

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 3, 2013

Meeting opened at 6:30pm

Present: Alan Vint, Chair; Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk; Mitch Feldmesser arrived at 6:33

Duane Pease, Administrative Assistant

Minute of silence was observed in memory of Brian Miller.

Agreed on 3-0 vote to allow flag in Town Center to be lowered to half-mast for Brian's service to the Town and its residents.

Warrants were signed; Payroll: \$6,405.50; Expenses: \$8,683.37

Minutes were approved with minor corrections.

First item of discussion were the parameters being created for the Building Commissioner (BC). Mitch felt the BC should be able to do inspections during his posted hours if no one came in to see him for a permit or had questions but he should return 15 minutes prior to leaving for the day. Alan stated there were a number of times people were waiting for him in the office and he was not there. Discussion continued and one issue was Monday holidays when there would be a 2 week gap in his availability, it was suggested he have a back up for people to see him. Howard said the prior BC had a back up to answer the phone and take messages. Also, an Executive Session may be held to discuss with BC as there are some sensitive issues. Howard suggested if an Executive Session were to be held; it could be posted and done prior to the regularly scheduled Board meeting.

The Animal Control Officers had dropped of papers for Alan to sign so they could be submitted to the State. Alan signed and ACO's will pick up.

There was a brief review of the Town Center draft. The Administrative Assistant (AA) will post a request for resident to join a committee to tackle this issue in the Post Office, have it published in the Country Journal and on the Town website.

Highway Superintendent, Skip Savery, told the Board a sinkhole developed on Town Hill Road and he believes it is related to an older culvert, he will be doing repairs. He will also be having some trees removed, specifically one in Bancroft along with some others that may be a problem if snow and ice accumulate on them. There is also a tree on Skyline Trail in front of Michael Feldberg's house, there are wires tied to the tree and WMECO will be notified, it may be their responsibility to remove the tree if it is interfering with their wires. There is also a question of who owns the tree. Skyline Trail is a "4 rod road" that means the Town owns a strip of land 66' wide that the road is situated on. This will be addressed prior to any tree removal.

Howard discussed the fact that documents posted on the website can't be searched but each document has to be read individually. He felt the meetings should be digitally taped, and then transcribed through a voice to print program. Also, the tape should be labeled when each new item was being discussed. Alan questioned what device would be needed and how would it work.

Tamarin Laurel-Paine said there are various programs available and if each topic were announced, a search should be possible.

Howard also noted he has attended the Hampshire County Emergency Management Program meetings as a member of the Executive Committee but is no longer interested in fulfilling that role. The AA will also post this notice at the Post Office, Country Journal and Town website seeking a resident to take this position.

The Assessor's Clerk position was discussed next. Alan asked Joe Kearns, former Selectman, current Finance chair and Town Moderator about the position. Joe advised there is an article on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) to allow the assessor's to appoint one of their own as clerk, this article was passed at the ATM. Howard said Town Counsel had given 2 different opinions regarding this. It could be considered a "Special Employee" and the Selectboard should appoint. If the S/B appoints it can't ethically appoint another assessor to the position. He does not think the Department of Revenue (DOR) has any say in the matter. Joe advised the assessors are under the umbrella of the DOR and has a specific person assigned to Middlefield. Alan thinks the assessment of "Assessor's Clerk" is wrong as the job entails much more than clerking, and is much more in line with being an Assistant. Alan is comfortable with the position as it stands.

Tamarin stated there is a fine line between them and perhaps the Ethics Commission should be contacted regarding this.

Howard read minutes of the Assessor's meeting regarding the appointment of the Clerk, Janine asked that the job be posted and interviews conducted. The Chair said there were time constraints and eventually the Clerk's position was filled on a 2-0 vote with the current Clerk recusing herself from the vote.

Mitch stated his understanding was the same as Alan's and he could see no problems but suggested Howard call the Ethics Commission to obtain answers.

Howard said he was not comfortable calling, he had problems phrasing the questions. Further discussion ensued and it was decided that Alan would call Ethics as well as the Attorney General's office to obtain clarification.

Howard further stated he was not making accusations but honestly had questions regarding the legality of the way the appointment is done.

The Council on Aging (COA) was next on the agenda. The appointments have to be made in the near future. Howard provided a hand out (attached) regarding the generator and heating costs of the building.

Mitch felt the Board should start from scratch and interview candidates that are interested in pursuing an appointment and that the Board should take the time and effort to interview these people.

Howard said he would prefer a change in direction on the COA and Alan said he was heading in that direction also. The Board has 2 lists of candidates, one provided by Cathy Roth and another that Alan has. The names on the lists are not the same. Alan felt the COA should have more financial expertise and that is not unreasonable to ask them to show up for an interview or submit a written statement as to why they would like to serve.

Judy Hoag asked what the Board was looking for. Alan advised the COA needed diversity and create new programs. He was not happy with the generator situation but that was not all the director's fault.

Susan Baker-Donnelly, current COA director, said there were a number of people working on the installation of the generator and she went to Skip and the Selectboard at the time. There were 3 quotes submitted and the lowest one was chosen. Also, the COA pursued a grant through Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for replacement of the slate roof and other improvements and it was received this year. The COA has a Health Fair, movie night, Chronic Illness clinic, has a hot meal once a week and provides transportation to doctor appointments for residents.

Howard felt the town never had a say in the generator issue and the job is still not completed.

Alan said he was personally warring on how the COA should go but agreed interviewing potential candidates was appropriate. The interviews will be held at the next S/B meeting on the 16th.

Marge Batorski requested the names of the interested candidates.

The AA will contact the interested parties and request they either attend the meeting or submit a letter.

The Communication Committee has completed the backup of the 7 Town Hall computers and inventoried all the programs.

Tamarin questioned the Town's Tax Taking of the prior general store and adjacent house.

Alan said it was time to move forward and he may have signed a petition years ago objecting to the Town taking the property. But since that time the DEP has removed the

contaminated soil and if the Town did not act, the buildings would be left abandoned and to continue to deteriorate.

Tamarin felt the Town should have taken the same option as the bank and walk away or have a non-profit obtain them.

Alan responded that there has been no interest in the building by anyone over the years and the prior S/B had voted unanimously to have the Town Tax Attorney start the taking procedure. Also, the current owner has given written permission to have the Town inspect the buildings. This will give a clearer assessment of the interior conditions. It is hoped the house may be saved and used for some purpose.

Alan motioned to adjourn, Howard 2nd, vote was 3-0 and meeting adjourned at 9:32pm

Minutes submitted by:

Duane Pease
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes:

Alan Vint, Chair

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

Mitch Feldmesser