

**MINUTES
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
AUGUST 13, 2013**

Chairman Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. Members present were Sandra Wilson, Thomas Buckley, Dianna Provencher and Matthew Dennison. Selectman Belanger was absent. There was no town administrator present.

Reappointment – Town Counsel

MOTION: Mr. Dennison moved to reappoint Joseph C. Cove, Esquire PC as Town Counsel, term to expire 6/30/14. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

CSX Transportation – License Agreement

Atty. Ned Bartlett was present to speak on behalf of his client, CSX Transportation, with regards to some utility work that needs to be conducted sooner than later. Water District Supt Mike Knox has worked with them to revamp water lines running along their rail line that need to be moved to accommodate new double-stack clearance allowances. He has worked with Atty. Cove on an agreement that will allow access to Town property through a license agreement, affording CSX the authority to work in this area.

Ms. Wilson has spoken with Mr. Knox who feels this license agreement proposal to be the best method with which to remedy this situation, with regulations coming into play within the next few months. Normally town meeting could authorize an easement to the property, but time would not allow for that process to take place. The work should be completed within ten work days but we have allowed for a longer window of opportunity, just in case.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to authorize Chairman to execute License Agreement with CSX Transportation as presented. Ms. Dennison seconded. UNANIMOUS

Town Administrator Search

Ms. Wilson distributed the questions asked by the Search Committee and a listing of those questions each Board member forwarded to her for consideration in preparation for our August 19th interviews with finalists. She felt 10-12 questions within a one-hour interview should work. We will set interviews for 6pm, 7pm, and 8pm. The same questions will be asked of each candidate with members taking turns asking the questions of the candidates. Follow up questions may come from response to original questions; it will vary as to who might ask those follow-up inquiries. Mr. Belanger has asked to be able to focus on follow-up questions for the most part, which Ms. Wilson felt he is skilled in and to which she agreed.

MRI rep Alan Gould will be here to introduce each candidate to the Board and the public. It will be our responsibility to figure out the best fit for the community. Finalists are as follows:

- Jonathan Sistare, previous town manager in New Hampshire, currently sole-attorney practice
- Shaun Suhoski, currently town administrator in Sturbridge
- Kevin Mizikar, currently assistant town administrator in Grafton

Ms. Wilson reviewed questions from Board members, asking each to name their top three. Two questions were selected from the Search Committee listing and offered up for Mr. Belanger to ask. She will compile the selected questions into an interview matrix to be copied and used for the interviews. There will be areas for the members to write their notes.

Cable Advisory Committee (CAC)

Ms. Wilson recognized two members from CAC in the audience. They had noted an item in Correspondence asking the Town to respond to the State with regards to cable contract negotiations. Ms. Sharon Richford stated that they have kept the State informed during contract deliberations and all notices have been sent to them already.

Also, the CAC has taken a vote to approve the contract negotiated with Charter Communications and will now forward to the Board of Selectmen for consideration. The Board will book this as an agenda item at our next available meeting.

Town Administrator Search (continued)

Ms. Wilson will ask our admin asst to forward to the finalists the following documents, unless they are available on the Website:

- DOR report from April 2012
- Listing of our policies and procedures
- General Bylaws
- Listing of elected officials
- Minutes from the last several Board meetings
- Listing of the occupation of each Board member

(Selectmen Dennison left the meeting at 7:02pm to attend Planning Board session and returned afterward.)

Ms. Wilson asked Advisory Board member present, Dave Mero, if they had any questions to add. Mr. Mero offered, "Why leave your current position".

Correspondence

1. Letter from Dept of Telecommunications & Cable notifying the Town that our cable license agreement with Charter Communications will expire in February 2014. Mr. Reed has contacted the signatory and informed them that we have completed our negotiations already. FILE

2. Mass Green Career Conference notice to be held October 3rd in Marlboro. Ms. Wilson noted early registration savings. She suggested any career minded students might benefit from this seminar. She asked that we forward info for posting on website. FILE

Late – memo from Town of Southbridge asking for support of their petition to keep the local Registry of Motor Vehicles open for users in this area. It was noted that this facility has moved or closed a few times in the last several years. Ms. Wilson noted someone collecting signatures in this regard at the concerts on the common. There may be some available at the public forum on August 22nd if the Town Clerk would allow such practice.

MOTION: Mr. Buckley moved that the Board authorize the TA to send letter of support to Southbridge officials. Ms. Provencher seconded. UNANIMOUS

Board Reports/New Business

Selectman Provencher:

- Worcester County Selectmen's Association will hold quarterly meeting on September 19th in Sterling. This newly formed group should provide us with some legislative clout.

Selectman Buckley:

- Met with Mr. Reed, Mr. Dennison and Dick Johnston regarding issues surrounding Waite Pond. A good meeting was held and information shared. We have no money to care for our natural resources, unfortunately. He explained that Mr. Reed contacted our consultant, Chris Cullen/Fuss & O'Neill, during the meeting for a conference call; he felt any repairs begin with a design, which Mr. Cullen felt may help buy us more time for dam repairs. We must do the work eventually. Mr. Dennison agreed that we would be in a better position if we had plans in place.

(Selectman Dennison returned to the meeting at this time.)

Proposition 2½ Override – FY'14 Budget discussions

Ms. Wilson noted the \$463,000 deficit within current FY'14 Budget, which we must balance at upcoming fall town meeting. If the Override fails, the School Dept will remain level funded from FY'13 we are told. Mr. Dennison was concerned with the disproportionate nature of this town wide issue.

We want to layout the course of action that will be taken if the Override should be approved. We will also need another listing of what departments will be cut should the Override proposal not be approved. Much misinformation is being bantered out and about; we need to provide factual information posted in numerous locations for the residents to be informed.

Matters under consideration included:

- If we are able to keep the Library open, should we fund for a Children's Librarian, a position that has remained vacant
- Regional dispatching
- Public Safety – describe situation within Police Dept with our not being able to afford replace personnel becoming a public safety issue, with crime at an all-time high. Many of our officers have chosen to stay on during these most difficult times
- Snow & Ice budget needs to be increased, as it is unrealistically underfunded every year
- Rebuild the Town's reserve accounts if Override is approved

In review of the draft slide show presentation:

- The Advisory Committee wants to add a slide that depicts our lost revenues over the last several years.
- Produce formula that shows how we got to this place

The Board asked that we invite our State legislators to these public forums. It was felt that the State has an involvement in our financial problems, as State Aid to Leicester was cut by \$1Million back in 2009 and has remained at this level for the past several years. The Board agreed that Senator Moore and Representative Binienda should be made aware of the situation we find ourselves in.

MOTION: Ms. Provencher moved to have the TA invite our State legislators to the Town's public forums on pending Override vote. Mr. Dennison seconded. UNANIMOUS

The proposed Override would allow 2% budget increase for the next five years, including FY'14. The Town's portion of that 2% is just under \$100,000 using the FY'13 figure of \$4,975,249 budgeted. The Board discussed where the additional \$99,505 may be spent:

- \$50,000 Police Department – add full timer
- Add (1) staff Highway Department – funds available within budget
- \$20,000 Fire Department – additional training and equipment
- \$15,000 Library – part time children's librarian
- \$ 6,000 Council on Aging – added hours and programs
- \$ 8,505 available balance to distribute among departments

Ms. Wilson reviewed with the Board a listing provided by Town Administrator Bob Reed, indicating some departments that may be able to cut according to recent fiscal year closeout, some reduced expenses of late, or some with balances remaining from when more staffing was available:

- \$12,000 Accounting - adjusted from TA's \$14,800 to consider additional training costs
- \$ 5,000 Elections/Registrations – fewer elections scheduled this year
- \$15,000 Insurance – claims history, participation credits, and rewards for training
- \$ 9,700 Building Dept – funds still in place from full-time vs part-time staffer
- \$15,000 Council on Aging –
- \$ 1,000 Historical Comm – unspent funds over past several years
- \$57,700 TOTAL ESTIMATED SAVINGS

Concerns raised included:

- Will we be able to reduce School's budget to Net School Spending required number?
- With loss of Facilities Manager's position at School Dept, can we use Building Inspector to view school buildings at least, sort of a regional facilities manager for Town and School?
- Tax Title properties available at this time totals \$1.94 Million, something we need to look at disposing of to increase revenues and get parcels back on tax rolls.

Our next meeting to discuss this further prior to first public forum on August 22nd will be held on Tuesday, August 20th.

On Monday August 19th we will meet solely to perform interviews with finalists for the Town Administrator's position.

Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Buckley moved to approve 7/8/13 and 7/29/13 Regular Session minutes.
Mr. Dennison seconded. UNANIMOUS

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan LeChasseur, Administrative Assistant