

SELECTBOARD MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 24, 2014

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

Present: Alan Vint, Chair; Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk; David DiNicola  
Duane Pease, Administrative Assistant

Erica Johnson, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), addressed the Board regarding the Community Development Strategies for the Block Grant for the coming year. Discussion ensued regarding new priorities for the town; Erica is looking out 3-5 years for projects as all are not funded each year. It was agreed the brownfield clean-up at the former General Store and the development of the area should be rated as high priorities. An upgrade to the Transfer Station should also be considered. Erica will re-tool the Town's strategy and email the report to the Board for review, adjustments and approval. Russell is again the lead Town for the grant

Dave questioned how the dollars for the septic repairs are handled, if the money is being used and how do people know money is available. Erica advised PVPC advertises in the Country Journal for this and for housing rehabilitation. Also, PVPC put more money into the housing rehab during the last cycle than in previous years. This money is basically free and if the house is sold before the term of the loan expires, the funds owed go back into the housing rehab budget.

Next discussed was the Senior Center project. The contractor has pretty much completed the project and will be back in warmer weather to finish up. Alan questioned if money will be held back to make sure the lawns are repaired properly. Erica said the next bill she sends for approval will have the hold back amount stated.

Michele Klemzewski of Southern Hilltown Adult Education Center (SHAEC) which is funded by a grant from PVPC advised the Board they would like to use the kitchen on December 13<sup>th</sup> to have a pressure canning class. Also, UMASS would like to donate up to 8 computers for use to teach classes in the Town Hall. UMASS requests a letter from the Town accepting the computers and waiving liability.

Highway Superintendent, Skip Savery, advised the Board that Washington had located a temporary bridge to replace the bridge on Becket Road. Washington will have to hire a private engineering firm to inspect and rate the bridge prior to it being moved and installed. The bridge is complete and should be relatively easy to install, skip has offered the help of the highway dept in installing the bridge. Alan said he had contacted the Town's State Senator and Representative to have them push Mass DOT into getting this bridge replaced.

Skip also advised he does not anticipate receiving the new truck much before March and has made repairs necessary to the older truck so it will be serviceable for this winter. The new truck was purchased under the State bid.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be holding a hearing on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the impact of the Worthington withdrawal.

In open forum Howard said he had been in contact with Town Counsel, Jonathan Silverstein, regarding the past actions of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Jonathan suggested an article be placed on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant accepting the past actions of the ZBA. This will be discussed at a future meeting. Also, there are 6 more By-Laws that have to be submitted to the Attorney General's office for review and approval.

Howard also brought up the fact that WiredWest is looking to individual towns to provide funding for the "last mile" hook up to the fiber optic network. The rough cost to Middlefield would be in the \$600-800,000 range. If this were not approved, the Town would not be connected to the network. Discussion followed with pros and cons discussed including higher home values, lower phone costs if connected to the network. Currently, the Verizon DSL does not reach all residents and some are not able to use a satellite connection and are restricted to dial-up access. Howard feels that WiredWest is building out the best and not interested in building a much less expensive network. This bonding could put the town in jeopardy.

Personnel Policy was also discussed and the draft submitted by Mary Courtney had been reviewed. It was directed primarily toward the Highway Dept. and did not address the appointed personnel to a great deal. The fire

and police depts. also need to be included. The board agreed they would continue to review and tweak it for future meetings.

Warrants were reviewed and signed. Payroll: \$14,103.81; Expenses: \$16,834.90.

Minutes of previous meeting were approved on motion by Howard, Alan 2<sup>nd</sup>; vote 3-0.

Joe Kearns advised the Transfer Station inspection was completed and a report sent. HRMC paid for the inspection. There are some areas that have to be improved and the electronics shed needs to be replaced. This will be addressed in the future.

There was brief discussion on the lawsuit that was filed regarding the Worthington withdrawal from the Gateway Regional School District.

Minutes from the Executive Session held at the last meeting were approved on a motion by Alan, Howard 2<sup>nd</sup>; vote 3-0. These minutes will be released at a future date.

Alan motioned to adjourn, Howard 2<sup>nd</sup>; vote 3-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:23pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease  
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

Alan Vint, Chair

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

David DiNicola