

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
APRIL 13, 2015

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

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

No warrants to sign.

Minutes approved on motion by Alan, Howard 2nd; vote 3-0.

Board met with the Finance Committee (FC) to review the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Board agreed to recommend most articles with the exception of the borrowing up to \$210,000 for the purchase of a tanker truck for the Fire Dept. There was discussion regarding the purchase of a used unit versus the cost of a new truck. Also, the Board and FC agreed to increase the disposal area funding to \$26,000, an increase of \$1,500.

School Committee member Noreen Suriner spoke to the Board regarding the Gateway Regional school budget, she was the only member not to agree to the budget presented. She feels the current budget does not address the unequal level of funding for the teachers as it relates to the administrative salaries. The teachers' salary structure ranks near the bottom in the state while the administration in the top half of the state's school district.

Noreen also spoke in support of WiredWest and the need to bring high speed internet to the Town. Many services are available via the internet including online conversations with medical providers. Howard advised her the Town would not qualify for bonding under the State bonding package for this as there is not enough industry in town. The Town would have to hire a bonding agent and obtain bonding on the open market at a higher rate. Noreen is hosting a WiredWest presentation this Saturday in the auditorium.

Noreen also spoke briefly on the need for Fire Dept. training and suggested the department contact Cumington as that department is willing to aid other town's departments.

The Board agreed to release \$12,290 for the electrical work completed on the Senior Center building. There will still be a hold-back until the landscaping and sewer line problems are resolved. AA to send email to Erica Johnson at Pioneer Valley Planning Commission advising of her of this.

There is a vacant position for an alternate delegate to WiredWest; Howard said the Kim Baker is interested in this position. Howard motioned to appoint, Dave 2nd; vote 3-0 and Kim was appointed. AA to send appointment letter to Kim to that position.

Howard addressed the current Police Chief situation, Tom Austin, the current chief is nearing the mandatory retirement age of 65. The Town can request a Home Rule petition from the legislature extending his retirement another 3 years. Alan motioned to send this to the legislature, Howard 2nd; vote 3-0. AA will send this to the Town's State Senator and House Representative so the process can begin.

Howard also suggested the Town look into having a Director of Public Safety that would put the Police Dept., Fire Dept and EMS under one umbrella. The Selectboard would appoint that person to coordinate and lead those departments.

In Open Forum, Steve Harris told the Board the solar array was turned off at noon on Friday. AA was in Town Hall and did not see anyone in the area at that time. It was suggested some type of nipple could be fixed to the electrical box to prevent the switch from easily dropping to the off position. This can not be locked in the on position as it would create an electrocution possibility if the utility had to work on downed lines.

The Pre-Town Meeting will be held on Monday, April 27th, at 6:30pm; the Selectboard Meeting will be held at 5:30pm that day.

Also, Alan motioned to place an article on the Annual Town Warrant seeking to add the position of Town Administrator. There was discussion on the need for additional hours for a person to aid the Board and relieve them of some of their duties. This could also be accomplished with additional hours for the AA if the Town rejects this position. Howard 2nd the motion and vote was 2-1 in favor with Dave voting against the article.

Will Rogers questioned the condition of Ryan Road, his sister purchased property and he is renting it from her. he was advised the portion of the road the land is located on was discontinued by Town meeting a number of years ago, he was given a copy of the Town Meeting minutes showing the discontinuance. There was discussion on private ways, and frontage requirements.

Noreen requested the Board look in to alternatives to the Gateway Regional School District (GRSD). The cost for Middlefield students would be transportation to another school and the tuition to attend. As a School Committee member she is distressed by the deep disconnect within the administration and Towns they serve. She believes this is a major reason that Worthington is leaving the district. If this had been addressed a few years ago, the current situation would not exist. Howard feels the loss of Worthington is a smoke screen for the GSRD to avoid more serious problems within the district. Noreen was advised to bring this matter up at the Annual Town Meeting.

Alan motioned he would like an article on the Annual Town Warrant for purchasing new chairs for the auditorium. There was discussion on this and Steve Harris had located metal folding chairs with padding that cost under \$100 for four and hanging racks for these chairs could also be purchased. Howard 2nd the motion; vote was 3-0 in favor of placing this article on the Warrant.

Highway Superintendent, Skip Savery, advised the Board the Pot Hole money has been approved by the State; he will have to spend it by June 30th. He is looking to buy a used roller and would like to spend around \$7,500 of the Pot Hole money for this. The Board was in agreement for him to purchase a roller. He has been contacting engineering firms regarding the work needed on a couple of bridges. Also, the fuel tank at the Town Hall again had water enter it and had to be pumped. The seals failed allowing the water to enter, he will have the seals replaced later and this should solve the water problem.

On motion by Howard, Dave 2nd; vote 3-0, the Board approved its letter to the Country Journal disputing the recent WiredWest mailing that used the Town Hall as its return address. This letter makes it clear the Board is not supporting WiredWest at this time.

Alan motioned to adjourn, Howard 2nd; vote 3-0 and meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Administrative Assistant

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

Alan Vint, Chair

Howard Knickerbocker, Clerk

David DiNicola