

**MINUTES
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
JANUARY 12, 2009**

Vice Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Members present were Thomas Brennan, Dianna Provencher and Stanley Zagorski. Selectman Belanger entered the meeting at approximately 7:15pm, and Selectman Zagorski entered shortly after that. Also present was Town Administrator Robert Reed.

Mr. Brennan noted that Mr. Belanger is a representative on the Lt. Governor's task force and attended a meeting this afternoon, while Mr. Zagorski is doing other town-related work, both being expected shortly.

Correspondence

1. Memo from Town Clerk Deborah Davis regarding positions up for re-election at the Annual Town Election on the 1st Monday in April. Ms. Davis further inquired as to limiting the election hours, noting the minimum hours the polls can be open per MGL is four (4) hours. In an attempt to limit spending within her budget, she is recommending 4:00-8:00pm. Members present had mixed feelings; Mr. Antanavica felt we should consider it, Ms. Provencher felt we should keep the regular polling hours especially when you consider our elderly population that come out in the daytime. The Board agreed to hold on this matter until a full board had time to consider further. PENDING

In regards to the Town Clerk's office, Mr. Antanavica has reviewed the fee structure and feels increases need to be made. Mr. Brennan appointed Selectman Antanavica to work with Ms. Davis on this issue as well as the polling hours and come back with a report to the BOS.

(Selectman Belanger, followed by Selectman Zagorski, enter the meeting at this time.)

2. Memo from Highway Supt. reporting some \$15,000 spent last year on beaver control. The Board asked that we acquire similar information from other local towns and see if they would be supportive of a measure to change the law. Upon his arrival, Mr. Belanger noted that the legislature created this law and must be involved to undue this monster regulation. He felt the towns were suffering financially and environmentally due the trapping restrictions that are in place; people are loosing portions of their property and experience flooding of homes as well. Mr. Reed noted that the Board of Health is involved in regulation, so he will work with them in this regard. PENDING

3. Memo from Planning Board recommending acceptance of Brickyard Road at the annual town meeting contingent upon roadway remaining in acceptable condition and all moneys owed to the Town being paid in full. PENDING

4. Letter from DEP approving the issuance of burn permits sooner than the regulated period of January 15th thru May 1st of each year, due to the large amount of debris from the December 11th ice storm. FILE

5. Memo from Retirement System regarding upcoming meeting on January 15th. Mr. Reed will be in attendance at which time we should be informed of our annual assessment, which he hopes is not increased due to the economic downturn and critical financial state we are in. They may ask to extend timelines for which the System must be fully funded. Mr. Brennan suggested our new Treasurer attend as well. FILE

6. Notice from SEA Consultants regarding Environmental Notification Form submitted to Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for the Leicester Water Supply District's draft Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. Mr. Reed noted that a meeting was held last week in this regard but he had conflicting schedule. FILE

Town Administrator's Report

- Mr. Reed distributed latest budget projection worksheets, noting level funded budget for FY'10 leaves us with a \$1,732,804 shortfall. Talks of a 10% cut of Local Aid would add another \$1 million dollars on top of this, a horrendous thought.
- FY'10 Department Budgets are due into the Accountant's office by January 16th, both level funded and a 3% cut proposals. He felt this can only mean cuts in personnel; he felt it can't be across the board but will have to be looked at individually. For example, Highway is down four positions since he started working here, and the Police cannot afford any personnel cuts. Mr. Brennan noted that the finance sub-committee is meeting again this week and asked anybody to come forward with ideas that might help with our financial situation.
- \$3500 grant for security camera installation received by Town from our insurance carrier due the efforts of Inspector of Buildings Jeff Taylor, who last year obtained funds for a roof inspection program. The Board asked that a letter of thanks be issued to Mr. Taylor.
- Error in recent tax bills is being worked on, but he has no official report of how the occurrence took place. Corrected bills and accompanying letters have been sent to those involved, basically residents with last names beginning in "R" through "Z".

Board Reports/Other Business**Selectwoman Provencher:**

- Fire Study Group continues to work on site review and final recommendation
- Economic Stimulus Package is being worked on at both local and regional levels, all scrambling to put project on the table for consideration
- Ice Storm Reimbursement meeting will be held January 14th at WPI, a briefing being held by MEMA. Mr. Antanavica noted that he will attend as will the Town Administrator, Highway Supt, and the Police Chief.
- Ice Derby being held February 21st on Sargent's Pond

Selectmen Belanger:

- Issue regarding difficulty for motorists at intersection of Main and South Main Street across from Barbers Crossing restaurant; he asked if CMRPC or our traffic consultant could look into this if they have not already

Special Town Meeting

Mr. Antanavica spoke of the Fire Station and other Town projects that were submitted to the Municipal Facilities Task Force recently for consideration under the anticipated "economic stimulus package" the Federal government may fund. He read from a news article recommending that conditions are right at this time, with supply prices low and many out of work, to bring in low bids on construction projects, a condition the writer felt will last no more than six months. Mr. Antanavica felt it is also a buyers market right now, and the Town should be ready to act on acquisition of properties needed for construction of new fire station.

Mr. Brennan, proud to have our own Selectman Belanger on this important task force, noted that projects that are "shovel ready" will be considered. A town meeting is needed to pursue acquisition and any permitting that would be required as the first step in considering a new fire station facility. Mr. Reed noted that the Town has already approved a study and some limited design funds. With the possibility of receiving millions of dollars in construction costs, we must move quickly to the next phase in preparation for the much anticipated municipal facilities funds. He reported that thousands of projects were submitted to the Lt. Governor's office, with Leicester submitting five of our own, including a new fire station.

The Board considered when to hold a special town meeting. Mr. Reed noted that there is a 14-day posting requirement. The Board agreed to meet again on January 22nd to review and close the STM Warrant.

MOTION: Mr. Brennan moved to hold a Special Town Meeting on February 9, 2009 at 7:00pm.
Mr. Antanavica seconded. UNANIMOUS

Mr. Reed will send out notices with limited timeframe in which article requests may be submitted.

Ice Storm Report – Highway Supt. and Fire Chief

Thomas Wood, Highway Supt., and Robert Wilson, Fire Chief, were present to report to the Board and the community of the December 11th ice storm that devastated the area, including Leicester. Mr. Wood reported that it wasn't until daylight on the 12th that we realized how much damage there was, with power outages widespread, trees, poles, power lines down everywhere, streets were unpassable. The Leicester Emergency Planning group met on a daily basis with updated reports on conditions; a shelter was set up at the Middle School which was later moved to the Senior Center, the National Guard was called in to assist with removal of debris from roadways, hiring of private contractors to chip and remove debris was done under emergency situation. They worked five days straight and then we received a 12" snowstorm. The tree damage is huge; according to FEMA, we may not know the full extent of the damage until springtime. Also, a bridge, a roadway, and a serious amount of guardrail were damaged. He reported that some \$142,000 has been spent thus far on the Ice Storm; we could see yet another \$350,000 it is estimated. This could be reimbursed through FEMA.

He reported that 90% of the roadways have been cleared of debris. There is work left to do, but they are trying to visit all neighborhoods before returning to some where debris was piled up after the chippers had already visited those roads. There will eventually be a cut-off date set for debris removal. He noted approval from DEP for the Fire Department to issue burn permits earlier than the January 15th annual date, and that the Recycling Center is accepting debris, as is a private property owner at 1439 Main Street across from Leicester Hill Country Club.

Mr. Belanger reported through the Lt. Governor's office that there is currently no clock set for a deadline on these storm-related expenses to be encumbered.

Mr. Belanger couldn't thank the Highway Supt. and Fire Chief enough, and all those involved in the post-ice storm collaboration to assist those in need. Mr. Wood said he couldn't have done it without the help of Mr. Wilson and Police Chief Hurley, along with Emergency Management Director Bob Dupuis. Mr. Belanger asked what we could do now to assist him.

Mr. Wood had met with former FEMA employee who now works as consultant for debris management, a local company in Massachusetts. He will assist the Town to put together an RFP for debris management proposals. We need to decide how much the Town is willing to spend; there is a package for 66hours of work totaling some \$5000 or a long-term maintenance plan that ranges in the \$20,000 area. He recommended the long-term contract. Mr. Reed agreed; this will take a huge load of the Highway Department while the contract will include aggressive approach to FEMA requirements for reimbursement. He will be ready to move on what will fall under the procurement regulations. Mr. Wood reported that the Town of Spencer has worked with this consultant, who comes with a good recommendation.

Ms. Provencher wondered at what rate the Town will be reimbursed by FEMA. Mr. Reed stated that was unknown at this time, but up to 75% has occurred in the past. The Board asked that all departments keep accurate ice storm related records to assist with this process.

Mr. Zagorski, noting yet another power outage in his neighborhood, asked about lingering tree damage that is apt to cause more fallen limbs and therefore power outages over the next several months. Mr. Wood reported that National Grid will continue with assessment and will commence with tree trimming program as soon as the weather allows. Another concern is town-owned trees and any damage there may to private property.

Ms. Provencher is receiving calls from those able to remove fallen tree limbs and asked if it is possible that they do so. Mr. Wood did not recommend they go on private property without permission from land owner.

Mr. Brennan felt there was no way the \$5000 program option would work, we need the \$20,000 investment. Having a consultant familiar with the geographic area he feels is a plus; he supports the recommendation of Supt. Wood and Mr. Reed. He asked, however, if this would need town meeting approval for this type of expenditure. Mr. Wood noted that he has contained costs within the Snow & Ice Budget, which we are able to deficit spend.

Again, Mr. Belanger expressed the Board's thanks to the town employees, all volunteers and all those who were patient and helped their neighbors out during this most devastating and far-reaching storm.

Mr. Zagorski noted that an emergency recap meeting is being held on January 20th at 6:30pm for those involved in this planning process. Mr. Wilson noted, while they were working toward a training session, we got the real thing here. Mr. Wood felt that the MEMA storm reimbursement meeting on January 14th should be informative.

Municipal Facilities Task Force

Chairman Belanger reported on the concept that the new President wants to hand Congress an Economic Stimulus Package that will include millions of dollars in municipal facilities projects "shovel ready" for completion within a year's time. How far along and how ready we are is critical; we want to be more ready than the other thousands of projects that were requested. It is urgent that we finalize plans for a new fire station; we must select a site and be ready for this special town meeting, and we must be prepared to address funding methods.

He did caution, however, that it is not law yet, there are no guarantees that this concept will move forward as planned. Mr. Zagorski noted the five projects submitted on behalf of the Town of Leicester, regretting that we aren't ready enough to have applied for green energy related assistance:

- New Fire Station
- Town Hall – Phase 3 renovations
- Library expansion
- Burncoat Park field expansion
- Middle School roof replacement

Board Reports/Other Business (continued)

Selectman Brennan:

- Prepared letter to be sent to former Senator Augustus for all his work on behalf of the Town of Leicester. The Board voted to approve signature and issuance of this letter.
- Prepared letter to be sent to Radio Station WTAG for their assistance during the Ice Storm in reporting of the outages and storm-related issues, on behalf of the Worcester County towns. The Board voted to approve signature and issuance of this letter.
- Suggested new General Bylaw that would require new construction to include generator hookup equipment due to concerns he heard during the recent storm. He asked that memo be sent to Bylaw Committee along with Planning and Zoning Boards to be copied, per Building Inspector's recommendation.
- "THANK YOU" be posted on Lions Club sign in center of Town for all those who handled the storm emergency

Minutes

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve 11/17/08 and 12/15/08 Regular Session minutes.
Mr. Antanavica seconded. 4-0, Mr. Brennan abstained.

Town Administrator's Report (continued)

- Distributed draft personnel policy allowing for Chairman or Town Administrator to deal with discipline issues within departments. Mr. Zagorski asked that we include language such as “with concurrence of department head”. The Board agreed.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to adopt policy as amended.
Ms. Brennan seconded. UNANIMOUS

- After discussions with Town Counsel, we need to clean up some of the Special Municipal Employee declarations; it is the position, not the individual, that needs to be declared.

MOTION: Mr. Brennan moved to declare the Planning Board, Board of Health, Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, and Fire Inspector as Special Municipal Employees. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

Executive Session

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to go into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition, no public announcement anticipated, the Board will adjourn with loss of quorum. Mr. Antanavica seconded. The Board was polled: ALL AYES

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:40pm.

The Board came out of Executive Session and adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan LeChasseur,
Administrative Assistant