

Selectmen's minutes of meeting July 14, 2020

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

Remote participation information provided to the public.

Brian opened the Special Permit Hearing for Roger Ball at 175 New Hartford Road, map and parcel 420-4.2.

Mr. Ball explained that he is seeking permission to add a storage building to the existing saphouse. He will remove and reconstruct the existing wood storage area in order to tie the two roofs together. By doing so the wood storage that is currently 7 feet from the front property line would now be moved to 11 feet from the property line.

George questioned the elevation of the side of the building that is on the hill side. Mr. Ball responded that the west side of the building would be dug into the hillside. The east side slopes down and that is where the doors would be located.

Brian responded that as you travel north on New Hartford Road the grade continues to climb. In order to get a level surface he has to dig into the ground. It will not be a tall structure on the roadside.

Mark questioned the distance from the road edge to the center of the stone wall. Mr. Ball responded that it is 15 feet, Brian responded that it is probably more like 8 feet.

George clarified that the center of the stone wall is 8 feet from the edge of the pavement.

Brian asked about coupling on an 8 foot wall. Roger would need to check with the contractor to keep the rooflines tied together.

Brian opened the hearing for public comments.

Alex Bowman stated that special permits are issued only for uses which are in harmony with the general purpose and intent of our bylaws. He further stated that structures must be set back 30 feet from the road or right of way. While this proposal does eliminate 200 square feet of nonconforming structure in the setback, it adds back 798 square feet of new still nonconforming structure which is an addition of 600 square feet or 3 times as much on nonconforming structure. In his opinion this proposal is substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood. It's a 1,000 square foot garage being added onto an existing small sugar shack. He does not feel that this proposal is the intended purpose of a special permit.

Bob Dwyer who is an abutter questioned the height of the building and the color of the building. He is worried about his building values. He wants to know why Mr. Ball just doesn't conform to the bylaws. He is concerned about the driveway site lines.

Mr. Ball responded that he doesn't want to building anything detrimental. The addition will be 4 feet higher than the saphouse. The color will match the existing building. If he were to set it further back he would then be in fields and wetlands.

Brian responded the peak of the building will be 15 feet high. The current height is 11 feet.

Mr. Ball explained that part of the woodshed would be removed.

John Burrows who is also an abutter stated that he has no objections at all to the project and does not feel it will be detrimental.

Roger Kohler is concerned that the volume of the building is many times more than the current building. He does not feel this falls within the bylaws. He feels this project is too large to fit within a special permit.

George questioned the garage door plan, it shows a driveway. Mr. Ball clarified that it is the current existing driveway not a new one.

Brian responded that Mr. Ball is not looking to upset his neighbors and would be willing to go back to the drawing board with the builder.

Mr. Ball doesn't want to do anything detrimental, he would like time to go back to the builder and possibly change the size of the building and revise the plan.

Dolores suggested postponing/continuing the hearing until the next Selectmen's meeting which is on July 27 at 7:00 p.m. and in the meantime that will give us time to follow up with town counsel as to whether we have to re advertise or allow Mr. Ball to negotiate the plans.

At 7:35 p.m. motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to postpone/continue the hearing until July 27, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Roll call vote: Brian, yes, Mark, yes, George, yes

Reviewed and signed minutes of meetings.

Reviewed and signed purchase orders.

Tabled item 4 regarding the library update. The Library Trustees would like to be part of the update.

Discussed the Town Custodian position. Joanne presented options. She surveyed surrounding towns and found the hourly rate to be \$16.00 to \$19.00. Some towns bid out for a cleaning service. There may be cleaning services willing to come to our area.

Dolores suggested posting the job on the website and Connect Sandisfield Facebook page, perhaps during this difficult economy there is a local person or a semi retired person that could use the job. George suggested posting the job and job description on the website and stating on the Connect Sandisfield Facebook page that there is a job opening and directing them to the website for further information.

Motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to post the position locally first as listed above.

Roll call vote: Brian, yes, Mark, yes, George, yes.

Ralph Morrison asked how much this job will be per hour and a job description. Brian responded that Joanne has done a lot of research and will be compiling the information. The job will pay anywhere from \$14.00 per hour to \$19.00 per hour. Ralph is concerned that current personnel working for the town for many years are making less than this job.

Discussed Roberts Road beyond the unmaintained portion. Brad Curry Road Super. And Dan Garrity participating by remote. Dan would like the road be maintained for all 4 seasons. There is no ditching or drainage and he is having difficulty reaching his property at 36 Roberts Road. He would like the property to be accessible for emergency services.

Brain reviewed his assessment card that shows that the building is listed as a seasonal camp valued at \$93,300 for the land and building. Brian clarified that it is not a single family home, it is a camp. There is no septic, it does have a drilled well, no electricity, solar power. There is an existing outhouse. Per the building code it is a camp and not a house.

Brad met with Dan a few weeks ago and walked the road. There are areas with drainage problems. They looked over the possibilities for a plow truck to turn around.

Mark asked if the road is still on the Chapter 90 list. Brad responded that as of 1997 it was.

Mark asked if this would qualify as a Chapter 90 project. Brad responded that it could but they probably couldn't get to it until at least September. Dan was hoping it could be done by this winter.

Brian asked if there was a foundation under the building. Dan responded that it is on piers. He does plan on installing a septic system sometime in the future.

Brad said this would have to be done in phases and probably not completed until the spring.

Mark asked if they could do patch work on the worst sections before they do a complete job.

Brad responded that they would have to create a turnaround for the plow truck.

Mark asked how much farther they would have to go past Mr. Garrity's driveway to create a turnaround. Brad responded that it has to be worked on.

Brain stated that with the time of year and the small road crew we can make it somewhat passable and to the job in the spring.

Discussed continuing ambulance service to the Town of Tolland. Brian read the letter received from Tolland which states that they would like to have a pay per call of \$450.00 per call instead of paying the Town \$30,000 annually. They would also like to be invoiced each month. Brian asked Fire Chief Ralph Morrison about Tolland's town meeting at which the Town of Tolland approved the \$30,000. Brian reiterated that we are the only town that covers Tolland except for the northern portion that Otis covers. Brian stated that this letter was totally unexpected. Ralph and John Burrows had already started the data collection information for Tolland. Brian asked Ralph if \$450 even covers the ambulance leaving the garage. Ralph explained that if ALS gets called we are then in the hole. Ralph stated that the state allows us to charge \$1,500 per ride. The letter from Tolland is completely different than what was originally agreed upon. Every time the ambulance goes out we would lose money especially if ALS is called. George asked about the wording of the article on the Tolland warrant. Ralph read the article "To see if the Town will appropriate and transfer from free cash \$30,000 to cover ambulance service expenses".

Mark asked about our obligation to Tolland. Ralph said we have no contract or obligation. Ralph proposes that we sent a bill to Tolland for the \$30,000 with a contract for 3 years with a 2 ½% increase each year which would include mutual aid available to them.

Ralph said it costs about \$90,000 a year to operate the ambulance excluding insurances and maintenance.

Ten years ago Ralph looked into contracted services, it would be about \$300,000 a year.

Approximately 33% of our calls are from Tolland which is how we came up with the \$30,000.

Ralph would like the selectmen to review this situation with Town Counsel.

Brian asked if we can refuse to respond to ambulance calls to Tolland. Ralph reiterated that we have no contract with Tolland.

Brian likes the idea of sending them a letter with an expiration date the end of August.

Brian directed Ralph to do some research on his end and with other ambulance services to see if we are legally obligated and Brian will follow up with town counsel.

Ralph reviewed all the mutual aid towns of which Tolland is not listed.

Mark does not like that Tolland changed the agreement after the deal was made. He asked Ralph to produce the number of calls to Tolland.

We will re address in two weeks.

Town Manager updates:

2 items have already been covered, the custodian job and Roberts Road.

The road paving project on Route 183 will begin on July 22, it is posted on the website.

Town Hall will be open to the public by appointment only. Masks will be provided.

She received a lengthy letter from the Technology Committee regarding Charter Comm.

The Route 57 culver replacement and paving, received an updated schedule from the engineer.

The bid opening for the culverts is on August 12 and the paving on Sept. 9.

School Comm. member Jennifer Hibbins and Eric Jesner from the school have reached out to her a couple of times to try to include the selectmen in their meetings. They are willing to move their meeting to 5p.m., still on Mondays. It has not been proposed to the school committee. Jennifer responded that it has not been decided yet. This should be a discussion for a future agenda item.

Four 8 foot picnic tables have been delivered to Yanner Park.

The chairs for the COA will be delivered next week.

Dropbox is coming.

Town Clerk Dolores Harasyko reviewed that as the Town Clerk she has to be the sole key holder of the dropbox during the early voting process for the primary and the presidential election.

Brian responded that won't be a problem.

Future agenda items:

Continuance of the special permit hearing for Roger Ball.

Town Clerk to present updates regarding the primary and election.

Follow up on the ambulance service to Tolland.

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair:

George would like to just implicate that Jennifer Hibbins relate to the school committee that they would be amenable to a 5 p.m. start. Jennifer stated that she has brought up moving from Otis to Sandisfield. Jennifer stated that at this time their meetings are by Zoom, they also meet in Otis because all of their files and documents are in Otis. Nina Carr stated that she remembers that when she was on the school committee they alternated between the 2 towns per the regional school agreement. Jennifer responded that she did research and couldn't find that.

John Burrows stated that the test holes that were filled with gravel on Route 57 do not have any more gravel in them and that someone has already damaged their tire. Brian responded that he has already asked the DPW to patch them.

John also asked if we can contract out the roadside mowing as there is nothing being done with the roadside mowing.

Doug Segrin explained a problem at the Transfer Station. Since the bottom access has been blocked the cars are backed up out on to Route 57 which could cause an accident. Brian explained that people without stickers would use the lower access to avoid getting caught without a sticker. Mark suggested switching the open and closed gates.

Doug is very upset with the Sandisfield Times article regarding the police department. George responded that the Sandisfield Times is a privately owned paper, that the town has no say over it.

Nina Carr reviewed that she works part time for Berkshire Kids. She is working with Roger Kohler planning for an August "Story Walk". It will be held outside in small family groups.

Mail reviewed
Warrants reviewed and signed
Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Brian O'Rourke

George Riley

Mark Newman