



**Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, December 2, 2014 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/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve 11/4 minutes, as amended.

On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve 11/10 minutes, as presented.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION APPOINTMENT

Commission Chair Joe Theriault introduced Rick Veltri for appointment as an alternate member. On a Ricci/Swanton motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Rick Veltri as alternate member.

COUNCIL ON AGING – INCREASE IN PERSONNEL

COA Director Debbie Thompson was present to give an explanation on her case management/advocacy services as requested by the board at their last meeting.

Thompson explained service units include home visits with residents, administrative work, return calls to client, referrals to agencies, and follow up with client and family. She estimates 6 to 8 hours for each service unit. She said many times a presenting problem (initial symptom for which a person seeks help) uncovers more serious long term issues. Thompson reported they have 4 cases with residents who are under the age of 60 and have serious mental health issues. Currently, the Outreach Coordinator works 19 hours a week which equals 950 hours a year. She is recommending the board consider adding a 19 hour a week outreach position which would cost \$20,026 annually. Blair asked if Thompson anticipated a large increase in cases from fiscal 14 to 15. She answered no but emphasized the hours they have now are not enough to cover their existing cases. Swanton asked Thompson how much of her time is spent assisting with outreach. She estimated about 20%. After some discussion the board members agreed this was a worthwhile request. On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to accept Debbie's recommendation and add to the COA budget for a part time person for 19 hours for \$20,000. It will go to the Finance Committee for review and recommendation.

DPW APPOINTMENT – Truck Driver/Laborer

DPW Director Rich Nota was present to introduce Ryan Ammesmaki for appointment to the open Truck Driver/Laborer position. Nota said Ammesmaki has assisted the department on a temporary basis and he spoke very highly of his character and abilities. On a Ricci/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to appoint Ryan Ammesmaki.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

Mary Helen Vesenka Turner, 247 Littleton County Road, asked for clarity on when the public should speak about an item scheduled for later on the agenda.

FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REVIEW

Fire Chief Rick Sicard began stating his personnel budget consists of his salary which is contingent on contract negotiations. He said the call fire fighters pay includes a contractual increase and the officer stipends will remain level funded. His expense budget includes radio repair which is level funded but he did have to increase his protective clothing line item due to the greater cost for turnout gear.

Chief Sicard is interested in utilizing any additional funds to establish a training budget. He has created a new training coordinator position within the department which is working out quite well. He said the department is enthusiastic about improved training so they can provide a better and safer service to the town. Chief Sicard included a letter from the training division which outlines their budget requests. Lucy Wallace suggested the prop shed be set up as a small warrant article and the remaining funds requested be incorporated into the department budget. The board members agreed. On a Blair/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve moving \$3,900.00 to a small warrant article.

TOWN HALL RENOVATION

Temporary office space/moving date/ Center on the Common

Stu Sklar invited members of the public to comment on this agenda item prior to the board discussion.

Ben Myers, 73 Westcott Road, first time in his experience living in town that the good efforts of a group of residents lead by Pete Jackson, Scott Hayward (General Store) and those working at the Center on the Common the town has a true vibrant town center. He referred to other neighboring towns such as Boxborough, Lancaster and Bolton who have no distinct town center area. He believes moving town offices to the old library will certainly jeopardize these efforts. He said the real question is what are our alternatives and cost associated with those alternatives.

Sklar reported receiving 91 emails and phone calls from residents regarding the Center on the Common staying at the old library, 80 were in favor, 6 that were in favor of offices moving there, 2 ambivalent and 3 from out of town individuals who wanted the Center to stay.

Pat White, 162 East Bare Hill Road, understood the deed for the property restricted the use. Sklar informed her the restriction, through in perpetuity, by law only lasted for 99 years and, therefore, no longer encumbered Old Library.

Mary Helen Vesenka Turner, 247 Littleton County Road, is concerned if temporary offices are housed in the old library it will be costly to get the space up to code and once the offices are no longer located there the space will be empty again as opposed to the vibrant community center it is today. She is not convinced those involved now will have the heart to start it again.

Keith Turner, 247 Littleton County Road, pointed out the town does not have a good record of taking care of its buildings evidence in point the town hall building is falling down and when the Center on the Common took over at the old library they had to deal with moldy carpets in the basement, leaks, elevator issues and no handicapped ramp. He complimented a private citizen for really taking on the building issues along with directing a community center which is now thriving with over 30 tenants renting space. He strongly urged the Selectmen to not stop the Center on the Common.

Tim Clark, 114 Bolton Road, went back to when the board first voted on temporary locations. He said parameters were set up for an ideal location which included physical attributes for employees and the public. He said they also discussed the amount of storage space that will be needed. He is hopeful the board will make a list of priorities before any decisions are made. He is not advocating for one measure of another but urges the board to look at the big picture so we can get the best value in the short and long term.

Bill Johnson, 72 Warren Avenue, said he was on the Board of Selectmen when the town entered into the agreement with the Center on the Common which at the time was a win win for the town by off-loading some of the tax burden for residents all while bringing some vibrancy to the town center. He suggested as part of any discussion or negotiation with the Center they be asked to provide their future ability to reimburse the town for the utility costs of the building. He said it should be clear to the town exactly how much of the building the Center can actually support.

Laura Vilain, 3 Oak Hill Road, favors keeping the Center open but said transparency is important and responsibility for the public buildings does fall upon the Board of Selectmen. She added there has also been discussion about the school administration eventually using the building for their offices. She said in order for the Center to grow and thrive they need a clear path forward with a commitment from the town. She also noted any new business requires a few years to really get up and running therefore renegotiation of the lease now is the right thing to do. Vilain disclosed she was applying for the open director position at the Center.

Mike Giesel, former resident and graduate of Bromfield, said he is currently working as a music instructor out of the Center. He has had a great deal of success holding private music and arts programs. He said as an alternative education instructor a location such as the Center on the Common is perfect. He asked the board to consider those who are working out of the Center in their decision.

Sklar invited Center on the Common President Bob Hubert and Center board member Tracy Kraus to come forward and give an overview of how the Center is doing.

Hubert began by saying they fully understand the town may need to move offices there and noted it was specifically referenced in the lease agreement. He would describe the Center on the Common as a partial success at this point in time. He said they have been able to keep the building reasonably clean, active and in 2013 made around \$30,000 in revenue. He said most of the revenue went to local artists, staff and insurance. He was quick to admit they are about \$10,000 in arrears on utility and rent payments. Hubert said he and Town Administrator Tim Bragan have discussed renegotiating s lease that is more appropriate.

Hubert described the Center as being very active with a good amount of programs. He said the big question becomes can we continue our success along with paying all utilities on the building. Hubert said they ran into unexpected difficulties when creating the 501c3 and with attaining their solicitation license from the state thus limiting their ability to actively seek donations. Kraus confirmed their business model is largely based on donated funds. Hubert also believes with the future of the building being uncertain it deters donations and long term renting. They strongly believe the Center can be viable in the future. Hubert is skeptical the Center activities could go on in other locations temporarily as the Center was created around the old library. Those involved love the building and want to help preserve it. He also commented on their ability to allow BYOB during gallery openings due to the issuance of their Entertainment License. In summary, Hubert acknowledged the current situation and understands the town may have a real need for the space but he wanted it to be known that those involved with the Center are fully committed to making it a success.

Wallace asked if they were comfortable in preparing a three to five year business plan demonstrating their ability to maintain the building. She said it would be helpful to understand if they can be self-sustaining. Blair asked Hubert if it was true that the COTC was in arrears on rent and utility payments in the amount of \$9,675. Hubert replied yes. Blair asked Hubert how much the COTC had spent on repairs and maintenance of the building since the commencement of their tenancy. Hubert replied none. Blair asked Hubert if it was true that the lease between the Town and the COTC had expired several months ago and that the COTC chose not to renew it. Hubert replied yes. Blair asked Bragan how much the Town had spent on repairs and maintenance to the building during the tenancy by the COTC and he answered in excess of \$40,000. Blair recognized the Center has struggled financially because of some limitations but appears to have a good path forward. He offered the idea of the town giving the building to the Center. He is concerned about future costly maintenance which will be required. He favors the town making a permanent decision on the building. Swanton recognized the difficulty for the Center to raise long term money with a short term lease. He is also interested in a five year plan. He is also interested in understanding what alternatives there may be for temporary offices. Ricci is interested in determining the least expensive and convenient alternative for town offices. Town Administrator Tim Bragan reminded the board of prior steps taken to find space available for lease in town. He is working on attaining costs for electrical upgrade, wireless communication and determining through the Office on Disability ADA requirements for use of the old library building as office space. He is investigating this option as he believes it will be the least expensive option. The board members decided it made sense to seek requests for proposal for leased office space within an 8 mile radius of the town center. To conclude the discussion the following motions were made:

On a Wallace/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to allow seeking of temporary office space within an 8 mile radius of the town center based on previous town meeting vote.

On a Ricci/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously to direct the Town Administrator to look for lease space commencing on April 1st for at least 12 to 18 months.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Bragan informed the board Richard Blinn is unable to serve on the Town Hall Construction Committee. The committee is interested in finding another resident with construction experience to fill the void.

Bragan reported 7 OPM applications have been received and will be reviewed by committee members. The Selectmen will need to vote on their recommendation so they will hold an off cycle meeting Tuesday, December 9th at 5pm.

LIAISON ASSIGNMENTS

The board quickly reviewed the updates due to the new board member.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST – K- WING

On a Ricci/Blair motion, the board voted unanimously in support of the following:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on December 2, 2014, the Board of Selectman of Harvard, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated January 2015 for the Hildreth Elementary School located at 27 Massachusetts Avenue, Harvard, Massachusetts which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future **the renovation or rebuild of the Kindergarten Wing at Hildreth Elementary School due to the following priorities Priority 1 – Mold, Priority 5 –Air Exchange, failing plumbing, electrical and ventilation systems, Priority 7 – ADA compliance issues**; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the City/Town/Regional School District to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

TRANSFER STATION POLICY

Ron Ricci highlighted his proposal to institute a fine schedule for vehicles that do not properly display their stickers for FY15. For FY16 he is also suggesting the sticker location be changed to inside the windshield. The board will consider the revisions and vote at their next meeting.

SELECTMEN REPORTS

Wallace announced the Master Plan Steering Committee will host a public forum related to Devens on Saturday at 9am at the Center on the Common.

Sklar commented on the open house he attended put on by the Community Harvest Program which has recently been donated land on Prospect Hill Road. He was quite impressed with their operation.

Sklar announced he will be attending a Chapter 70 meeting on education aid preparing for testimony at a hearing in Central Mass. He will ask the board to support his testimony at a meeting in January.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35pm.

Documents referenced:

Hist. Com appointment – Rick Veltir volunteer form dated 11.13.2014

COA discussion – explanation dated 11.25.2014, FY14 statistics

DPW appointment – letter from DPW Director dated 11.25.2014

Fire Dept. budget review – FY16 submission

Center on Common – memo from Hubert dated 11.28.2014

Transfer Station – FY15 & FY16 revisions dated 12.16.2014