

**MINUTES
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2013**

Chairman Belanger called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Members present included Douglas Belanger, Sandra Wilson, Thomas Buckley, Dianna Provencher and Matthew Dennison. Also present was Town Administrator Robert Reed.

Application for Used Car Dealers License

MOTION: Ms. Wilson moved to open public hearing.
Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

Ernest Eldridge was present, property owner, to request he be licensed for five (5) of the twenty (20) vehicles allocated at his 515 Main Street parcel under TekCar Inc. TekCar manager is having a hard time and this is Mr. Eldridge's resolution to help him on the lease. A letter from TekCar is included approving this change.

Ms. Wilson asked if his vehicles will be parked out back, as indicated on original permit. Mr. Eldridge stated yes. Nothing else will change.

MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved to approve amended Class II License for TekCar to fifteen (15) vehicles, to incorporate new Class II License issued to Ernie's Cars for five (5) cars within the total allotment of twenty at this location. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to close public hearing.
Mr. Buckley seconded. UNANIMOUS

Correspondence

1. Memo from EMS Director requesting appointment of EMTs, one Basic and one Paramedic.
MOTION: Ms. Wilson moved to appoint Richard Johnson and Michael Borowiec, subject to all Town hiring policies and procedures. Mr. Dennison seconded. UNANIMOUS

2. Memo from Police Chief requesting approval of donations to his department from local vendor.
MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved to accept donations as noted.
Ms. Wilson seconded. UNANIMOUS

Ms. Wilson noted that there were also donations made to the Senior Center and we should have that list. Mr. Reed will speak to Director in this regard.

3. Public Hearing notice on Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to be held at Selectmen's meeting on January 28th relative to next round of grant applications. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) will continue to administer this grant process on behalf of the Town. FILE

4. Notice from Charter Communications of upcoming rate adjustments. The Board asked that we forward copy to LCAC. FILE

Late – final Invoice 23 for services rendered by PVPC for CDBG grant administration in the amount of \$4455.64 paid through grant funds.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve invoice and signatures by Board.
Mr. Buckley seconded. UNANIMOUS

Set Date – Regional Dispatching

Mr. Belanger announced that we will hold a public forum on Wednesday, February 27th at 6:30pm in Town Hall on proposed regional dispatching discussions. Mr. Buckley asked that we advertise this everywhere we can do so at no cost to the Town.

Town Administrator's Report

- Further discussions taking place on solar farm and the possibility the Town could purchase more electricity. He is also continuing discussions with Broadway Electric and should have a proposal ready shortly relative to further electricity credits.
- We had recently signed an Agreement with EBS Foran to allow a few hours per week of HR administration within the Treasurer's Office. Now the Town of Spencer has inquired if we would be interested in a shared HR person. They will seek applications and we will see what qualifications come in like, with that position proposed to start as of July 1st in Spencer. Ms. Wilson asked if EBS Foran would be a contender for those services. Mr. Reed will speak with Spencer administrator in this regard.
- Highway Supt has reported the 1994 International dump truck was damaged in a recent mv accident and it may be totaled. There is little value to this old truck and the new ones are estimated to cost \$186,000. Supt will look into leasing costs vs outright purchase.
- Phase II dam remediation work for town and district owned dams may be eligible for new grant funds. He will speak with our consultant in this regard.
- Additional funds will be needed to complete cable negotiation services by consultant, which we can pay from our Consulting article appropriation. Our Cable Advisory Committee is nearing the end of negotiations with Charter.
- Hazardous Mitigation grants may become available through CMRPC.

FY'14 Budget Discussions

Library services – Director Suzanne Hall was present along with Trustees Donald and Teena Cherry. Ms. Hall stated that they are doing okay so far with state and local cuts, barring any catastrophe. Any further cuts in services will cause us to lose our State certification, at which time we would exist solely as a stand-alone library.

Mr. Dennison asked, in general, that we have included in this budget information the history of yearly expenditures; having appropriated amounts only does not help him. Mr. Belanger agreed; other years the forms included this information.

- Ms. Wilson asked how close we are to being at the limit to receive State Library Aid.
 - Ms. Hall stated that we have requested and received waivers the past several years, as with many other towns. Any further reduction in hours will jeopardize our certification.
 - Mr. Reed noted that in the waiver we must provide information that the Library budget has not been reduced any further than other departments have.
- Mr. Buckley asked how many years has this budget been level funded.
 - Mr. Reed stated several; we should be able to add 2.5% each year.
- Mr. Buckley felt they are at the breaking point.
 - Ms. Hall reported that the Friends of the Library recently paid to upgrade computers but otherwise their infrastructure is failing. They receive 400-600 visitors each week.
 - Mr. Cherry stated that Ms. Hall has done a fantastic job, they have no complaints and she has moved the Library services forward during her tenure.

Ms. Wilson felt we need to separately list all equipment needed to make their department whole, not a wish-list. Mr. Buckley agreed. Mr. Dennison had just mentioned the same to Mr. Reed; the residents need to know what these departments are dealing with.

Council on Aging – Director Rachelle Cloutier was present and stated she will level fund her budget as indicated, but she cannot run the Center on the budgeted 25hr/week. It is a very active place with many new programs added. Outreach is being done in-house also, seniors have made many connections during their visits, and we are grateful to receive so many donations. She works much more than the 25-hr she is budgeted for. She relies on grant funding and hopes those don't get cut. US Census dictates their allotment and we have more and more residents reaching the age of 60. And they try to help all, not just Leicester residents. It is a beautiful senior center and it should be utilized to the fullest. Mr. Belanger felt they do a wonderful job and asked that she let her team know.

- Mr. Buckley wondered about a listing of donations that came in recently. Mr. Reed stated that he might have that list on hand.
- Mr. Buckley has visited the Senior Center and tried to help out on occasion. You get a warm and cordial welcome and you are all doing a remarkable job.
- Mr. Belanger suggested they make note of donations within their monthly newsletter. Ms. Cloutier noted that a grant program pays for the clerk to put the newsletter together, otherwise it would be difficult for her to accomplish.

Treasurer/Collector – Deborah Kristoff was present and noted that her department doesn't benefit from any donations. And they cannot take another hit; they need more work hours and updated equipment. Pc's are 9+ years old, printer is barely held together, the financial server is about 7hr old now, and their calculator died. And they need their computers, which are used all day by all three employees. There air conditioner is 13yr old and their chairs are all broken. They are relying on big copy machine as they cannot afford ink for their printers within the office; this results in leaving the office unmanned if copies are needed for taxpayers.

- Mr. Belanger noted you can find knock-off toner cartridges at cheaper pricing. Mr. Buckley noted that manufacturers' inkjet packs are sometimes required if maintenance contracts are in place, and you don't always get a bargain with those no-name brands.

Ms. Kristoff did not feel these working conditions were safe or efficient. Moral is bad; there have been not step increases in several years, although a cost-of-living raise has been given out to those under the Personnel Board. She did not take her 2% salary increase because she needed the funds instead to go toward work hours more.

Training for staff held at UMass Amherst is attended but last year her girls commuted because there are no funds to stay on site. We eventually may have to pay for this training ourselves, as it looks now.

If either of them needs to be out of the office for appointments or illness, it makes it very difficult. They are always busy, there is no slack time. This was formerly a 4-person office which is now down to 2½ people.

She stated that her assistants, Colleen and Amy, do an excellent job for the Town. And they do accept payment plans for taxpayers who need to work something out to keep current.

- Ms. Provencher asked what her bottom line budget was
 - Mr. Reed stated that this budget is \$136,000 less than it was in 2009. There can be no further cuts to this financial office.
- Mr. Buckley was astonished that she did not take her salary increase but instead utilized that money elsewhere. People need to know this.
 - Ms. Kristoff reiterated that she was desperate to fund more hours.

Mr. Reed noted that over the years we have not considered selling off receivables but we may need to revisit that now. Mr. Dennison had asked that we list and act on owner-unknown parcels. Mr. Belanger wanted to pursue absentee landlords and use some leverage to get these back taxes paid.

- Ms. Wilson asked if she had done an analysis of what hours she would really need to be caught up.
 - No. Ms. Kristoff stated that she just keeps working and plugging away.
- Ms. Wilson asked if she has been able to utilize any temporary help.
 - Ms. Kristoff is hoping a few hours each week in HR support will alleviate many of the interruptions they experience; re-enrollment for various health plans, changes to any of them, it all takes time away from other work.
- Mr. Buckley wondered if another full-timer would be enough.
 - Ms. Kristoff felt that would be wonderful.

Mr. Reed noted that Ms. Kristoff is an important member of their finance group and also serves on our health insurance group. She does a great job on the health plan. And he is excited to include our new school superintendent in these meetings.

Town Administrator's Report/New Business

- Town Accountant wants to revise system and update chart of accounts per recommendation of Auditor. We can use consulting funds to start the work and seek additional funds at town meeting to complete project.
- Good to hear Selectmen asking for list of needs from departments so we have a realistic picture of how they are managing. We cannot cut across all departments anymore, some cannot handle any further budget cuts. We have asked them to level fund budgets. Lists of necessities will be maintained separately. However, we cannot move very far in this process without learning first what the School is seeking for FY'14 budget. Ms. Wilson asked if new chart of accounts was also included in the DOR report as an upgrade that is needed. Mr. Reed stated yes, but it is his fault; Ms. Buxton has been asking for this for years. Mr. Belanger agreed that we have tough decisions ahead; we have hit the wall, no more room for cuts in most budgets if we plan to provide same level of services. Mr. Buckley felt level funding budgets to be sound advice. Each year it is reported that we are \$1+ Million in deficit and by the end of the budget season Mr. Reed finds the money and we get by. However, we need to inform the public that departments are hurting and we need to stop the bleeding. Next we'll be regionalizing towns. Mr. Belanger felt regional approach does improve services plus equipment. He noted that most do not understand what a Proposition Override is or does. Mr. Reed noted that we have been lucky to have the cooperation of employees, who have agreed to forego step increases etc; their good will has been stretched, however. Mr. Dennison felt this have been oncoming for years. He hears the arguments out there that people's hours are being cut at their workplaces and raises are not being handed out, such as with his employer. Our revenues have been cut and there is no new business coming in. He has always been opposed to the option but now must consider an override. Ms. Provencher agreed it was time to do business differently; we will have to pick and choose which departments are cut this year. Mr. Buckley hears complaints that our tax bills are too high; he does not want to pay more either but feels our tax bills are reasonable and an override may be our only option. Ms. Wilson had hoped we would be looking to Advisory Board this year for budgeting cuts. She asked if we were in agreement to reduce membership on Advisory Board from nine to seven. Mr. Belanger felt we need to send that request to the Bylaw Committee along with any others that have come up over the past year; whether we pursue them or not, at least we will have submitted within the 90-day timeframe. Mr. Belanger asked what year would best reflect a certain level of services with a healthy budget, before State cuts began. Mr. Reed felt that would be 2009 but will look into this further. The Board asked that we be certain the press is kept informed and ask that they publicize these discussions so residents become aware.

Signatures

Mr. Reed had Employment Agreement with Rachelle Cloutier, Council on Aging Director, for the Board to sign. As with other department heads, benefits were pro-rated according to start date.

MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved to authorize Board signing employment agreement with COA Director, as presented. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

Board Reports/New Business**Selectman Provencher:**

- Attended recent breakfast meeting of MassPort and City of Worcester and JetBlue Airlines officials. Hopefully negotiations will lead to new carrier at Worcester Airport.

Selectman Wilson:

- Attended quarterly CMRPC meeting, which Mr. Belanger attended as WRTA participant. We will be issued 2.5% increase in CMRPC dues for FY'14, which must be added to the town meeting warrant.
- Fine-free January at the Library, so return those materials at no cost this month and help to improve circulation items returned.

Selectman Belanger:

- Tailgate football party will be held by Eller's owners to help raise money for Founders Day celebration. \$5 buffet and raffles will be held with 5:00pm start on Sunday January 20th for the 6:30 Patriots game. The owners have been very generous and will again be donating the food.
- Wednesday night he will have the Town Administrator and Police Chief live on his cable television show to discuss regional dispatching.
- Marshall St land issue involving Greater Worcester Land Trust is scheduled for discussion at ConCom meeting January 16th. He hopes those involved will try to work to the mutual benefit of all and amend any agreements that may be necessary.

Minutes

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve 12/3/12 Regular Session minutes.
Ms. Wilson seconded. UNANIMOUS

Executive Session

MOTION: Ms. Wilson moved to go into Executive Session under MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation; no public announcement anticipated, the Board to adjourn with loss of quorum.
Mr. Buckley seconded. The Board was polled: ALL AYES

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:20pm.
The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:45pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan LeChasseur,
Administrative Assistant