

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
DECEMBER 5, 2016

Meeting opened at 6:02pm

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

Erica Johnson of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) met with the Board to review the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). There are 4 towns that submit on application for the grant, Middlefield, Chester, Huntington and Russell. She gave an explanation of what the grant can fund and how the grant monies are allocated to various services. Housing rehab and septic repair are usually the main uses of the funding for eligible homeowners. When a homeowner is granted funding, there is a lien placed on their property and if, at the end of 15 years they still own and live in the home, the loan is forgiven. If the home is sold prior, the lien is decreased by a percentage of the number of years lived in before the sale. Towns may also submit major project for submission, Middlefield used this grant for the replacement of the roof on the Senior Center. There was further discussion on what priorities the town has and the Senior Center floor insulation and a new furnace would be appropriately added to the list. Also, the electrical service needs updating.

Erica stated that regional applications are looked at more favorably, she meets with all four towns and tries to apply the grant funding equally. The grants are award based on the financial needs of the town's population. She will forward a new prioritized list of projects to the Selectboard for review.

Maureen Sullivan said this would not seem to be fair when it came to funding a new library, the clientele should be considered rather than the population as a whole. Erica said seniors are considered low to medium income and would look into if children would qualify. The Board thanked Erica for coming and explaining the CDBG uses.

Joe Kearns, Finance Chair, advised the Board a Special Town Meeting will have to be held as there are now 4 students enrolled in Vocational School and only 2 were budgeted base on the numbers provided at the time of the Annual Town Meeting.

Warrants reviewed and signed; Expenses: \$173,624.51; Payroll: \$10,947.86.

Minutes of 11/28/16 were approved on motion by Dave, Judy 2nd; vote 3-0.

Mail reviewed, only mail of note was letter from Kathy O'Brien stating she no longer want a pole on her property for the wireless internet.

Dave spoke on the role of Selectmen. He stated there is little or no guidance when a new member is sworn in but the Mass. Municipal Assoc. does have a handbook that is helpful. The position can be stressful, a lot of decisions have to be made, and there needs to be cooperation among the Board. A lot of good people have held this position.

Also, there will be some town expenses in the future that relate to the closing of the former landfill and purchasing the property, what to do with the General Store site when it becomes Town property and the costs of the Worthington withdrawal from the Gateway School District.

There was discussion regarding what could be done to improve the Town. Dave had investigated restoring the old reservoir so summer homes could be built to add to the town's tax base, Judy said that many of the older residents would like to remain in town but can not afford to and some type of Senior Housing would be beneficial, if the rail service is increase, a railroad station of some type would be helpful.

Joe Kearns added the Community Compact group is looking into both economic and recreation development in the towns.

The high speed internet was discussed next. Dave motioned to complete the new readiness process requested by MBI before any additional work is done on the Town Pilot Program until the RFP's issued by MBI are received. There was no immediate 2nd. Discussion ensued with Board and Joe Kearns as member of the Communication Committee. Judy questioned how long this would take and Denis and Joe both said the readiness program is necessary for the remainder of the total project, not the Pilot as that has already been vetted and approved by MBI. Judy felt waiting for the RFP's that are due 1/11/17 may be worth pausing the Pilot at this time. Discussion continued, Dave felt if the town rushed into the pilot, it may be putting many people at risk if the finances would not support the costs and if the RFP's brought new companies into the mix. Joe stated there has been constant turnover in the leadership at MBI and some town are not waiting for them but going out on their own. Also, the engineering dollars that were allotted to each town were to fund the engineers at MBI and therefore, MBI had a great stake in keeping the process under their control. After additional discussion and frustration Dave withdrew his motion. Judy then motioned to hold off on any further activity and payments until a board vote at a future meeting and start the readiness process. Dave 2nd; vote 2-1 in favor with Denis dissenting .

Dave then motioned to adjourn, Denis 2nd; vote 3-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:42pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Town Administrator

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

David DiNicola, Chair

Denis Basak

Judith Hoag