

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
NOVEMBER 18, 2013

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

Present: Alan Vint, Chair; Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk; Mitch Feldmesser
Duane Pease, Administrative Assistant

Todd Ford, Executive Director of Hampshire Council of Government (HCOG) addressed the Board. He gave an update on the aggregate power petition that will be sent to the Mass DOER and then to the DPU for approval of their electric power contract. Also, the profit sharing a few towns received will be ending as the costs have increased. The present contract will be for a fixed cost basis and no additional costs will be passed through to the members. A real time contract was not recommended as the costs can vary widely. It is expected the new bid will be 9+ cents per KW, the current price is 7.775 cents /KW. There was general discussion regarding the net metering effect of the Town's solar installation and also, that the Town will have the option of opting out if not satisfied with the price.

Sherri Venditti questioned that a fixed price contract usually has hedges built into it and who absorbs those costs. Todd said that HCOG buys the hedges.

Alan motioned to sign on to the aggregate power with the understanding the Town has the option to opt out. Mitch 2nd, vote 3-0.

Todd then advised the IT program continues to grow and that some Berkshire towns have signed on. It is a cloud based platform that results in software licensing savings for the towns. HCOG is continuing to expand their accounting services and is looking into providing services for Grant writing in the future.

Alan said the Town May utilize the Grant writing. Howard asked if there was anything for document preservation being considered for the towns. Todd will research that.

Minutes of Board of Health meeting were approved on motion by Alan, Howard 2nd, vote 3-0.

There were no warrants to sign this week.

Next discussion concerned the Senior Center and food being brought in. the Fair Committee had a pot luck supper and the Board was advised it was a members only and not opened to the public. Marge Batorski questioned what was wrong with a pot luck supper open to the public. Alan explained there were no safeguards in the food preparations and it could be a public health risk for the Town and the participants. The Town could also face a liability issue if someone became ill as a result of eating the food. This issue is a directive from the State regarding pot luck suppers.

The Town Hall kitchen was questioned regarding food safety and preparation that will be on the next meeting agenda.

Minutes of last Board meeting were approved on a motion by Alan, Howard 2nd, vote 3-0.

Mail was reviewed. Discussion on proposed septic system design and installation on the Hudson property that was emailed to Board by Health Agent, Jackie Duda.

Terry Crean, abutter, said he had spoke with the installer and the design is for a 3 bedroom home.

Alan motioned to hold a Board of Health hearing at 6pm on 12/2/13. Mitch 2nd, vote 3-0.

Howard advised the Board he had spoke with Jack Cobb, Historical Commission chair, and Howard will represent the Commission on the Town Center Committee. Alan motioned to appoint Howard, Mitch 2nd, vote 3-0.

Elizabeth Rairach of Pioneer Valley Commission (PVPC) came to the Board to review last years priority list of projects and update for this years grant submission. Last years high priority was the Senior Center roof and funding for that has been granted. She felt the remainder of the list could be updated and used for this years' submission. The Board would like the Town Center brownfield moved to the very high priority list as the Town is in the process of tax taking on the property. Also, the Board asked if there was any assistance available to help complete the Middlefield Master Plan. This plan is 90% completed but has to be organized and written. This could be included on the list and categorized as a high priority.

Judy Hoag asked if there were any restrictions on obtaining grants every year. Elizabeth said no, Middlefield can apply every year but dollar limitations may apply as the Senior Center was a large amount.

PVPC will submit the grant request to the CDS and there will be a public forum in Russell. Russell is the lead community this year for the grant application.

Elizabeth was also asked if she had any experience in Middlefield by Sherri Venditti. She responded that she had been involved in obtaining the Historic Designation for the village and was quite familiar with the Town,

Judy also questioned if the request would just be for the brownfield and Alan said it would also involve the buildings.

Howard spoke briefly on records retention and that all emails should be printed as well as saved on the computer. Steve will be asked to make sure there is no outside access to the Town website.

Sherrri questioned the use of home computers and could all emails sent by the Board be also sent to the Selectboard address. That can be done but some of the communications with Town Counsel are privileged and not sent to the S/B address.

Howard said the Town does not have its own server and relies on an outside source for its email. Also, phone conversations are not recorded.

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has requested Jay Swift and Judy Artioli be appointed as alternates. Alan motioned to appoint, Mitch 2nd, vote 3-0 to appoint.

Howard, Council on Aging (COA) representative, advised the Board one person had applied for the position of Meal Coordinator and will be interviewed by the COA Board.

Mitch spoke as a member of the ZBA regarding the use of Town Counsel (TC) and having to use the limited ZBA budget for this expense. He felt the various Boards need to have these monies included in their budgets and then be able to contact TC without having to go through the Selectboard for authorization. Alan said the S/B is the gatekeeper as the Town has a limited budget and the funds have to be closely monitored. The Conservation Committee is fortunate as it has DEP available for free legal advice. And there is a need to increase the TC budget at the Annual Town Meeting.

Alan motioned to adjourn, Howard 2nd, vote 3-0 and meeting closed at 7:45pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes:

Alan Vint, Chair

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

Mitch Feldmesser