

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**JANUARY 28, 2019 at 6:30pm**  
**TOWN HALL, SELECT BOARD CONFERENCE ROOM**

**CALL TO ORDER/OPENING**

Chairwoman Provencher called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Chair Dianna Provencher, Vice Chair Sandra Wilson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair Brian Green, Selectman Harry Brooks, Selectman Rick Antanavica, Town Administrator David Genereux, Assistant to the Town Administrator Kristen Forsberg and Student Liaisons Alyssa Pupillo and Katheryn Stapel were in attendance.

**1. SCHEDULED ITEMS**

**a. 6:30pm - Discussion with State Legislators**

**1) Water/Sewer Issues**

Senator Moore, Kathleen Polanowicz with Congressman McGovern's office and Representative LeBoeuf were in attendance to discuss the impending bankruptcy at Cherry Valley Sewer District. Senator Moore has put \$100,000 in a bond bill for an economic development study but needs to see a collaborative effort from the Board, all districts, DEP and residents in order to move forward. Ms. Polanowicz noted that Congressman McGovern has been in touch with EDA and USDA among other federal agencies and that all have stated this would have to be a town-wide project to move forward. All legislators offered their support and expressed concern for the residents and the town. The Board expressed concerns including the districts being separate subscriber owned entities, issues surrounding merger of the districts including debt and high rates, USDA refusing to assist with debt or refinance their loans and economic development concerns if foreclosures occur in Cherry Valley to due to high rates and the bankruptcy of the sewer district.

Mr. Genereux noted he has solicited financial information from all districts, of which, most has come in and the rest will come in within the next month to get an idea of where the districts stand. The next step would be to seek agreement from the commissioners, superintendents and the board regarding how to address this looming bankruptcy as a town issue.

Several commissioners from the 7 water and sewer districts spoke about willingness to coordinate at the local level and solve the issues without outside interference, concern for the residents in Cherry Valley, issues with astronomical discharge permits from DEP due to multiple watersheds and sections of town being allowed to leave the Cherry Valley district resulting in a small number of rate payers bearing the burden of all costs in that district.

Kathleen Polanowicz with Congressman McGovern's office noted that potential available funding would be for a planning study and is only available to a municipality, not an individual district. Ms. Polanowicz added that the federal government wants to find a solution for the entire system in Leicester, not just for one district. Finally, Ms. Polanowicz noted Congressman McGovern has reached out to the City Manager and DPW Director in Worcester to see if fees charged to Leicester could be reduced but were told no as Leicester pays the same fees as other communities.

A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Mr. Green to form a small group to discuss these issues which would include select board representatives and one representative from each water and sewer district. The motion carried 5:0:0.

## **2) Marijuana Host Community Agreements**

Representative LeBoeuf noted he had filed a bill to remove some of the ambiguity in the recreational marijuana regulations relative to host community agreements and quantifying community impact fees. Representative LeBoeuf note that there is no legislative action on the table to invalidate any existing agreements and the bill he is proposing would remove the requirement to quantify impacts.

## **3) Solar Project PILOTs**

Representative LeBoeuf has filed a bill with Representative Barrett from North Adams to close loopholes in solar PILOT agreements which were allowing some companies to avoid payments in lieu of taxes.

### **b. 7:00pm - Discussion with Schools - Potential Closure of Leicester Memorial School**

Tom Lauder, School Committee Chair, Tammy Tebo, School Committee member and Dr. Marilyn Tencza, Superintendent, discussed the possible closing of Memorial School. The School Committee has not yet taken a vote on this proposal; the vote is planned for February 12<sup>th</sup>. Issues including transferring ownership of the building to the Town, how to pay for utilities once it is decommissioned as a school, the possibility of leasing the building to a collaborative or selling the building were discussed. Closing the school would help offset the \$700,000 shortfall in the FY20 budget and would result in less layoffs. Mr. Genereux noted that Town Meeting would have to authorize the sale of the building. There is room in the other buildings to house the Memorial School students as enrollment is continuing to decline. Some of the savings would be allocated to retrofitting a wing of the high school for PreK in year one.

### **c. 7:30pm - Library Renovation & Expansion Update**

Rob Para Jr., OPM, provided an update on the Library project. The project reached 97% completion at the end of December and there are 2-3 weeks of contractor work remaining. Change orders are at 7% and the contracts are open ended without an end date. A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Ms. Wilson to approve the requested change order for glass repairs, terrazzo floor repairs and plaster repairs on the ground at a total cost of \$35,690. The motion carried 5:0:0.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SESSION, MGL CHAPTER 30A, SECTION 21A**

No executive session was held

## **3. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

No members of the public provided comment

## **4. REPORTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **a. Student Liaison Reports**

The student liaisons provided updates from the Leicester Public Schools including the Yankee Candle fundraiser at Primary, box top collections, the Middle School Valentines Day Dance, midterms at the High School, donations of shoes to fund a wheelchair accessible van for student Eddie Besse and snow cancellation/delay protocol.

### **b. Select Board Reports**

The Select Board discussed various topics including the availability of girl scout cookies at Walmart, Coopers, Ellers and Subway, the recent MMA Annual Meeting and the CMRPC meeting on economic development.

### **c. Town Administrator Report**

The Town Administrator presented highlights from his written report

## **5. RESIGNATIONS/APPOINTMENTS**

### **a. Appointment - Part Time Library Assistant - Lori Buckley**

A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Ms. Wilson to appoint Lori Buckley to the position of part-time library assistant. The motion carried 5:0:0.

### **b. Appointment - Tyler Jefferson - Per Diem/On Call EMT-Basic**

A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Ms. Wilson to appoint Tyler Jefferson to the position of per diem/on call EMT basic. The motion carried 5:0:0.

## **6. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **a. FY 2020 Budget Review & Proposed Prop 2 ½ Override Discussion**

Mr. Genereux discussed the Governor's budget which will give the town a net increase of \$4,000 over last year. Although health insurance came in at a zero percent increase, Worcester Regional came in at a 13% increase instead of the 10% projected. Mr. Genereux discussed increases in budgets over the period of FY13-FY19, noting that municipal budgets have increased by 13.61%, the intergovernmental budget has increased by 14.61% and the school budget has increased by 8.65% over this time period, not including snow and ice and capital expenses. The Town is fortunately to have maintained its AA+ rating but that rating may be on borrowed time given the financial outlook of the Town, even with increases in revenue from marijuana businesses. To respond to this issue, the Town will be ramping up tax takings which are a number of years behind and will need to move forward with tax lien sales to build our reserves. Capital requests are down some for FY20 so this will need to be assessed in the coming years. Mr. Genereux finally noted that the Town is not adequately funding OPEB or stabilization at this time.

Mr. Genereux and Highway Superintendent Dennis Griffin discussed the proposed 2.5% override which would add 4 new staff and take on town building maintenance and snow plowing/field maintenance for the schools at a cost of \$350,000/year. One of the new hires is proposed to be a second foreman so that two divisions, buildings/grounds and highway can be created. In 1994, the Highway Dept had 14 employees and now have 9 including the superintendent, department assistant, mechanic and one position out on works comp which leaves 5 employees out on the roads. Mr. Griffin noted that right now he has one full time and one temporary part time employee to clean and maintain over 200,000 square feet of town buildings. Mr. Griffin noted that every piece of highway equipment funded through the debt exclusion has been designed and ordered at a total cost of \$910,000. In addition, the Highway Department will have an auction in the spring and hope to generate \$30,000-\$50,000.

School Committee Chair Tom Lauder said the school fields have been embarrassing forever and are the worst fields out of their league which includes 13 schools. The school has only ever had the resources to mow the fields. He expressed excitement about being able to have proper maintenance of the fields and the plowing which would save the schools approximately \$130,000 per year and help offset school operating budget deficits.

### **b. Request to Use Town Roadways - Tarentino Strong 5k Road Race**

A motion was made by Ms. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Green to approve the use of Town Roadways for the Tarentino Strong 5k road race. The motion carried 5:0:0.

### **c. Award Bid for Church Street Bridge Reconstruction and Authorize Town Administrator to Sign Contract**

A motion was made by Mr. Antanavica and seconded by Mr. Green to award the bid for the Church Street bridge replacement to NEL Corporation at a cost of \$423,990 and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the contract. The motion carried 5:0:0.

**d. Parks & Rec Donations - Tarentino Playground Fund**

A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Mr. Antanavica to accept donations in the amount of \$130 made to Parks and Rec in memory of Gordon O'Rourke for the Tarentino Playground Fund. The motion carried 5:0:0.

**e. Senior Center Donations - Veterans Breakfast**

A motion was made by Mr. Brooks and seconded by Mr. Antanavica to accept donations in the amount of \$500 made to the Senior Center for the Veterans Breakfast. The motion carried 5:0:0.

**f. Fire Department Donation – Unrestricted**

Ms. Forsberg noted this donation is actually for EMS, not Fire. A motion was made by Mr. Antanavica and seconded by Ms. Wilson to accept the donation of \$500 to the EMS department. The motion carried 5:0:0.

**7. MINUTES**

**a. January 7, 2019**

A motion was made by Ms. Wilson and seconded by Mr. Brooks to approve the minutes of January 7, 2019. The motion carried 5:0:0.

**b. January 10, 2019**

A motion was made by Mr. Antanavica and seconded by Mr. Green to approve the minutes of January 10, 2019. The motion carried 5:0:0.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Antanavica and seconded by Mr. Brooks at 9:46pm. The motion carried unanimously.