

## **MINUTES OF THE MARCH 12, 2018 BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

MEMBER'S PRESENT: Board Members Bruno Federico, Mike Houghton and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

At 7:34 pm Chairman Federico opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

### **MINUTES**

Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the minutes of 3/5/18 as submitted. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

### **TREASURER**

Town Treasurer Deb Bronson stated the general fund balance is \$7,349,281.44.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Dan Crow, Chairman of the Smyk Study Committee, presented a report on how best to accept the Smyk's bequest without burdening the Town. Terry Knowles from the Attorney General's office will be meeting with the Committee on Thursday, 3/22, to answer their questions. He described how the property abuts undeveloped town owned land and would be an easy access point to 59 acres of scenic open space. They are still considering options as to what to do with the house on the property. They have many questions for the AG's office. It hasn't been decided whether or not they will accept the bequest. Mr. Houghton asked about the cost of ongoing maintenance. Public Works Director Colin Laverty estimated \$40,000 for the first year and \$25-30,000 thereafter for the landscaping alone. Mr. Federico asked what the Trustees of the Trust Funds recommendation was. Mr. Deschaine confirmed that the Trustees estimate that in 10 years the endowment would accumulate enough principal to cover the operating costs. Upon reviewing the questions the Committee had for the AG, Mr. Federico asked why they might want to borrow against the endowment. Mr. Swett replied that it was to jump start any projects. Borrowing at 3% and getting a return at 8.5% makes good financial sense. Discussion ensued about possible projects such as building a pavilion or leasing the house.

Representative Pat Abrami came before the Board, at the recommendation of Mr. Federico, regarding House Bill 1381 relative to the valuation and taxation of multi-jurisdictional utility property. Mr. Abrami explained that utilities are specialty properties and don't lend themselves to the standard assessing methods. There is a wide disparity in how towns assess utilities. He advocates a standard methodology be used by all towns. He reviewed the details of Bill 1381, noting that, after much negotiation, the utilities have accepted the changes. Mr. Abrami continued that this issue has been ongoing for a long time and has resulted in many lawsuits. This Bill hopes to remedy the problem. However, he doesn't feel the Bill is ready, mostly due to the land valuation, and will probably recommend tabling it. They are headed in the right direction though. Representative Patricia Lovejoy stated that she has an issue with the land valuation and if the Bill doesn't get tabled, she would be speaking against it. Town Assessor Andrea Lewy discussed the ongoing issues with the utility poles and the difficulties dealing with

uncooperative utility companies. Mr. Abrami agreed to meet with Ms. Lewy to discuss the matter further. Mr. Deschaine described problems with DRA's Utility Appraisal Division. If we are to rely on them, they must have adequate funding and credible appraisers on staff to do the work we expect them to do. Mr. Abrami agreed to investigate the matter with his contacts at the Dept. of Revenue. Mr. Deschaine then asked if there was a need for a constitutional amendment to allow this to occur. He feels the new method deviates from the mandate. Mr. Abrami responded that there hasn't been any discussion and that they must always test for constitutionality.

#### FIRE DEPT.

Fire Chief Matt Larrabee reported 156 calls this year to date. He briefly discussed what will be presented at Town Meeting. He requested, and received, the Selectmen's approval to allow the Fire Dept. to participate in the SMS PTO fundraiser on May 11<sup>th</sup> when they auction off a Ride to School in a Fire Truck. Chief Larrabee noted they responded to a small fire on Wedgewood last Friday. He continued his report, noting the Fire Dept. will be ready for the impending storm. He is working with the Police Dept. on an active shooter response plan. They are coordinating efforts with Exeter. Four candidates have almost completed Fire Fighter I and will be assets to the Department.

#### ASSESSING

Town Assessor Andrea Lewy recommended 4 veterans' credits for 2018. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the veteran's credits for Paul Best, Philip Sheridan, Darla Walter and Kimberly Woods. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Ms. Lewy recommended a solar exemption for Susan Canada. Mr. Houghton made a motion to approve the solar exemption. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Lastly, Ms. Lewy received an Intent to Cut for 83 L Bunker Hill Avenue. Mr. Federico asked if it was for preparation for development. Ms. Lewy said they are not ready for that. Mr. Federico made a motion to approve the Intent to Cut for Lester & Catherine Carbonneau. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

At 8:55pm Mr. Federico made a motion to go into a non-public session to review the application for an elderly exemption. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously. At 8:56pm Mr. Federico made a motion to come out of the non-public session and seal the minutes due to the nature of the discussion. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Federico continued the discussion regarding tabling Bill 1381, noting the importance of accurate land values for the right of way. Ms. Lewy concurred that appraising property for utilities is very specialized and the methodology needs to be specific.

In Public Works Director Colin Lavery's absence, Mr. Deschaine gave a brief update on the Highway Department's projects: bathroom renovation should be complete next week; Dowling

replaced the heat exchanges, all under warranty; entrance to Room A has been redone; Mr. Laverty had to return early from maternity leave because of the storm. Preparation for Election Day was discussed. Mr. Deschaine reported participating in a conference call with the State regarding the impact of the impending storm on Election Day. The State's position is that no one, including the Governor, has authority to move/cancel/postpone elections. Even if the Governor calls a State of Emergency, the Statutes do not invoke the authority to postpone elections.

## MEETINGS

Mr. Federico reviewed the meetings of the past week. Voter Information Night went well and is posted on YouTube. Mr. Houghton reported that at the Planning Board meeting, the Whittaker subdivision project has been finalizing a few details but is nearing closure. The PCAC has been involved. Fire and Highway advocate it being a thru road. The abutters disagree. Mr. Deschaine reported that the PCAC has created a survey and requests the Board's feedback. Mr. Houghton suggested they coordinate with the Planning Board regarding their vision for projects in the town. Mr. Houghton emphasized the need for consistency when making decisions. Mr. Deschaine reported there was very low attendance at the School District meeting.

## ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Deschaine asked for and received the Board's approval for the Skate park project's flyers to be handed out at Town Meeting.

Discussion ensued regarding the confusion it would cause if the offices were closed because of the impending storm but open for voting on Election Day. It was decided that the Municipal Center would remain open and employees should use their judgement regarding their ability to get into work safely.

Mr. Deschaine is validating the invoice for printing of the Town Report. He noted that the reports were delivered late. The Specifications state there is a penalty for late delivery and asked for the Board's feedback. They discussed making changes to the Specifications for next year.

The Moody's Report is very favorable. Town Treasurer Deb Bronson noted a large difference in the reported operating revenue in the years since 2014. Mr. Deschaine will review the past reports but feels the discrepancy is due to the way the accounting firm is classifying revenue.

Mr. Deschaine showed the Board the Heritage Commission's flyer that was handed out at Voter Information Night and questioned if it violated the Social Media Policy. The Board agreed it was - town communications cannot be used to advocate a position. Mr. Houghton suggested a minor change that would make it acceptable.

Mr. Deschaine presented the annual parade permit request from Reach the Beach for a race on September 15, 2018. Mr. Federico made a motion to approve the parade permit and authorize the Chair to sign. Mr. Houghton seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Mr. Deschaine received a request from Colleen Lake to be on the agenda next week to discuss the progress on the Bartlett Cushman House. It was speculated that Ms. Lake would like to meet to discuss the 5 year maximum lease and the need to bring it to Town Meeting for a longer term. Mr. Houghton was in favor of keeping the project moving forward and is open to discussing alternatives.

The Board and Mr. Deschaine reviewed the budget numbers for the presentation at Town Meeting.

At 9:57 pm Mr. Houghton made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Federico seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Richard  
Recording Secretary