



Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, October 20, 2015 at 6:00pm
Hapgood Meeting Room

The meeting was called to order at 6:00PM by Chair, Ron Ricci in the Hapgood Meeting Room. Selectmen Lucy Wallace, Leo Blair, Ken Swanton and Stu Sklar were in attendance as well as Town Administrator Tim Bragan. Executive Assistant Julie Doucet entered the meeting at 7:00pm and Leo Blair at 6:30pm.

Minutes

On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the 10/6 minutes, as presented.

Capital requests

Council on Aging

COA Director Debbie Thompson and COA board member Connie Larrabee were present to review the phase two of the Hildreth House construction project estimated to cost 2.7 million. This project is scheduled for fiscal 2018. Larrabee explained the estimate has increased due to the inclusion of the driveway and turnaround. They expect the estimate to change once reviewed by Vertex (OPM). Phase 2 consists of an addition with a dining room on the first floor, multi-purpose room upstairs, renovation of the kitchen and two handicapped bathrooms. The Friends of the COA intends to undertake a private fundraising campaign with the goal of raising \$500,000 for this project. In addition the COA will seek grants to offset costs. They are also optimistic any senior housing development to happen on the Hildreth House property could potentially include improvements to the Hildreth House. The project was initially slated for 2018 but they realize they need another year to pursue these additional funding sources.

Department of Public Works

Director Rich Nota was present to review his requests. He began with requesting a light duty pickup truck to replace a 2004 in the fleet currently. They need a good reliable diesel truck for plowing. The second item is for the purchase of a crane for handling catch basin cleaning. He investigated privatizing that function instead of the town making a capital purchase for this maintenance. Nota recommended they privatize this function as done with road sweeping. He admitted his department does not have the time to do an effective job in cleaning the catch basins. He asked the BoS to replace this item with a \$35,000 Park & Recreation mower. Nota informed the board the septic system at the highway garage failed last winter. They are pumping the system on a monthly basis to avoid backups but the system must be replaced to be in compliance. He has estimated \$40,000 for design and construction of a new system. Ricci suggested requesting a reserve fund transfer from the Finance committee to obtain a system design which includes an accurate estimate of the cost. Nota agreed. Lastly, he is requesting funds for water system mapping. DEP has done a survey and listed this as a deficiency in our current system. The cost will be \$25,000 which includes field surveys with time measurements to all gate stops and electric mapping of the system.

Cemetery Commissions asked Nota to take a look at the condition of their roadways. Nota did a measurement of up to 1000 feet of road that needs to be repaired. He estimates about \$30,000 to make these repairs.

Swanton asked about Nota's requests related to repairs of his facility. Nota said the building has a seriously deficient area where his office and the mechanic bay is located. The mechanics bay needs to be updated from a safety standpoint and they need to add a lift. He said the main portion of the building is in good condition. He would first do a conceptual design study to determine what is necessary and required.

Town Hall Construction update

Committee member Laura Andrews was present to give the update. Andrews reported the project continues to be on schedule. Items underway include installation of the vapor barrier, siding and trim. She indicated painting will begin soon. She asked for approval of the 5th application for payment from GVW. Andrews acknowledged the school department's use of second floor has been resolved and continued work is being done to accommodate audio visual needs on the second floor. On a Blair/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the 5th application for payment. Sklar thanked the committee for their efforts in keeping the project on schedule and on budget. Committee Chair Rick Maiore said the committee is also pleased with the progress thus far. He encouraged the BoS to set up a time to visit the site.

Future use of the upper Town Hall

Ken Swanton made a motion for the plan for second floor of Town Hall to remain as is except for adding audio visual equipment and movable partitions which may be necessary for board meetings. He amended his motion to add the plan is as presented at the October 2014 Special Town Meeting which was seconded by Sklar and voted on unanimously.

Historical Commission appointment

Commission member Moe Dancause recommended resident Scott Roy for appointment as an alternate member. This is an annual appointment. Roy took a few moments to introduce himself and explain why he is interested in serving on the commission.

On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Scott Roy as an alternate on the Historical Commission.

Town Administrator report

Tim Bragan invited Moderator Bob Eubank to join him for an update on the organization of a working group to review possible Town Administrator/Manager change. Bragan told the board they will provide a recommendation to the Selectmen in January. The group will consist of Bob Eubank (Chair), Town Clerk Janet Vellante, Selectmen Chair Ron Ricci, Personnel Board Victor Normand, Finance Committee Chair Alice Von Loesecke and Town Hall Construction Committee Chair Rick Maiore. Eubank confirmed they will be seeking input from other communities who have made this change.

Bragan reported he and Sklar attended a Mass Municipal Association meeting last Friday where many topics were discussed. He said the main topic of discussion was related to a recent letter

sent from the Administration and Finance to the legislation about tax revenue being down. It is not a critical issue as of yet. Bragan plans to attend an upcoming listening session on how the state can ease the burden for cities and towns.

Bragan asked the board members to supply him with any items they wish to be included in this year's budgets as soon as possible. The budgets are due November 1st.

Capital budget request review

Fire Department

The Selectmen reviewed the Fire Department requests at their last meeting. They all support replacing the command car in three years and upgrading the town's fire alarm system however they were not in agreement on refurbishing the Fire Station. They discussed moving the refurbishment of the Fire Station out further on the schedule due to the other projects in process and in the queue. Blair was not convinced the project is even necessary. Wallace did support having a needs assessment done to determine what is the best path to take.

Police Department

They supported moving the police cruiser to the operating budget.

Council on Aging

Wallace made a motion seconded by Sklar to support moving their phase 2 request (Hildreth House construction project) out to fiscal year 19 and the amount requested. Discussion ensued on how best to move forward with this project. The board members were in agreement more time was needed however Blair was not ready to support the project itself only moving it out on the schedule. Ricci and Swanton agreed with Blair. Blair amended Wallace's motion to only move the project to fiscal 19 which was seconded by Sklar and voted on unanimously. However, Blair was not in favor of Wallace's motion to support the project. He is interested in helping the project succeed by leveraging the additional land on the site to create downsize housing and include additional improvements to the Hildreth House. He will not support the project if it is entirely funded by the taxpayers. He volunteered to do what he can to assist. Swanton changed his vote on the motion to support it. Discussion followed on removing the project from the capital plan schedule. Wallace pointed out it is hard to be successful with private fundraising without full support from the Selectmen. She said that is why they are asking for our support now. Wallace made another motion to support the project funding as currently presented. (3-2 vote: Wallace & Sklar – aye, Ricci, Swanton & Blair – nay)

Public outreach on future use of old library

Ron Ricci opened the meeting to allow public input.

Harvard Cultural Collaboration presentation

Board President Judy Eissenberg introduced the collaborative expressing their excitement for the opportunity to use the old library as a center for the advancement of local arts and culture.

Eissenberg introduced her fellow board and committee members:

Mark Mikitarian, Kirsti Gamage, Willie Wickman, Pat Jennings, Maimie Wytrwal and Jim Breslauer.

Eissenberg gave a virtual tour by describing how the group envisions the cultural center as a welcoming visible venue and gathering space for the community. A place to showcase art and artists along with storytelling, book clubs, dance/exercise classes, photography and an area for children.

Mark Mikitarian said their mission is to serve the town and neighboring communities by leading the sponsorship, coordination and promotion of arts and culture for a multi-generational audience. They feel their business plan is solid and can be successful due to strong financial pledges and the expertise of the board members. Their main goals are to nurture a network of community organizations with collaboration and cross-marketing, develop and manage as sustainable financial strategy and establish a website with a master community cultural calendar. Their proposal includes budget forecasting, rental revenue projections, fundraising and reinvestment into the building.

Mikitarian reviewed their fundraising plan which will handle interior improvements and future capital upgrades. They will also pursue grant dollars. They have a great deal of momentum already and are asking the Selectmen to support the concept for use of the building as a cultural center and to work on a lease agreement with a long term goal for sustainability into the future.

Board member comment/questions

Lucy Wallace complimented the group and asked for some clarity on upgrades to the building. Jim Breslauer explained their intent is to install a lift in year two with funds raised. She also asked about staffing. Mikitarian explained they will expand the board to eleven members to accommodate staffing needs. He assured the board expenses will be kept up and staff will only be hired when it is financially feasible.

Stu Sklar asked how their board membership is set up. Breslauer answered in the current bylaws they will serve three year terms.

Ken Swanton, Leo Blair and Ron Ricci have concerns/questions about the center being self-sustaining, accessibility costs, commitment on expenses being paid and understanding their revenue stream.

Teresa Garti, collaborative member, is confident with support from the Selectmen they will be able to network deep into the community. The potential is there. Pat Jennings, collaborative member, is aware of many residents interested in volunteering.

Ron Ricci admits it will be great if it can work but he does not want the town to end up in the same situation as before. He needs to be comfortable the town is covered. He expected this proposal to include data from the Center on the Common as well as the Pilot Project.

Willie Wickman, collaborative member, assured the board as additional insured they would be notified if any changes were to occur with the coverage.

Eisenberg asked the Selectmen to not judge the group on the failures of others. She said their proof for success is in their presentation.

Al Combs, collaborative advisor, is not able to serve on their board but has agreed to serve as an advisor. He has the experience and expertise they are looking for in a critical evaluator. He has already provided them with feedback. He believes their fundraising goals will be easily met. He is impressed with the group and supports their mission.

Michael Maccini, 5A Old Littleton Road, as a close neighbor he provided feedback on the problems he encountered when the previous groups were using the building. He described loud music, trash, blocking of his driveway area and people outside of the building hanging around until very late in the night. He asked the Selectmen to set an acceptable decibel level if the building is used as a cultural center again.

Bruce Nickerson, 212 Stow Road, wondered about competing efforts for grant funding and questioned adequate parking.

Peter Warren, 52 Lancaster County Road, commended the collaborative for their efforts. He asked if the school department was still interested in the building for their administrative offices. He wants the Selectmen to first consider what the town needs are before committing the building to another entity. He also mentioned Devens, what happens if we take back our portion? Maybe we should be maintaining the old library for a Town Hall annex in the event we need the space. He asked if meetings could still be accommodated in the building. He offered the idea of renting the second floor of Town Hall for some of those interested in renting space from the collaborative. Warren expects any lease agreement will include personal guarantees and possibly a large security deposit to assure what happened before will not happen again.

Mary Helen Turner, 247 Littleton County Road, thanked the collaborative members for coming with this vision. She pointed out we need both the nuts and bolts and the passion to make this successful. She commented on all that has been learned through the trials and tribulations of the last groups. Turner said the one underlying issue to consider is the public has expressed interest in having a cultural center that can benefit everyone in town. She also pointed out whether the Center on the Common paid the utilities or not the town still had to either way so really how much was lost. She highly recommends the Selectmen encourage this to move forward.

Alice Von Loesecke, Finance Committee Chair, has many questions and agrees with several statements made especially about the need to determine what the best use of the building is. Could two entities co-exist? She recognized their business plan as an incubator model not with market rates. She said there are many hidden costs to consider if the school administration offices do not move here and both buildings (Bromfield House) need repairs. She said we need to be careful with the scale, scope and potential uses.

Diane Moore, 154 East Bare Hill Road, as a fairly new resident in town she is grateful for those involved who have provided a strong framework for success. She suggested the Selectmen offer a partnership around the plan allowing the momentum to continue while the details get worked

out. She believes the adult opportunities that will be offered provide a rich cultural center true to the vision of town.

On a Blair/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint a member of the BoS to work with the Town Administrator to meet with the architectural access board to determine what if anything needs to be done for accessibility after we come out of temporary offices in terms of what and when.

School Committee Chair SusanMary Reddinger was asked to come forward. She said the committee took a vote to wait until the community decides what should be done with the old library building before moving forward. They do not want to be in contention over the space with the arts in town.

Ricci decided to coordinate a meeting with himself, Reddinger and Von Loesecke to discuss options looking at this with a town wide perspective.

Blair suggested the board members develop a list of questions for the collaborative. Additionally, Wallace suggested including a list of requirements for a possible lease of the building. The questions and lease requirements will be sent to Tim Bragan and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet by Wednesday, October 28th. The questions will be copied to a member of the collaborative. The list of questions and requirements will be reviewed at the next BoS meeting.

Stu Sklar commented on the town's desire to have a vibrant town center. He supports working with this group to try and make that happen.

Pam Erdos, 4 Madigan Lane, commended the presentation and is pleased at the healthy conversation it has started. She does not feel it is right for the Selectmen to ask this group of committed people with a vision and credibility to account for the failure of others. She said instead of focusing on competing municipal uses maybe it is time to elevate the discussion and find a space for the cultural collaborative, take a risk and follow the vision.

Capital budget request review continued

Department of Public Works

On a Swanton/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to support the requests for a light-duty truck, replace septic system, water system mapping and field mower. The catch basin initially requested was take off and the replacement of the cemetery roads will be paid for through cemetery funds.

When the board discussed the addition to the public works building it again came up the number of large projects on the horizon. Blair suggested they get a cash flow analysis which will give them a better understanding of what funds are available and how best to prioritize projects. The board decided to review a debt schedule at their November 17th meeting and to include Phase 2 of the Hildreth House. They will also consider the proposed Public Works building at that time.

Selectmen policy change

Wallace noted that at their meeting on October 6th, she and Blair were asked to develop language for the proposed change to the advisory board section of their policy which would allow more than one member of the board to serve on the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust. Wallace recommended allowing more than one Selectmen but less than a quorum of the BoS. Blair did not agree. He does not support setting a limit. Discussion ensued on the merits of each approach. Wallace strongly advocated for the trust being an independent group. Blair believes the trust can achieve success by trying a different approach. Everyone agrees affordable housing is a complicated issue and does need more involvement from the Selectmen.

MAHT Chair Bruce Nickerson was invited to provide his opinion. He supports making changes to help the trust be successful. He mentioned having paid staff would be helpful along with regular interaction with the BoS. The trust will discuss making changes at their next meeting. On a Blair/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the change initially drafted. (4-1, Wallace – Nay)

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05pm.

Documents referenced:

Capital submissions – DPW dated 9.24.2015 & COA dated 10.6.2015

Town Hall updated – dated 10.13.2015

Hist. Com. Appointment – Roy volunteer form dated 9.29.2015

Harvard Cultural Collaborative business plan – dated 10.15.2015

BoS policy changed – doc from Wallace dated 10.15.2015