

Selectboard Meeting
July 25, 2001

Present: Noreen Suriner, Chair; Alan Vint; Mitch Feldmesser
Duane Pease, Admin Asst.

Meeting called to order by chair at **7pm**; meeting then adjourned to auditorium for the public discussion on the Historic Arches.

7:05pm the “Arches” meeting was called to order. Present were the Middlefield Selectboard; Chester Selectman Gene Bishop; Dave Pierce, Friends of the Arches; Chris Curtis, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission; Andrew Madden, regional manager MA Fish & Wildlife and Craig McDonnell, MA Fish & Wildlife.

There were also 20 residents and representatives of various interests in the audience.

Chris Curtis gave a re-cap of the long struggle of the joint efforts in preserving these National Treasures. The Arches are in the National Register but the group has spent over 17 years searching for the funding to restore them to their original condition. Funding was in place at one time but was then rescinded. He had a site visit last week with MA DOT and DOT considers it a “Live Project”. The westerly bridge needs base work, that will entail building a structure around the base to keep water away during the repairs. There needs to be equipment access and CSX has agreed to the use of one of their right-of-ways for the equipment. Some other issues are also settled but the funding needs to be secured. The original funding granted in 1998 was \$1.1 million but that number has increased.

Craig McDonnell spoke regarding how the work would be done; that funding exists in a series of programs but securing those funds would be difficult. The actual contract for repairs would go out to bid and then awarded but the engineering for the project would be done by Purcell Engineering as they have been involved in the project from the beginning and have the expertise needed. Permitting would be done by MA DOT and the engineer. Future maintenance should be minimal these bridges have stood for over 150 years but Fish & Wildlife would be responsible as they are in a MA Wildlife area. The area would be accessible by the Herbert Cross Rd but to restrict motorized traffic gates, bollards and large stones would be utilized to prevent access.

Andrew Madden reinforced the statements of McDonnell and that he, Madden, would be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the site.

Alan Vint questioned the enforcement of the regulations, i.e. camping, fires. The Environmental Police and State Police most likely would not be able to respond quick enough and the local police do not have the resources or equipment to continually patrol the area.

Mitch Feldmesser questioned the signage that would be used advising of proper usage. Noreen Suriner also questioned the access to the Arches, parking and vehicle access.

An audience member, Loren Johnson, had many questions regarding the CSX right-of-way as it is through his property. He did not feel he should have to spend his own money to have an attorney draw up a contract to make sure the right-of-way was used properly, maintained, absolve him of any liabilities and left in the same condition. McDonnell explained the State could not expend public funds for that but perhaps there could be some Pro-Bono work done by a local atty for him. He would be given an easement payment when the contract was awarded many in attendance agreed with Loren and felt this should not cost him money. He was also concerned, as were some of his neighbors, about the parking of the construction equipment and worker's vehicles. Loren was to have a private conversation with McDonnell about his concerns after the meeting.

It would be one construction season for the Arch repairs to be completed.

Chris Curtis, PVPC, said all accesses, environmental concerns and permits would have to be approved and in place before attempting to secure State and Federal funding.

Craig McDonnell said to take the approach "Assume we can find a way".

8:45 The Arches meeting was adjourned.

8:50 Selectboard meeting reopened with all in attendance.

Minutes were reviewed, some revisions noted on the minutes.

Mitch reviewed appointments and questioned how he was listed as appointing himself, that error corrected in minutes.

Minutes were approved by 3-0 vote.

Warrants reviewed and signed

Mitch questioned salary of Administrative Assistant.

Alan stated the position paid \$12/hr for 15/hrs a week.

Mitch also questioned salary of Town accountant

Alan relayed board had agreed to this being a salaried position

Noreen announced the BSO would be providing a free concert to Middlefield in appreciation for the hospitality shown during their run earlier this summer. The concert will be August 10th at 8pm in the Town Hall auditorium. Admin Asst to make posters to post in Post Office and Town Hall.

Kopelman & Paige bills

Alan felt the bill was excessive for the services rendered but it was decided to pay the bill.

Mitch stated they should provide better accounting in the way the bills are presented.

Alan received a \$1,000+ bill for the Green Community work that was done by K & P and felt there was no justification for the bill. Atty was asking for inappropriate material for this grant.

Mitch did not recall authorizing K&P for the Green Communities grant.

Alan explained an expedited letter was needed and they are the Town Counsel.

Alan also felt the attorneys were being switched around and questioned if we were being billed for bringing the new attorney up-to-speed. Perhaps meeting with Atty Kopelman would be beneficial.

Alan: just want to know what we are paying for. He is requesting that each task be itemized on any bill submitted going forward and that Town receives itemization of the last 2 bills.

Noreen and Mitch both agreed.

Alan made a Motion to Rescind approval of paying the \$822.50 bill that had been previously approved; there was no 2nd of the motion.

Mitch stated “one cannot undue what all have approved”

Noreen said to release the payment on that bill but hold the Green Community bill until Alan contacts K&P for itemization and possible meeting.

Letter to Peter Oligny

Noreen requested status on letter regarding the cleaning of the grease trap in the Town Hall Kitchen as the Grange uses on a regular basis.

Alan: Peter did not want the liability of cleaning the trap and felt it was the responsibility of the maintenance person. Peter also felt the Grange would not be around much longer but did not elaborate.

Mitch questioned if the trap had been cleaned in the last 2 years.

It was felt that either Peter or Skip Savery had cleaned it.

Noreen would like the letter rewritten and then sent to Peter Oligny.

Alan to rewrite the letter.

Water Tank

Emergency situation arose on a Sunday night when the water tank in the Town Hall started to leak.

Alan called a plumber Monday morning and the tank was in need of replacement. Alan was able to coordinate the replacement of the tank, obtaining an electrician to do the re-wiring necessary and maintain the function of the Town Hall with very little disruption to all.

Also, later that week on Friday, Alan and Joe Kearns took down the wood framing around the old tank and disposed of it.

There were 2 old refrigerators in the kitchen that Alan removed to the transfer station. The old tank will be removed by the Highway Dept and disposed of.

Alan also said there was one more leak in the plumbing, unrelated to the tank that had to be repaired. Also, a bill to be submitted by a prior plumber will have deductions taken as the work had to be redone.

Noreen and Mitch both commended Alan on his work during the water tank emergency.

Noreen: also thanked Alan and many others for their work in installing the new shades in the Town Hall. Alan acknowledged that Laurie LaFreniere also helped to install the shades along with the vender.

Noreen, Mitch and Alan were very grateful for the installation.

Jungle Gym

Noreen: a child was hurt on the Jungle Gym when a board broke; the child just suffered scrapes but is okay.

Noreen thanked Skip Savery very much for his quick response and repairs. Skip advised that the deck needs to be replaced and that the repairs are ongoing.

Marie Pease wanted to know the status of a complaint that Mr. Jamula had filed with the town, she was advised he sent a letter to the Board and it was forwarded to the Police Chief.

Alan read her the letter the Board had prepared to send to Mr. Jamula regarding his dispute of the road closure and right-of-way issued.

Marie requested a copy of the letter when it is sent.

Ron Radwich, new Highway hire, submitted copies of his licenses and health certificate.

He also spoke on the new radio purchase; they are going to stay with Motorola. Noreen said that was fine as long as the purchase did not exceed the \$25,000 appropriated.

Highway Dept Complaint

Skip Savery, Road Superintendent, present.

Alan took a phone call regarding a safety complaint (letter was sent by State outlining the violations), one of the Town employees, working alone, was using the wood chipper without the proper safety equipment. (hard hat, face protection, ear protection) and the lack of any communication equipment in case of an emergency.

Skip said all the protective equipment was available to the worker but he chose not to wear it. He will reiterate the importance of using all the protective equipment and if any employee does not use it he will send him home.

Noreen said to keep reinforcing the need to use this equipment.

Also, every truck is equipped with a radio, so there was a means of communicating. Skip said all of his equipment has all the safety features that are available.

The Town tractor is in need of a clutch so Skip is using his own when needed for the time being.

Alan appreciated the use of “wildlife” friendly culverts. Noreen and Mitch agreed.

Skip said he picked up the surplus truck last Friday, it needs batteries and has already registered it.

Noreen requested the status on the road plan. Skip said he has been working on it.

Skip said the removal of the old water tank in the Town Hall was going to be a “rainy day” project.

Noreen: any unfilled positions, appointments will be made at a later date.

Special Town Meeting Warrants were previously approved.

File locking policy will be addressed at a later date. Current combination locks on the cabinets all have the same combination.

Noreen: feels very strongly about the 911 Dispatch and that Pittsfield is charging the Town \$6,600 a year for the service. The police and EMT’s are okay with a change to Hampshire County dispatch. She would like to meet with both the Sheriff of Berkshire and Hampshire to County to discuss.

Mitch and Alan both agreed to her meeting with them.

Noreen discussed having the Selectboard place an ad the Middlefield Fair Booklet, a half-page ad would cost \$30 and each member would contribute \$10 from their own money, not from any Town funds. The ad would congratulate the fair and thank the townspeople.

Mitch would like to find a way to use a Town account.

Alan felt we could not spend town money for this ad as it would not be legal.

Noreen was hoping all 3 would agree to share.

Mitch said it doesn't feel right that he should pay as the Selectman expense could cover the cost.

Noreen agreed with Alan and they will pay for ad with their own money.

Administrative Assistant

Would like the hours posted in the Post Office as well as on the board on the Town Hall.

Tentative posting would be for:

Monday: 5:30pm

Friday: 9:00am-3:00pm

Saturday: 8:30am-10:30am

Agenda for possible meeting next week even though it is the off week.

Green Community Grant

There is much to discuss with this grant and it will take time to go through. The grant is for \$138,000 and the Town has until August 20th to come up with an application on how to spend the grant.

Noreen

Need to discuss appointment of a Health Agent.

Alan: Andy Myers came is Saturday looking for information on a house on Chipman Road and there was no information in the file. Alan then looked for his info and it was not there. It had been in the file a couple years ago. Does not know where it is now.

Mitch brought up the previous discussion of Mr. Johnson's right-of-way that is needed for the Arch restoration and thought it would be helpful if Kopelman & Paige could review the easement for him.

Noreen said we would need the document first and see if the other 2 towns would contribute to the review but it would not be Middlefield alone.

MMIA

Noreen questioned the replacement value on the Town Hall.

Alan and Mitch felt it was appropriate for the type of construction.

Alan reviewed the MMIA vehicle listing, deleted some vehicles no longer in service and added a new one. This info was forwarded to MMIA.

Mowing

Chuck Winn had the low bid for the Town mowing; he mows with his own equipment as an employee of the Town. He does not have liability or work comp ins to cover this.

Alan stated that any private contractor would have to supply the Town with proof of insurance and the Town's insurance would not come into play.

It was agreed that any future bids for mowing would only be considered if that entity provided the necessary insurances and would not be considered an employee of the Town.

Sharon Verditti, Town resident questioned the posting of the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting and why there was no meeting to discuss the Warrant.

Noreen explained that both of the Town Constables were to be away so the Warrant was signed early so it could be posted early.

Alan stated there already had been a vote to hold the meeting on August 8th so this had to be done.

Noreen made motion to adjourn; Alan seconded. Vote 3-0 to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 10:40pm

Minutes respectively submitted,

Duane C. Pease
Admin. Asst.