



**Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, November 17, 2015 at 7:00pm
Hapgood Meeting Room**

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

Tax Classification Hearing

Principal Assessor Harald Scheid reported valuations have been approved by the Department of Revenue and new growth has been certified. He reviewed the estimated levy for fiscal year 2016. Scheid recommends the Selectmen maintain a uniform tax rate across all classes of property. The commercial tax base in Harvard is not large enough to support splitting the tax rate. He estimates the tax rate for fiscal 2016 to increase from \$17.79 to \$18.05. He said the average annual increase to residents will be \$296.00. Leo Blair calculated a \$1,200,000 increase in the levy by having to increase tax rate and property valuations. On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted to adopt a residential shift factor as written with a proposed rate of \$18.05 subject to DOR certification. (4/1 vote – Blair, Nay)

Action Plan report from the Water System Study Committee

Committee Chair Kyle Hedrick reported the committee has been tasked with following through on proposals made by the previous group.

Action items:

- With the greatest threat to the Pond Road wells being the use of salt on the roadway. The committee is asking the DPW to reduce salt use on Pond and Warren Road. This will eliminate the salt runoff. They also plan to persuade Mass DOT and Mas DEP to consider changing their policy of road treatments on Mass Ave.
- Possible resurrection of well 3 on Bolton Road. This requires a new permitting process with DEP. Before proceeding down the permitting path the wells physical characteristics need to be checked and water quality needs to be tested. They estimate this will cost \$3,500.

They decided to not investigate the construction of a concrete pad at the Bolton Road reservoir until other alternatives have been exhausted.

The Water & Sewer Commission recently voted to approve \$40,000 for the Pond Road Runoff Diversion Project. They have since received an estimate of \$69,000 but are optimistic the cost will not be this high.

The Whitman Road Sewer District expansion was withdrawn by the town at ATM & STM.

On a Swanton/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to endorse the \$69,000 for the Pond Road Runoff Diversion Project for consideration by the Capital Planning & Investment Committee (CPIC).

Department Budget Reviews

Finance Department – Finance Director Lorraine Leonard

Leonard noted a reduction in personnel due to staff turnover. She also re-set her salary line item to step 1. Her expenses are level service and level funded. The board decided it was best to leave the Finance Director's salary line item as is. They want flexibility to hire at a higher step if desired.

Council on Aging – Director Debbie Thompson

Thompson began by thanking the board for their previous efforts to increase her staff. She said the personnel is now adequate to provide the services necessary. She did indicate if funds are available she would prefer to have the outreach worker who is partially funded through the formula one grant fully funded through the town. This would free up those funds for other items. Her expense budget is level funded.

Fire Dept. - Chief Rick Sicard

Chief Sicard reported there was a structure fire last week. Luckily with the help of the new ladder truck, early detection and prompt response from the department no one was hurt and the home was saved. He also mentioned the ladder truck was used to hang the Christmas lights on town common tree.

Chief Sicard was happy to report the replacement of engine 2 will be finished sooner than expected. We will likely have it several months ahead of schedule. He reported the center Fire Station repairs are moving along with the brick work being finished and doors installed this week. He included a 2% pay increase to the officer's stipends and they are making some changes to the structure of the department by adding another lieutenant position. His expense budget has increased by \$2,000 for certification fees and equipment.

If additional funds are available his first priority would be to purchase new SCBA masks. This is a new standard that was adopted this year which provides a much higher thermal protection. This would cost \$6,650.00. The board members felt this was important enough to be included in his budget and if necessary added as a small warrant article at the Annual Town Meeting (ATM).

Department of Public Works – Director Rich Nota

Nota reported not much change with his personnel budget as most of the staff has turned over so many of the employees are at step 1. His expenses have increased at a moderate rate considering the ages of vehicles and buildings. His largest increase is \$13,000 under the professional services line item for Catchbasin cleaning. Nota proposed privatizing this service to avoid capital expenditures, labor, fuel, maintenance and insurance costs. He provided the board with a cost benefit analysis. The board members were supportive of the proposal. They talked briefly about transfer station recycling and Nota confirmed he plans to fill the truck driver/laborer vacancy.

Police Dept. - Chief Ed Denmark

Chief Denmark was brief with leveled funded expenses and standard increases to personnel costs.

Ayer Road speed limit

Resident Jenifer Fraser began by thanking Chief Denmark and Town Administrator Tim Bragan for being so responsive to her concerns. She reiterated her concerns over the speed limit on Ayer Road. Previously she had requested a blind driveway sign and a convex mirror for added safety when entering and exiting her driveway. They realized portions of the road under the town's jurisdiction include sharp curves, steep descents and many blind driveways. She wondered if a 30mph limit made sense to increase safety. She attained fifty signatures from town residents requesting the 30mph speed limit that is currently posted at the police station be moved north of Mill Road with accompanying signage that alerts drivers to the conditions of the road.

Tina Bardenheuer, 101 Ayer Road, said she has similar concerns after having many close calls exiting and entering driveways and witnessing many pets being killed. She supports Jenifer Fraser's effort to make the roadway safer for all who travel it.

Laura Andrews, 13 Scott Road, commented on how dangerous it is exiting Mill Road when taking a left turn.

Gus Fraser, 60 Ayer Road, also supports Jenifer in her efforts. He said while attaining signatures many residents expressed a general concern over speeding traffic in town.

Chief Denmark conducted a preliminary speed survey in the area of 60 Ayer Road. The traffic counter is in need of repair thus the preliminary results. He plans to repeat the study to attain reliable data. He recorded the speeds of 167 vehicles. The 85th percentile speed was 45 mph, the 50th percentile speed was 40 mph, and the 95th percentile speed was 48 mph. The mode for this data set was 40 mph. He gave a brief explanation on how speed limits are set. He also noted MassDOT procedures for speed zoning states speeds cannot be set lower than 7 mph from the 85th percentile speed, which in this case is 45 mph. He explained the best case scenario would give an adjusted speed of 38 mph, rounded to 40 mph, which is the current speed limit on that roadway. His statistics support the 40mph speed limit. He acknowledged the town's ability to reduce the speed limit is unlikely. He said the worst case scenario is we ask the state to do their own study and they increase the limit, which is possible.

He recommends:

- Increasing both the northbound and southbound sightlines
- Erecting yellow advisory speed signs below the existing "Blind Driveway" signs.
- Specific for 60 Ayer Road – removal of trees on right side of driveway and relocation or removal of fence on the adjacent property to the left would help with traffic sightline

At the speeds recorded in this survey, the additional distance would allow for more than adequate stopping distances and allow for increased stopping distances caused by poor conditions or

heavier vehicles. He recommends a 35 mph advisory sign. The Board asked that he survey speeds on Ayer Road up to Mill Road, given the challenge of turning left onto Ayer Rd from Mill Rd.

Jenifer Fraser emphasized this is not just her issue alone but a town wide issue. Chief Denmark will do a speed study along the roadway near Mill Road.

Meals Tax – Finance Committee member Don Ludwig

Ludwig told the board the Finance Committee has not considered the meals tax since 2010. This is an item they committed to review again this year. He explained the tax will add an additional .75 cents on gross receipts. Based on state estimates, Harvard could receive up to \$25,900 in revenue from this tax. The Finance Committee collected data from surrounding towns and dining destinations who have already instituted the tax. Ludwig reported the Finance Committee unanimously voted in favor of asking the Selectmen to add this as a warrant article at the ATM. The BoS supported their request.

Historical Commission appointment

Chair Joe Theriault introduced Wendy Cote Magan for appointment of the architect position on the commission. Magan has been a resident for 12 years and has been an architect for 20. On a Wallace/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Wendy Cote Magan to the Historical Commission.

Town Hall renovation update

Laura Andrews reported the project is still on schedule. The siding and roofing will be completed by the end of November and the staging will be removed. Painting is set to begin. They are currently reviewing the recommendations from Juniper Hills Design (John Holland) to make certain they are being followed.

Architect interviews for the Hildreth House project will be conducted tomorrow. A recommendation will be ready for the BoS at their December 1st meeting.

On a Blair/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the 6th application for payment from GVW.

Cable presentation – Chair Bill Johnson

Johnson expected to present the BoS with a 10 year implementation plan but he wondered if a more fundamental question needed to be answered. Ricci had brought to his attention the mission statement included in his presentation does not reflect what is currently in place. He admitted their mission has evolved. Their operational spending strategy includes additional staffing, implementation of a plan/budget for preventative maintenance and equipment support. Their capital spending strategy includes development of comprehensive video broadcast system that will meet town needs for the next 10 years, funding fiber optic communications (backbone provided by Charter), recording/broadcast infrastructure investment and video editing investment. They will also budget for equipment obsolescence and replacement. Johnson explained their basis for the 10 year capital and operation funding plans are driven by funding requirements the town negotiated with Charter Communications. He indicated the plan goals and

implementation have not changed but now they have better numbers on the capital and labor costs necessary to support the operational plan. He expects the capital improvements will allow them to cover more government meetings. The additional capital improvements will support their new course of expanding public and educational components. Johnson said the new studio is helping to facilitate a credited course at Bromfield, expanded programming and more work with the Council on Aging. In order to do more to support their current mission they must invest in additional staff. Johnson is also anxious to get started on the system for the renovated town hall. Ricci noted the major investments required are due to Charter changing from an analog signal to digital. Johnson explained the additional fee to subscribers was changed so those who utilize more of Charter's services pay more than those who use less. Ricci asked HCTV to meet with the Capital Planning & Investment Committee (CPIC) to review FY17 requests and then bring back a revised mission to the BoS for their consideration. He also invited Johnson to return for the December 1st BoS meeting to review their budgets once the entire committee has voted on them. BoS liaison Stu Sklar will coordinate a meeting with HCTV and the school department to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The new station manager position will need to be approved at the ATM therefore the following motion was made:

On a Sklar/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to authorize HCTV to hire a contract station manager for FY16 not to exceed \$10,000.

Ambulance appointments

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint list as presented.

(Alice Kennedy, Judy Swift Mitchell, Chris Mitchell, Kia Bolduc)

(Bromfield students taking class: Jessy Andrews, Joe Calabresi, Talbot Chipman, Kate Connors, Camryn Farren, Kyle Into, Caroline Noyes, Shane Picariello, Connor Reitler)

Ambulance budget and staffing presentation

Co-Director Steve Beckman began the presentation giving historical information about the service and their current state of affairs. He said they are the only public safety entity with a single point of failure and they operate under the state's service zone agreement. He described their service similar to the healthcare field which has increased oversight, regulation requirements, electronic communications and administrative responsibilities. He noted with the aging demographic of Harvard the service is used more and more. Beckman said the service is constantly recruiting members in order to maintain a squad able to support greater expectations. The service is beginning to realize the all-volunteer model is becoming more and more difficult to maintain and it may be time to begin discussing paid staff.

Squad member Will Stevenson reviewed call statistics, their finances, equipment costs and billing revenue. He said revenues and expenses are hard to track as their service is so unpredictable. They are planning to purchase a new ambulance in FY18 which will likely cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000. They will have approximately \$200,000 at the end of FY15 toward this purchase.

Stevenson reviewed their staffing and scheduling needs. They try to manage schedules for daytime and nighttime but admitted staffing is difficult to manage based on volunteer availability.

He outlined additional roles held by volunteers but not limited to billing, finances, operations, HR, and on-going training. Stevenson noted they are the only volunteer squad left in Worcester County.

Co-Director Jason Cotting acknowledged the service is starting to question their unpaid volunteer model. He spoke about it being difficult to muster a crew in the daytime hours.

The BoS were supportive of the service working with the Human Resources Director, Town Administrator and the Personnel Board to establish the best model and identify the necessary staff.

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to extend the meeting to after 10pm to accomplish agenda items 12a & b.

Bare Hill Rowing Agreement

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to extend the summer program through December 31, 2016.

Minutes

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

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the 10/20, as presented.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:22pm.

Documents referenced:

Tax Classification report – dated 11/17/2015 & tax rate option spreadsheet FY16

Water Study report – dated 11/9/2015

Budgets: Finance dated 10/2/2015, COA dated 11/4/2015, Fire dated 11/4/2015,
DPW dated 11/2/2015, Police dated 11/4/2015

Ayer Road traffic study – dated 11/13/2015

Meals Tax presentation – dated 11/17/2015

Hist. Com. Magan volunteer form – dated 11/2/2015

Town Hall updated – dated 11/12/2015

Cable presentation – dated 11/3/2015

Ambulance presentation – dated 11/10/2015