

**MINUTES  
SELECTMEN'S MEETING  
DECEMBER 15, 2008**

Chairman Belanger called the meeting to order at 6:20pm. Members present were Douglas Belanger, Thomas Brennan, Dianna Provencher, Richard Antanavica and Stanley Zagorski. Also present was Town Administrator Robert Reed.

**Ice Storm Update**

Chairman Belanger noted the daily emergency planning meetings that have been held at the Police Department training room. Up until this afternoon, we were going to move our meeting down there, but recently had power restored to allow this meeting to be held in Town Hall. After briefing the Board on issues to date and discussing matters between members, the Board directed the Town Administrator to continue the care for those using the temporary shelter that has been housed at the Middle School up until this time. Tomorrow the Senior Center will become the shelter location; food for those in need is meant for those staying at the shelter, but we will try to not turn anyone away. The Board also directed the Town Administrator to allow the Highway Department to spend as needed to handle the storm damage and maintenance, but to keep accurate records in connecting the work to the storm. They felt the accounting department may need to be understanding with regard to these expenses.

**Correspondence**

1. Memo from Moose Hill Water Commission notifying the public that their regular meeting night will be changed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month so as not to conflict with the Selectmen's meeting. FILE

Mr. Reed noted recent meeting with members of MHWC and himself with DEP rep John Bechman relative to DEP's advisory as to how the Town should proceed with regard to utilizing the Reservoir as a water supply. He asked DEP to make their report more focused, with zoning changes for land protection and ownership issues concerning abutting parcels to be the next phase that will be addressed. The Board felt this may need to be an article on the annual town meeting warrant.

2. Letter of resignation from Capital Improvement Planning Committee member Dave Mero.

MOTION: Mr. Brennan moved to accept with regret and letter of thanks sent for service to the Town. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

3. Memo from Parks and Rec Committee regarding property line dispute at Rochdale Park. Mr. Reed noted that a plan from some years ago shows the need to address this long standing issue, but we need the abutter, Raymond Shea Jr., to come to the table. He will try to keep the momentum going on this, but Mr. Shea has ignored our attempts to discuss this matter. Mr. Antanavica wanted to make certain this has nothing to do with the Town taking ownership of the dam. PENDING

4. Memo from Parks 7 Rec Committee regarding agreement with Becker College for field use and maintenance. As liaison to Becker College, Mr. Zagorski will contact P&R Chairperson to discuss authority to enter into such agreements, any private work on Town property, insurance certificates, and the like. He will report back to the Board in this regard. PENDING

5. Request from Town Planner to designate Planning Board members as Special Municipal Employees. Mr. Reed will discuss same with Town Counsel and review file materials that speak to this designation being done in other instances, which may not have been done correctly. He noted any such designation must address the position, not the individual. PENDING

6. Letter from Town of Southborough thanking Chief Hurley and Police Department staff for their assistance of late relative to the passing of their police chief. FILE

Late – Memo from Highway Supt. notifying Town Administrator that as of 1/01/09 Kevin Sanko will move up to the position of Heavy Equipment Operator. Mr. Reed noted that the position was posted within the Department, with only Mr. Sanko applying. FILE

Other – Ms. Provencher reported on a meeting held November 28<sup>th</sup> relative to dam and stormwater issues. A group of individuals have been looking into the Waites Pond Dam issue and how the Town might want to proceed.

Mr. Reed noted the DCR report from October 2008 that was sent to former owner Brick City Land Trust. He has spoken with DCR officials about the Town having taken possession of the property and not being aware previously that poor conditions existed. DCR agreed to hold off compliance issues until the Town can appropriate funds at the annual town meeting to deal with professional inspection of the Waites Pond Dam. The alternative to breach the dam was discussed, and is still an option.

Ms. Provencher and Mr. Antanavica recommended a task force be formed to allow investigation on and direction to the abutters of the Pond to form an association to take possession of and make repairs to the Dam. Ms. LeChasseur noted, having been through this process where she lived, that it takes legislative action to form a water district. In the meantime, Chairman Belanger asked that the volunteers be appointed to allow them to work with the abutters in this regard. The group will be given a charge.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to appoint James Nicas, Richard Johnston and Ruth Kaminski to a Waites Pond Dam Task Force. Mr. Antanavica seconded. UNANIMOUS

#### **Licensing Issues – Requests to amend License**

Ms. LeChasseur explained that James DiCentes, owner of Deer Pond Auto Service, has requested that motorcycles be included in his License as vehicles to be repaired under Motor Vehicle Repair License.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve and add language that specifies motorcycles included under Deer Pond Auto's Motor Vehicle Repair License. Mr. Antanavica seconded. UNANIMOUS

Ms. LeChasseur further explained that Peter Ribaud, RPM Auto Service, has bought property from former owner Fran Hetherman, who passed away. As new owner, he requests that his License be amended to read with his name as owner, and do away with previous language that allowed Mr. Hetherman to lease space to Mr. Ribaud; nothing else is changed on the License.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve and amend License as requested by Mr. Ribaud, RPM Auto Service's Motor Vehicle Repair License. Mr. Antanavica seconded. UNANIMOUS

The Board agreed that neither situation constituted a public hearing process. The Licenses will be amended for the 2009 calendar year.

#### **Town Administrator's Report**

- Advisory Board Chairman Chris Culross is on board for Budget message with two scenarios; zero % Level Funded and minus 3% cut from 2009 budget to be prepared by all departments for 2010 Budget draft. He has heard of a 10% cut to the State Budget, but he is not sure if that means 10% of Local Aid or 10% of the Lottery Aid; there is nothing definitive from the Legislature at this time.
- Budget Sub-Committee is planning to meet this Thursday evening. Although the School Superintendent preferred to meet with the School Committee beforehand, Mr. Reed explained that a pre-budget meeting with the Supt. and members of the School Committee, as members of the Budget Sub-Committee, would be more beneficial. He noted other members include Chris Culross and Ed Cote from the Advisory Board along with Mr. Brennan and Mr. Belanger. Mr. Brennan noted that he cannot be available until 7pm. Mr. Reed will delay start time of the meeting accordingly.

#### **Minutes**

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to approve 11/03/08 Regular Session minutes. Mr. Zagorski seconded. UNANIMOUS

#### **Board Reports/Other Business**

The Board agreed that we should include mention in the 2008 Town Report of the many heroes in our community that handled and pitched in during the Ice Storm that we are still dealing with. They suggested we

obtain pictures from residents and have a layout of the storm coverage. Members couldn't say enough about our Highway Department, our Emergency Management team including Bob Dupuis, Jim Hurley, Tom Wood, and Bob Wilson along with Darlene O'Connor and Paul Soojian, the assistance received from the National Guard, the response from National Grid, and the storm coverage by local WTAG radio.

#### **Treasurer/Collector – Applicant**

Deborah Kristoff of Rutland was in to meet the Board of Selectmen as Mr. Reed recommended her for appointment as the Town's new Treasurer/Collector. Mr. Reed explained the recruitment process and, although we lost an excellent department head, we seem to have found an excellent replacement. He felt that Ms. Kristoff will add to the fine working group that we have in place here in Town Hall and he is pleased to recommend her for appointment.

MOTION: Mr. Antanavica moved to appoint Deborah Kristoff as Treasurer/Collector effective January 12, 2009. Ms. Provencher seconded.

Chairman Belanger asked Ms. Kristoff if she would like to address the Board. She thanked the Board for the opportunity. She reported that she lives in Rutland, so the vacancy in Leicester was immediately attractive to her. She currently holds this position in Northbridge and did so formerly in Sterling. She has much respect for the taxpayer, and although the law demands certain requirements be fulfilled by the Collector, she feels a need to make it work between her function and the role of the taxpayer. She believes in good customer service.

VOTE: 4-0, Mr. Brennan abstained.

#### **Executive Session – MGL Chapter 39, Section 23B (7)**

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to go into Executive Session under MGL C. 39, S. 23B (7).  
Mr. Brennan seconded. The Board was polled: ALL AYES

The Chairman noted that the Board will reconvene in Open Session.

The Board went into Executive Session at 7:15pm.  
The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:00pm.

#### **Reorganization of Board**

Mr. Belanger noted that the Board has been unable to consider this item of late, lacking a full Board present, and an item the Selectmen agreed to hold on in April and reconsider in October instead. He asked the Board's pleasure.

Ms. Provencher reported that she hears from constituents that her rank of the Board has not changed in a few years, and she had been agreeable to remain as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair until this issue was reconsidered in October this year. Mr. Zagorski asked if Mr. Brennan would be available to serve as Vice Chair. Mr. Brennan stated yes, he hadn't been available recently but now has a new job that will again allow him to continue with evening meetings of the Board of Selectmen, an important factor when he accepted the new position. Mr. Zagorski asked when Ms. Provencher would be next in line for the Vice Chairmanship. It was reported that the reorganization takes place annually after the April Town Elections. So, Mr. Zagorski noted, she would be up for consideration for Vice Chairman next April.

Mr. Antanavica nominated Douglas Belanger as Chairman through April 2009. Mr. Zagorski seconded. Mr. Belanger was named Chairman.

Mr. Zagorski nominated Thomas Brennan as Vice Chairman through April 2009. Mr. Antanavica seconded. Mr. Brennan was named Vice Chairman.

Mr. Brennan nominated Dianna Provencher as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman through April 2009. Mr. Zagorski seconded. Ms. Provencher was named 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman.

#### **2010 Budget Projections**

Mr. Reed again submitted Budget memo dated 12/01/08, noting items he has listed to generate revenue. He urged that the Town needs to increase the tax base or employees will surely be hurt; we may have to re-open collective bargaining agreements and renegotiate salaries. He suggested looking at the ratio of health

insurance premium the Town and employee pays. However, the items listed if adopted would merely be a drop in the bucket. We need a serious financial strategy to be put in place.

Mr. Brennan suggested the new Treasurer develop an aging schedule for loans that we have in place and see if we can reorganize the note and interest payments. Mr. Reed agreed this is one thing to look at, as is bi-weekly payroll, which the Board did not support in the past.

Besides releasing the staff to work on other issues such as the new long-term disability insurance plan that will be offered, bi-weekly payroll can save the Town \$4-6,000/year in costs. This is a practice done in most municipalities and certainly in the private sector, and Mr. Reed felt it time that this be instituted, we need to grab at any type of savings we see available. He felt that any union negotiations prompted by such a change can be dealt with as a condition of employment.

Mr. Reed suggested we cut stipends for elected officials. Mr. Antanavica agreed, but felt we should start by reducing the Administrator's salary by 10%. Although an attempt to get the Board's attention, he is promoting an across the board cut, not aimed specifically at one person as Mr. Antanavica is suggesting. Mr. Zagorski asked that we find out first what the total savings would be if elected officials were not paid.

Again revisiting the subject of charging the water and sewer districts for billing and collection services, he noted another \$25-30,000 that could be gleaned from such a procedure being adopted. Mr. Zagorski felt that, although he cannot speak to the subject as treasurer of one district, he felt there were benefits the Town receives from the districts; he suggested a cost analysis of both Town and districts be undertaken first to get an accurate picture.

Mr. Antanavica revisited his take on a sidewalk maintenance bylaw that would come with a fining system. Ms. Provencher felt the businesses and residents had enough taxes and charges to pay without having to pay fines if the snow isn't removed in a timely manner. Mr. Antanavica felt making the property owners responsible would free up the Highway equipment and time to allow other areas to be worked on.

Mr. Reed noted that pre-pays for special education related costs is allowed by law for only the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of a new year, yet the School Department has been continued to pay for "SPED" costs that go beyond that 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. When allowed to do so, this creates a false budget; the School Department is actually getting more than their share. He and the School Superintendent have had this discussion, along with one involving tuition offset that is charged on Local Aid sheets vs. the Town's Schedule 19 report. ???? – Bob, what's this about???

It was agreed to amend the Town Administrator's list:

- Add mileage costs to elected officials' tally and see what total mileage costs are for other personnel as well
- Find out what authority could impose maintenance of private sidewalks
- Cost analysis of water & sewer districts costs that the Town benefits from along with the amount the Town could retrieve in charges for billing and collection services for water and sewer districts
- Look at health insurance premium cost ratio of Town vs. employee and estimate savings if changed

Mr. Reed again stressed that the economic situation we are in is too severe not to consider more serious action such as the dreaded Proposition 2½ Override; the Board is not being financially responsible if it keeps ignoring the situation we find ourselves in.

Mr. Zagorski asked for budgeted vs. actual budget numbers effective 12/31, recalling \$100,000 that was "found" last May. Mr. Reed stated that he can perform that exercise, but departmental budgets are already scrubbed clean, there is no excess.

MOTION: Mr. Antanavica moved to adjourn.  
Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan LeChasseur, Administrative Assistant