

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
NOVEMBER 21, 2016

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

Present: David DiNicola, Chair; Denis Basak
Duane Pease, Town Administrator (TA)

Warrants reviewed and signed; Payroll: \$18,628.36; Expenses: \$58,919.47 and \$1,984.72.

Minutes of 11/1/16 and 11/17/16 approved on motion by Dave, Denis 2nd; vote 2-0.

No mail to review.

Planning board has unanimously recommended Dale Hoag by appointed to fill on of the open slots on the Board. This position is up for election at the Annual Town voting in May. Dave motioned to appoint, Denis 2nd; vote 2-0. TA will send letter to Dale advising of appointment.

On motion by Dave, Denis 2nd; vote 2-0 it was voted to close the Town Hall on Thursday and Friday after Thanksgiving.

Patricia Baker addressed the Board regarding the wireless internet and private providers that may be available to serve the Town. She spoke with Jim Consolati, Selectboard chair in Tyringham. They currently have a wireless system and found it did not work very well, storms and leaves cause outages. Tyringham has spent \$30,000 to a Strand Mapping g and Fiber Design report from Mid-Hudson and are considering several cable companies.

Frontier Communications is currently looking into expanding into some Mass towns along the Connecticut border and MBI has asked them to do all 44 unserved towns. No decision has been made on that request.

Verizon has no interest in providing service at this time according to Eileen Cumming the government Liaison.

Comcast is currently building out to 9 underserved towns that they provide cable TV, internet and phone to. They received a 4 million dollar grant for this from MBI. They provide cable service to Chester and the extended build out would place it very close to Middlefield.

Patricia feels the Town should investigate these alternatives to the wireless system to see if would be feasible for fiber for the Town.

There was continued discussion and Howard Knickerbocker said the money MBI had kept for their own use was now being used to entice cable companies to enter the market. Also, WiredWest is no longer viable as the bigger towns are being gobbled up by cable companies and the small towns alone can't produce enough revenue. Howard also added that the Finance Committee should vet wireless proposal the Town is pursuing as it doesn't seem feasible that the town could stand alone and provide the service at a cost effective rate.

Dave said that something has to be done to provide internet service, whether it is wireless or fiber but he wants to wait until a full Selectboard is present before any decisions are made. He is going to deal with MBI and their representative, Cornell Robinson, on all decisions and that it is not his call but it is up to the voters to decide.

Denis said he understood the concerns but the spreadsheet presented to MBI on the Town wireless system showed the system to be viable.

Tamarin Laurel-Paine questioned the use of the Chester Fire Tower and the costs associated with maintaining and replacing the equipment. Sherri Venditti said the Pilot Program was to be used to test the viability of a wireless system. Howard Knickerbocker said the Pilot was not just a Pilot but a n actual build out to 25-30% of the town. less money could have been spent of a pilot to obtain the needed information on the TV whitespace by running the pilot from behind the Town Hall.

After further discussion, Dave motioned to adjourn, Denis 2nd, vote 2-0 and meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease,
Town Administrator

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

David DiNicola, Chair

Denis Basak