

Selectmen's minutes of meeting June 8, 2020

Members present: Mark Newman, Brian O'Rourke, George Riley, Joanne Grybosh
Dolores Harasyko, Admin. Asst.

Called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Remote participation information provided for the public.

Reviewed and signed minutes of meeting

Reviewed and signed purchase orders. George questioned purchase orders for A & M Auto. He would like to return them for the required 3 quotes before approving them. There are 2 purchase orders that need quotes.

Brian O'Rourke presented information and cost proposal for Permit Eyes 20/20 which is a cloud-based E Permitting software solution for building permits. After many years our Building Inspector Eric Munson is retiring effective June 30, 2020. Matthew Colmer from Great Barrington will be the new Building Inspector. He is very familiar with the Permit Eyes program. This program is currently used by most towns around us. It is directly connected to the Treasurer and Assessors software. This software will also allow for paying on line for building permits, transfer station stickers and dog licenses. Joanne addressed the Permit Eyes software. She explained the difference in available modules. The module 2020 has an add on feature to add the transfer station stickers and dog licenses directly connected to Uni Bank.

Permit Eyes 2020 can be added on to and is less expensive. The Berkshire County Module is restricted to building permits only.

Brian said that we are the least expensive town in Berkshire County for building permit fees.

He did a comparison with some surrounding towns.

For a 2200 square foot house valued at \$550,000 the permit fee in Sandisfield is \$880.00, in Egremont, Monterey, Alford, Stockbridge the permit fee is \$3,655, in New Marlborough it would be \$2,700. The increase in permit fees would provide substantial income for the town.

Our current fee schedule is based on square foot not on the building value.

George responded that a square foot structure is regressive and he would support the change to building value.

Roger Brown asked what the purpose of the fee is. Brian responded that it is a way to generate money for the town, it is to offset the costs associated with all the inspectors that are involved when building a home.

George would like to move forward with the increased fee structure.

Motion by George, second by Mark, passed unanimously to implement the Permit Eyes 2020 program and move forward with a new value based fee structure effective July 1, 2020. Brian will present the fee schedule at next weeks meeting.

Librarian Terry Spohnholz present to give an update on the reopening of the Library. She has started working at the Library getting it ready to reopen Saturday, June 13. It will be open for

curbside service only. She has been updating the website to include instructions on how to order books. She will then place the books in a bag and in a container outside for pickup. She does need her book Drop Box back from the Town Hall Annex. Joanne will order a new drop box for the Annex.

Roger Kohler asked about sanitation. Terry responded that she will wipe down all books before and after use. State minimum is that the books cannot be recirculated for 24 hours.

Discussed the CARE ACT Relief stimulus payment. Terry did a lot of research. The percentage of payment is based on Medicare. She discuss with Ralph Morrison who agrees the time that goes into all the paperwork and meeting all the requirements is not worth the \$1,700. Motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to not accept the stimulus payment.

Roger Brown from Finance Committee participating remotely to discuss concerns from the Finance Committee. Following is his proposal:

Background: Previous Budget approved by Select Board, to avoid a Prop 2 1/5 override, transferred amount from free cash to limit tax increases to that threshold by both funding articles (3,7,9,11 and 13) totaling \$101,226.13 from free cash and a 'general' transfer of \$124,841.43 from free cash for a net depletion of Free Cash of \$226,107.56. Not included in the proposed budget was the replenishment of the stabilization fund for the \$93,400 taken in previous years to cover Rugg Bridge expenses.

Certified Free Cash account balance was \$657,000 with DOR guidance of \$350,000 leaving \$307,000 as Free Cash above the DOR guidance.

The Finance Committee considered the budget and did not support the School Funding and two other minor areas (Yanner Park Stabilization transfer - \$10,000) and Recreation Committee (\$7000).

The Prop 2 1/5 levy limit, and therefore the free cash allocations to avoid the breach, was calculated with incomplete information. Improvement to tax capacity was \$231,777.79 (6.7% of 2021 proposed budget). The revised proposed budget retained the funding of specific articles 3,7,9,11 and 13 - \$101,266.13 but eliminated the 'general' transfer of \$124,841.43 from Free Cash.

Proposal:

- 1) Request that the Select Board either use the additional taxing capacity or Free Cash to fund the following:
 - a. \$93,400 – repayment to Stabilization for funds borrowed for Rugg Bridge
 - b. \$100,000 – fund Capital Improvement Account not from the Stabilization Account

Result could be funded from either: \$231,841.43 in "additional capacity" on levy limit or \$205,737.87 in Free Cash above DOR guidance.

- 2) If this request is followed, I would change my votes on Yanner Park on Recreation Committee funding (\$17,000). If the request is not followed, I would oppose the budget.
- 3) Advise the Select Board:
 - a. Clearer roles and responsibilities are needed on the calculation of Levy Limit.
 - b. Given the dramatic issues facing the Town for 2021, austerity oversight must be practiced ensuring that revenues, current expenses and planned expenses do not cause damage to the Town's finance well-being.
 - c. Immediate engagement with the School Board is required to ensure alignment on expense budget planning. Today, there are no boundaries.

Brian responded that he does not have an issue paying the Stabilization back as long as it does not go over prop. 2 ½. He stated that we did the same \$100,000 transfer as last year.

Brian asked about the \$900,000 that is already in Stabilization. Roger responded that Capitol Improvement is for any sort of capitol purchase over \$25,000 or an item with a 5 year replacement plan.

The Stabilization Account is for unexpected activities such as an emergency arising from a tornado, unplanned events.

Brian asked if there is a state recommended amount to keep in Stabilization. Roger responded that he has researched and cannot find a prescribed formula for stabilization.

Brian asked that with Broadband coming up soon would that be considered Capitol Improvement or Stabilization. Roger responded that Stabilization would be appropriate with a payback. Kathy Jacobs clarified that the process of the Capitol Improvement plan has not been complete. There is no committee to review requests.

Brian reviewed Free Cash. The state recommended amount is 10% of the annual budget. Kathy responded that it is \$350,000. Brian responded that that is the bare bones amount. Brian asked if they are in favor of changing their vote on Yanner Park and Recreation Comm., Roger responded that they would.

Roger Kohler from the Recreation Committee responded that their Chair has resigned and they need to meet with the remaining members. Selectmen agreed.

Discussed the different numbers for the Levy Limit. The Selectmen have \$106,000 under, Finance Committee has \$231,000 under. Roger Brown will supply their process for the levy limit.

Brian clarified that we cannot add a warrant article to the already posted FY2021 Warrant but they can look into the stabilization pay pack article at the next special town meeting.

Town Manager updates:

Joanne was out of office last week.

The Swap Shed will be ready to open June 20. The electrical work is almost complete. They are implementing a color coded sticker system so that items do not remain after a certain amount of time.

She presented to the Selectmen tonight a complete DPW job description for a full time employee.

MVP update, there are 2 action items to be completed involving DPW, herself and the Board of Selectmen.

Joanne is requesting conformation on the purchase order for Point that it is for the most current version.

She will need Uni Bank contact info from the Treasurer for the Permit Eyes program.

Future agenda items:

Discuss the CARE ACT Relief

Discuss fees for building permits and the Permit Eyes program

Roger Kohler in to review Planning Board fees

Roger Kohler in to review the Marijuana bylaw draft

Discuss the reopening of town buildings

By remote Ralph Morrison asked for a review of the previous conversation on the CARE ACT stimulus payment. Brian provided it.

Ralph asked about the purchase order for tires for the Police Dept. George responded that unless it is an emergency that we need 3 quotes. Ralph responded that his interpretation from Ethics is that there is no conflict of interest because he filed his paperwork with the Town Clerk. George responded that we will review the documents.

George asked Ralph about the Tolland Town Meeting regarding funding of the ambulance services, Ralph responded that it went well and passed.

Mail reviewed

Warrants reviewed and signed

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Mark Newman

Brian O'Rourke

George Riley