

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
FEBRUARY 17, 2015

Meeting opened at 6:00pm by Clerk, Howard Knickerbocker, in absence of Chair.

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

Warrants reviewed and signed; Payroll: \$14,116.06; Expenses: \$150,538.82.
Warrants from previous period were: Payroll: \$11,151.10; Expenses:
\$6,325.15

Minutes approved on motion by Howard, Dave 2nd; vote 2-0.
Board of Health minutes approved on motion by Howard, Dave 2nd; vote 2-0.

Mail reviewed. Treasurer submitted hand written notes in response to questions previously given to her. Explanations will be further pursued at future meeting.

Howard spoke on WiredWest request to have Selectboard vote to bring bonding issue to Annual Town Meeting. He had spoke with Town Counsel regarding this and was advised if the Board brought this forward it would indicate the Board was supporting the bond issue. The Board is still divided on this issue and it will be further discussed after a public meeting with WiredWest representatives. There is a 3 year window for acceptance of the WiredWest proposal.

Town Hall custodian, Kathy O'Brien, advised there were items missing from the kitchen after the talent show.

Steve Harris spoke to the Board regarding his current attempt to bring a wireless network to the Town in lieu of WiredWest's hard wiring to each household. He has written to Mass Broadband requesting a pilot program for Middlefield. If this were successful, it would be fully state funded at no cost to the Town. Steve is not sure how it would be set up but the bidding process would sort this out. If this were not successful, it still would not cost the Town any money. He has been in contact with Warwick, this town set up their own wireless network to serve its residents. There was further

discussion on this topic. Sherri Venditti questioned if there were any alternatives to this since the area is geographically challenging. The Request for Proposals would hopefully bring various options for the project. Maureen Sullivan advised the DSL available from Verizon currently ends at Root Road and if the pilot was unsuccessful what would be a back up plan. The Town would still have the WiredWest option should it choose to fund the bonding issue. Dave felt the Board needs to have all the information before bringing this to the Voters. Howard is still very leery of the WiredWest proposal as they seem to have based their estimates on best case scenarios and are not taking the rapid advance of technology into consideration.

Patricia and Kim Baker met with the Board next to discuss issues they have with the Assessors and their tax situation. Patricia stated at the September 29th Selectboard (S/B) meeting one of the assessors stated the Bakers were not paying their fair share of taxes. She disputes this as they pay in excess of \$16,000 yearly to the Town. They pay corporate taxes to the State as well. The assessor's had previously hired an independent appraiser to inspect their property on two occasions; his purpose was for inspecting the property, not the personal property the assessors are alleging. Patricia said the assessors have made allegations of the Baker's owning personal property that they do not own. They have filed for abatements and they have been denied. The Bakers feel the assessors are discriminating against them. The Baker's sent a letter to the Selectboard previously and Howard felt the letter was quite threatening and he is not in favor of putting the S/B in the middle of this dispute. The assessors are an elected board and do not answer to the S/B. there was further discussion between the S/B and Bakers. The Bakers are not asking the S/B to mediate but just want to set the record straight.

Patricia would like to see the Assessor position be appointed by the S/B, that way there would be a deeper, qualified applicant pool and trust could be reestablished with the assessors. This has worked well with the Tax Collector and Treasurer positions. She is going to present an article for the Annual Town Meeting seeking to replace the elected Board of Assessors with appointed assessors or assessor. Kim stated that having one assessor and hiring a certified appraiser has worked well in other towns. They did say their attorney has been in contact with Town Counsel but not much headway has been made.

Next item discussed was WiredWest and the proposed informational meeting with their representatives. Joe Kearns will contact them to arrange

the meeting. Howard stated that with the information that has been made available so far he would fight their proposal tooth and nail as it does not seem feasible. Maureen Sullivan said there is a need for technology in town and it can take as long as 30 seconds for information to load on a computer currently in some parts of town as most of the businesses are e-commerce businesses and they have a need for faster speeds.

Howard said the Yoga classes have been a huge success and are being extended. The COA is looking into applying for an Energy Grant for the COA Center.

Town Clerk, Marge Batorski, advised the caucus is to be held March 23rd and all names must be submitted by noon on March 7th.

The Rabies clinic will be held at the Fire Station from 6:30-8:00pm on March 26th.

Howard attended the recent Executive Session in Huntington regarding the Worthington withdrawal.

Judy Hoag questioned who would pay for an independent appraisal in a dispute with the assessors over property or personal property. Howard said it would be up to the individual to pay.

Howard motioned to adjourn, Dave 2nd; vote 2-0 and meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

David DiNicola

