

**MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
JANUARY 20TH, 2015 at 6:30PM**

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING

Chairman Buckley called the meeting to order at 6:38pm. Chair Thomas E. Buckley, III, Vice-Chair Dianna Provencher, Selectwoman Sandra Wilson and Town Administrator Kevin Mizikar were in attendance. Selectmen Belanger and Dennison were absent due to personal reasons.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No members of the public provided comment

1. SCHEDULED

None

2. CORRESPONDENCE

A. Donation – Senior Center

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Wilson to accept the donation to the Senior Center from Joseph Laconte. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Donation – Police Department

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Wilson to accept the donation to the Police Department from Hot Dog Annie's. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Chapter 90 Funds

Mr. Mizikar presented a letter from Governor Baker releasing an additional \$100M statewide in Chapter 90 funds for FY'15 which increases the Town's apportionment from \$436,134 to \$654,201. This additional \$220K in funding will enable the Town to carry out its plans for roadway improvements faster than expected.

3. NEW BUSINESS

A. Appointment – Temporary Office Assistant – Treasurer's Office

Mr. Mizikar presented a request to appoint Kara Miller to the position of Temporary Office Assistant in the Treasurer's Office. Mr. Mizikar and Ms. Perkins, Interim Treasurer/Collector, interviewed a number of candidates and recommend appointing Ms. Miller to the position.

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Wilson to appoint Kara Miller to the position of Temporary Office Assistant.

Under discussion, Ms. Wilson noted that Ms. Miller has been an office manager for 11 years and has both accounting and treasury experience. Ms. Wilson asked how many candidates applied for the position. Mr. Mizikar responded 7-8 applications were received and 3 interviews were conducted. Ms. Wilson asked if the other applicants would be notified via email if not selected. Mr. Mizikar responded in the affirmative.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. Set date, time, location and open STM Warrant

Mr. Mizikar stated that as the Special Town Meeting occurs within the Annual Town Meeting, the Board does not need to set the date, time and location but rather just open the warrant.

A motion was made by Ms. Wilson and seconded by Ms. Provencher to open the Special Town Meeting warrant.

Under discussion, Ms. Wilson asked about the deadline to submit warrant articles. Mr. Mizikar stated department heads must submit articles to the Town Administrator by 3/12/15. Articles will be presented to the Board on 3/16/15 and the Board will be asked to sign the warrant on 4/6/15. Citizen petitions must be submitted in advance of 4/6/15 to make the warrant.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. Set date, time, location and open ATM Warrant

A motion was made by Ms. Wilson and seconded by Ms. Provencher set the Annual Town Meeting for Tuesday, May 5th, 2015 at 7:00pm in the Town Hall Gym and open the Annual Town Meeting warrant. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Collection Box Certificates of Compliance

A motion was made by Ms. Wilson and seconded by Ms. Provencher to approve the Certificates of Compliance for the collection boxes located at 1136 Main Street, 1230 Main Street and 147 Main Street. The motion carried unanimously.

4. DISCUSSION/OLD BUSINESS

A. FY'16 Budget Workshop

Mr. Mizikar gave a presentation on the draft FY'16 budget. The general financial condition of the Town is much stronger than 12 months ago and the tough choices made over the past 16 months are paying off. Free cash is estimated to be \$1.7M and should be certified by 1/31/15. The stabilization fund has doubled from last year at this time and reserves have increased by over \$705K as compared to January of 2014. Health insurance costs are \$100K lower in FY'15 than in FY'14 and unemployment costs are down which indicates increased stability and a slight uptick in employment.

The budget call was put out in early October requesting level service funding and allowing for up to 3 enhanced service requests. The Board will take initial action on the budget on 2/2/15 and turn it over to the Finance Committee for their review. Mr. Mizikar presented a balanced operating budget proposal of \$27.5M, representing a 1.9% increase over FY'15. Ten enhanced service requests at a cost of \$219K were received from Town Departments (not including Schools) and the proposed budget recommends funding \$181K of these requests.

The Town is healthier on the revenue side and is relying more on property taxes and less on State aid which is more favorable as it increases self-sufficiency and control. Property tax is projected to increase by \$472,768, or 3.66%, due largely to new tax revenue from solar developments. State aid is not expected to change. Ms. Wilson asked about potential cuts to local aid. Ms. Mizikar cited a press release from the Governor today stating he is not going to cut local aid to balance the budget and the release of Chapter 90 funds points in this direction as well. The Town will still have latitude in the bottom line budget if the State does make cuts as the budget is based on last year's State aid numbers and is therefore conservative. The proposed budget anticipates \$2.080M in local receipts due to an increase in free cash which will allow the Town to begin climbing out of difficult times and investing in facilities, one time uses and services to residents. Financial trends show that \$2.4M in local receipts will be collected based on 9% annual growth over the past 3 years so this number is still conservative. Ms. Wilson asked if the meal tax is included in the budget. Mr. Mizikar responded in the affirmative.

On the expenditure side, no significant increase to any budget category is proposed. The budget proposes funding the reserve fund out of tax levy as opposed to free cash. The 15.85% increase to general administrative services is offset by a \$72K decrease to health and human services resulting from combining the budgets of several departments under the Department of Inspectional Services. The vocational/technical school fees and tuition has been removed from the budget and is proposed to be funded as a separate article to more accurately and transparently account for these fluctuating fees and not affect the School budget. Ms. Wilson asked if this article would be for tuition only. Dr. Paolucci responded in the affirmative, noting that \$130K remains in the School budget for 2 buses to transport the vocational/technical students to their respective schools.

Mr. Mizikar discussed some of the proposed increases including restoring staffing in the assessor's office and providing additional funding for a consultant to assist with field work, revising the IT budget to more accurately reflect costs as the line item was under budgeted in FY'15, restoring the Town Planner/DIS Director to full time to assist with economic development, increasing the Town Hall Building budget to address deferred maintenance to hopefully be offset by energy improvements, increasing tree maintenance from 5-6 days, adjusting the snow and ice budget to more accurately account for anticipated expenditures, increasing the street light budget to reflect increasing electricity energy costs, increasing the veterans services budget to address the increasing needs of eligible veterans, restoring hours at the library and increasing health insurance costs due to prescriptions and the Affordable Care Act.

Mr. Mizikar discussed some of the proposed reductions including moving the PT custodian position from the Town Hall budget to the PD budget, reflecting the decrease in debt service, a decrease to the retirement budget based on a recent assessment and a decrease to the unemployment budget based on current trends. Mr. Mizikar noted that the Town has received more in ambulance receipts in the last 12 months than ever before. \$410K was received from Medicaid in calendar year 2014 and as a result, the ambulance revenue budget may see an increase as opposed to running in deficit.

Mr. Mizikar noted that the school department budget, health insurance, State aid, PD/Fire disability insurance and ambulance receipts are only estimates at this time. In sum, the proposed budget increases spending by \$515,205, or 1.9% over the FY'15 budget to restore the Town budget to FY'13 levels, expand services and enable long term planning and growth.

B. EcoATM

Mr. Buckley provided information from EcoATM regarding their decision to delay moving forward with a license request to install their electronic device buy-back kiosk in Walmart. The company noted that payouts can be up to \$400 but the average payout would be \$250. The company may come back to the Board for a license later in the year.

5. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Mr. Mizikar presented highlights from his Town Administrator report. Ms. Wilson asked about the staffing plan for the police department and expressed concern regarding the ratio of sergeants to officers. Mr. Mizikar stated he will review the staffing plan and provide information at the next meeting.

6. BOARD OF SELECTMEN REPORTS

Ms. Wilson attended the quarterly CMRPC meeting and noted the annual assessment is increasing by 2.5%. The meeting also had a session on 25 year population projections. The western region is projected to have low population growth and moderate employment growth. Central Mass population size and employment are expected to grow due to 495 and 146. Ms. Wilson also noted the new ambulance is being built and the progress

can be viewed online, reminded residents that property taxes are due February 2nd and asked residents to support local Girl Scout troops during this cookie season to fund their community service projects and trips.

Ms. Provencher also attended the CMRPC quarterly meeting, reminded residents to pay their taxes and noted that she and Ms. Wilson will be attending the Mass Municipal Association annual meeting at the end of January.

Mr. Buckley expressed his concern regarding the increase in electricity bills, particularly the increase in service fees and delivery charges. Mr. Buckley noted that the Mass Department of Public Utilities has 3 Commissioners and recommended residents reach out to both the Commissioners and their legislators regarding the steep National Grid rate increases. Ms. Provencher noted that the Worcester County Selectmen's Association met and had the same discussion. Mr. Mizikar noted he had a conference call today with the Hampshire Council of Governments on the forthcoming residential energy aggregation which was approved at Town Meeting. Residents will be notified by mail when the change occurs but it is still several months away.

7. MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Wilson to accept the minutes of January 5, 2015. The motion carried unanimously.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session was held.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Wilson at 8:11pm. The motion carried unanimously.