

Selectboard Minutes
February 24, 2014

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

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

No warrants to approve.

Minutes of last S/B meeting approved on motion by Alan, Howard 2nd; vote 3-0.

Mail reviewed and Business License for Masato Fry signed by Board.

It was noted Janine Savoy has resigned from the Planning Board, Board of Assessors and the Finance Committee.

Howard addressed Board on COA. Neither bathroom in the Senior Center is handicap accessible and one has an electrical panel over the toilet. Howard suggested since the bathrooms are back-to-back they be combined into one handicap accessible bathroom. This would entail removing the wall between the rooms, installing a new toilet but the current sink could be used in the new bathroom. Insulation would need to be installed under the flooring. The electric panel could be put in a secured closet. There was discussion regarding the funding of this project and if this should be put forward at the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) as it is a Town building. A Request for Proposals could be published as this would have to be coordinated with a contractor, plumber and electrician. Howard was authorized to obtain quotes/ bids to get the project moving and obtain some idea of what it would cost. Also, Howard requested Judy Hoag, Ed Vivier and Laura Lafreniere be appointed to the COA board. Alan motioned to appoint, Howard 2nd, vote 3-0 to appoint.

Steve Harris, Communication Committee (CC), advised the Board he had met with a consultant for a phone system in the Town Hall, this would use the fiber optic installed as part of the Mass Broad Band for the new system. Currently the Verizon bill is \$400+ a month. He is also researching how to best utilize the fiber system in the Town Hall. The line could be shared with the Library with the Town paying half the bill. This would make uploads/downloads much faster than the current DSL. The Highway and Fire Depts. Could be hooked together on the fiber optic system. The CC will meet and consider the options and then make a recommendation to the S/B.

Options for Town Counsel were discussed next. There were discussions prior to the "road issue" but Kopelman & Paige had been involved in researching and providing advice to the Town and it was not financially feasible to change law firms at that time. Howard said the dollar cost is only one part of the costs and that the service is important. Mitch said that 2 years down the road the Board may not be satisfied with a new firm. Alan reiterated there are no more funds in the account and since there are no pending lawsuits,

this is the opportunity to research other firms. One discussion to have with any law firm is to see if they are willing to take a retainer and provide service to the Town for the year, this would not include any legal work related to lawsuits. This would be beneficial to the Town so various Board would be able to have questions answered without worrying about the cost to the budget. An example given was that of the Building Commissioner's request to speak with Counsel prior to instituting actions on some of the Zoning issues.

Eric Weiss, Hampshire COG, met with the Board to go over the RFP he will be sending out for the door and window replacement in the Highway Garage and Fire Dept Garage. After reviewing the RFP, on a motion by Alan, Mitch 2nd, vote 3-0 to have Alan sign the RFP as Board Chairman. Also discussed was the ceiling in the Town Hall, Eric will inspect and submit a RFP to the board for approval. Eric advised he was very pleased with the contractor that installed the new heaters in the Highway and Fire Dept. garages and they are working well.

Eric requested the Board authorize HCOG be the broker for the SREC's gained from the installation of the solar array. Howard motioned to appoint HCOG, Alan 2nd; vote 3-0. the current price is \$240 and the new auction rate will be \$285. The SREC's are available over a ten year period to the Town.

Eric provided a breakdown of the monies spent so far from the Green Grant and the anticipated expenditures in the future. There should be some monies left over that could be used in the Senior Center.

There was discussion regarding the Senior Center using the funds to lessen the heating costs. Sherri Venditti said the "envelope" of the building needs to be secured with new windows, increased insulation and better plumbing. Eric said this may be something for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to look into. Sherri countered the PVPC has limited ability to do much for the Town due to income levels of the residents. Eric will advise what can be done with the Green Grant money. Eric volunteered to prepare an RFP for the COA bathroom project.

The Board set the scheduled for the next 4 meetings: 3/10 @ 6pm; 3/24 @ 5:30pm (prior to Special Town Meeting); 4/7 @ 6pm & 4/21 @ 6pm.

Highway Superintendent, Skip Savory, advised the Board he has about \$2,200 left in the snow account. He has had no problems obtain salt from his supplier.

Joe Kearns, Finance Chair (FC), told the Board he attended a meeting with State Representative Pignatelli and State Senator Downing. Wired West and the Worthington attempted withdrawal from Gateway were discussed and they were made aware of the concerns the Towns have. Also, he had received a message from Huntington Selectman McVeigh looking to see if Middlefield would consider sharing the legal costs to fight Worthington's withdrawal. There will be a Wired West meeting in Cummington on 2/27 from 7-9pm.

The Board next reviewed the ATM warrant that the FC had prepared. There was discussion over the stipend paid to the S/B members, Mitch could not see doubling the amount but would support and increase to \$2,500 for the Chair and maintaining the current \$1,500 for the other 2 members. It was agreed the AA would research what other Town's pay their board members. Again, Town Counsel account had the most discussion, board is recommending an increase to \$12,000 as ZBA, Planning, Conservation all have a need for legal advice and need the ability to ask specific questions. There is some free legal services from the State but they do not address specific questions and refer you to your Town counsel. The Voc Ed budget currently provides for 4 students who are all seniors this year, it is not known how many, if any, of the 4 eighth graders currently in Gateway will be going to a vocational school this fall. A revised ATM warrant will be available at the next S/B meeting.

There will be a GTAC meeting on Saturday, March 8th @ 9:30am at Stanton Hall in Huntington. Also, the Municipal Conference is scheduled for April 12th and Board members need to register if interested in attending.

Alan motioned to adjourn, Howard 2nd; vote 3-0 and meeting adjourned at 9:03pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes:

Alan Vint, Chair

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

Mitch Feldmesser