just had the largest snowfall in the shortest amount of time ever in history. The board asked Nota to tell his staff how pleased and thankful they are for their efforts.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

James Breslaurer, 130 Poor Farm Road, came forward to remind the board that if they do not decide to release the old library to the Center on the Common the Planning Group continues to be interested. He said they do not wish to compete with Center on the Common but want the Selectmen to know they remain open to giving a presentation to the Selectmen in support of a cultural center in the old library. Sklar asked if the Selectmen decide to use the old library for temporary office space will this hinder their efforts. Breslaurer said they could still organize a board of directors, begin fundraising, plan programs they can hold in alternate locations and collaborate with other organizations. Wallace asked if members of the Planning Group had spoken with the Center on the Common. Breslaurer said he did reach out to them but had not heard back.

Blair cautioned the board about setting expectations on the future use of the old library before the board has had a chance to decide what the best use of the building is in the short and long term. Swanton agreed suggesting the board decide to develop a succession plan 6 months prior to the town hall renovation being complete. Ricci wants to use the time they have to properly vet all their options. The board members agreed it made sense to invite all those interested in the building to give a proposal so they can decide what will be the future of the old library.

TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF TOWN HALL OFFICES

Bragan again reviewed the quotes given to rent space at the Appleworks building (\$78,000) and in Devens (\$71,000). The quotes include plowing and all utilities but not moving costs. Bragan has received verbal quotes totaling \$23,000 for electrical work and to move and install the phone system at the old library. With the addition of annual utilities costs (approximately \$12,000/year) for using the old library Blair estimates the total cost to be around \$35,000 cheaper than moving

to another location. Bragan did not further investigate the Shirley town hall offer as he does not believe residents will want to travel to Shirley to pay their taxes. He does plan to have a ramp company come out about installing a temporary ramp although he is still not certain it will be required. Wallace asked a few questions about the condition of the old library as far as what other tasks will need to be completed before the staff can move in. Swanton asked if the improvements made will be permanent to the building. Bragan answered yes. He admitted parking will be an issue and space will be tight. Swanton asked if meetings will held in the building. Bragan said there will be a meeting room on the bottom floor where meetings can be televised. He confirmed the move will take place the week of April 13th. On a Blair/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to temporarily relocate town offices to the old library during renovation of the town hall building. The board members agreed to target the end of the summer to begin work on deciding what will happen with the building once the town offices move out.

MASSDEVELOPMENT PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, February 10, 2015, 7pm, Volunteers Hall

Stu Sklar planned to turn the hearing over to the Planning Board but because the Joint Boards of Selectmen have been working with MassDevelopment on this Blair suggested it be run by the Selectmen. Sklar said notice of the hearing and link to MassDevelopment's website outlining the changes will be sent to all boards/committees in town. Swanton asked what the goal of the hearing is. Wallace said the hearing provides a forum for MassDevelopment to determine if the town will pass what is proposed and the public an opportunity to give their input. Blair added they are required to hold public hearings on any proposed zoning changes. Wallace informed the board she plans to speak personally about some concerns she has but will not speak on behalf of the board considering they have not taken a position as a whole.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Bragan announced the advertisement for the town hall renovation has been published in the central register. Vertex (OPM) and LLB (Architect) are working on issues with the plans and preparing the bid documents. All recent votes taken by the Selectmen have been incorporated. The Town Hall Construction Committee was unable to meet on Monday due to the storm but will meet next Monday.

Bragan announced the Personnel Board is holding a hearing tomorrow morning to review changes to the Personnel Policies.

Bragan told the board he has begun drafting the annual town meeting warrant.

Bragan announced the departure of Receptionist Mary Relic. Five interviews were conducted to fill her position with Jared Aponte proving to be the best candidate.

Bragan complimented the DPW staff on their efforts through the recent snow storms. He noted their appreciation toward residents for staying off the roads during the storms so they could clear them. The Selectmen also took a moment to thank the staff.

ENTERTAINMENT LICENSE

On a Blair/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the license to the Unitarian Church for the annual Harvard Schools Trust Gala.

BARE HILL POND RULE ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the Bare Hill Pond rule enforcement and penalties.

MS RIDE & BARE HILL TRIATHLON

On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the Bare Hill Triathlon and the MS bike ride.

CHAPTER 61A – LOT 2B PROSPECT HILL ROAD

Bragan confirmed the Conservation Commission and Trust are not interested in the property. Sklar explained after the property was purchased it was split into two parcels one of which is now under agreement for sale. Blair questioned the legality of the property being in chapter based on what was written in the notice of intent submitted by the landowner. After some explanation by the Town Administrator, the board decided this did not preclude them from acting on the right of 1st refusal. On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to not act on the Right of 1st Refusal.

MEETING SCHEDULE CHANGE

The board decided to move their next meeting out a week, from the 17th to the 24th.

SENIOR TAX RELIEF ARTICLE

Sklar asked the board to contemplate supporting an article for the annual town meeting for a senior tax exemption. He is interested in copying the town of Sudbury's program which aims to reduce the tax burden of seniors, who meet the circuit breakers, to 10% of their income.

Sklar explained the program needs to pass at town meeting as a home rule petition, be approved by the state, and then back for another town meeting vote and ballot question. He believes it may help up to 27 households in town. He said the program is a tax burden shift which the town has talked about over the years and at one time had it on a warrant. He believes it could be a viable way to help our most needy residents stay in town. Ricci thought it made sense to tailor the program based on Harvard's demographics and not follow exactly what Sudbury did. Blair agreed with Ricci and wondered if Assistant Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro and Ricci could work together on parameters that would work best for Harvard. He said for the town to embrace a program like this it needs to be the right fit for Harvard. Wallace does not think there is enough time before this year's annual town meeting to educate the community on this program. Sklar is optimistic his fellow board members will support this article but if not he plans to get it on the warrant through a citizens petition. Wallace again expressed her concern about how assets are determined and without support from the Council on Aging and lead by the Selectmen there is a good chance it will not pass. Swanton said it may be a good idea but does not like that it is coming up so late in the process. He saw in Sudbury they worked on this for quite some time with involvement from the COA, Finance Committee and Board of Assessors none of which we have done. He would suggest vetting of this type of article begin in the fall for

presentation at a spring town meeting. He does not see the benefit to pushing this through. Wallace also pointed out the Hildreth House Improvement Committee has been working hard on its proposal for this year's annual town meeting and that she would hate to see this article jeopardize passage of theirs. Blair wondered if it made sense to float the idea at the annual town meeting and see what the reaction is from the voters. He also urged Sklar to not do a citizens petition.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Sklar announced the Suburban Coalition is holding a meeting on March 12th at the Newton Marriott on sustaining vibrant communities throughout the Commonwealth.

Swanton reported the OPM is reviewing the final cost estimates on the Hildreth House.

Ricci asked the board members to review the draft large scale events policy and provide feedback by next Tuesday to him or Marie.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

Documents referenced:

Roadway Management Program – Fiscal 2015-2019

Entertainment license request dated 1.15.2015

BHP rule enforcement & penalties dated 1.12.2015

Senior Tax Relief – packet of information dated 2.12.2014