

SELECTBOARD MINUTES
FEBRUARY 26, 2019

Meeting opened at 6:00pm

Present: David DiNicola, Chair; Albert Sirard
Duane Pease, Town Administrator (TA)
Absent: Judith Hoag

First item on agenda was to vote on the Order of Taking for the Chester Road Bridge over Smart Brook. Dave motioned to accept the Order as written, Al 2nd; vote 2-0. Order and mylars signed and TA to bring to Northampton for filing with Registry of Deeds.

Warrants reviewed and signed; Payroll: \$15,586.50; Expenses: \$19,101.50.

Minutes approved without changes on motion by Dave, Al 2nd; vote 2-0.

Snow budget was discussed next with Highway Superintendent Skip Savery. He currently has about \$4,000 left in his budget, this account can be overspent with approval of the Selectboard. Last year the budget was \$23,800 over and was covered by Free Cash with a Town Meeting vote. After further discussion, Al motioned to allow up to \$25,000 additional, Dave 2nd; vote 2-0.

TA advised board that Comcast contracted person has been doing the pole mapping and surveys. Agreement is with Town Counsel for review.

Next item on the agenda was the future of the Police Department, current chief, Tom Austin, will be retiring from his position in September. The town had obtained an extension so he could continue until then. Dave said he was in favor of hiring the State Police to cover the town, this is something that Alford does. He believes they pay \$50/hour for the coverage. He will look further into it. Tom said the advantage of a local force is that they know the residents and their main duty is to care and protect them. This may include defusing potential situations and keeping residents out of jail. He feels the new chief should be put in between 20-30 hours a week, which would include patrols and office work. The chief issues gun permits, hunting permits, handling court orders, etc. Tom said he gets around 30 911 calls from Berkshire dispatch which are mostly medical calls but probably another 100 calls or drop ins from residents that don't want to call 911 with their issues. It was questioned if a merger with Chester would be beneficial, that

problem is Chester is in Hampden County and uses a different dispatch service, court, District Attorney and jail. Tom also said in times of emergencies the State Police are not going to be responding to the town for ice storms, floods, etc. and this is a great advantage of having a local police force. During the summer, there is much more traffic and the GPS systems are now routing people through town to get to the Pittsfield area. The current department is down to 2 officers, Tom and his daughter, Jennie. Bob has moved out of the area, Curt has retired and Matt has not kept up to date with the required on-line training. He has tried to get people interested but it is becoming more difficult to recruit and as any new officer will have to go through 320 hours of intermediate training and 50 hours of firearm training. This is not just a Middlefield problem, but a problem throughout the state with smaller towns that have a part-time force. Tom said he has been trying to take care of the residents for 37 years and his knowledge of the people and town has been used to a great advantage.

The Board thanked Tom and asked him to firm up his budget numbers and come back to another meeting.

Curt Robie of the Finance Committee has been working on a Capital Plan and told the Board the plan is over \$1,000,000 and the projects are not “pie in the sky” needs.

Skip Savery advised the Board he is considering paving Town Hill Road this year using his Chapter 90 money.

There was no new business or questions from the public.

Dave motioned to adjourn, Al 2nd; vote 2-0 and meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

Minutes respectively submitted by:

Duane Pease
Town Administrator

Minutes accepted with/without changes by:

David DiNicola, Chair

Albert Sirard

