

Selectmen's minutes of meeting March 15, 2021

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

Called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Remote and Zoom information provided to the public.

Reviewed and signed minutes of meetings.

Reviewed and signed purchase orders.

Roger Kohler from the Planning Board in to present the revised Marijuana Bylaw that was voted on by the Planning Board after their public hearing. They amended the definition of canopy, they inserted the overlay map, clarified best practices regarding night sky, discussed moving the dispensary in to the overlay district. He explained that some members of the public at the hearing expressed concerns that the canopy size was too restrictive. As the Planning Board they had a discussion to increase the canopy but a majority of the Planning Board did not agree. They also discussed the tier structure, they as a board could not agree so no change was made.

Brian responded that he was in on the Planning Board Zoom call. He would like to ask the selectboard members if they have any questions. Mark responded that he does not agree with all of it but would like to send it to Town Counsel. Brian responded that it is not Town Counsel that approves the bylaw, it is the Attorney General that will make the decision as to whether it passes. Mark would like to see the canopy tripled to 450,000 square feet.

George questioned whether the Planning Board changed the medical dispensary which now can only be located in the overlay district. It was not discussed at the public hearing. Roger responded that it seemed people coming and going as in a retail facility. Roger confirmed that it was not discussed at the public hearing.

George is in favor of the changes made by the Planning Board. He would like the word Marijuana removed and changed to Cannabis. He would like the verbiage to be consistent with the Cannabis Control Comm. He would like to increase the canopy to 250,000 square feet with the idea that we can amend it later. Brian agrees to change the working from Marijuana to Cannabis. He also agrees with increasing the canopy size. He feels it is our job to bring a bylaw to the town meeting that has a strong possibility to pass. The majority of the input is that 150,000 square feet is too restrictive. Town Counsel suggested a limit as to how many facilities with a cap.

Motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to amend the square footage to 300,000. Discussion followed.

Lauren Greenwell appreciates both sides. They are prepared to support the 300,000 square foot canopy which could allow the spread of the impact, allowing more small farms. It is a reasonable starting point.

Roger Kohler agrees that it is reasonable.

Alex Bowman asked if there are any changes to the tier size, Brian responded that there was not much concern in the tier table.

Ed Brozman asked that if there are currently special permits being worked on would they be considered as part of the total canopy.

George responded that he feels they would be included in the total. Brian will follow up with Town Counsel.

Carl Nett stated that Roger Brown and 4 other people suggested increasing the tier sizes.

Motion by Brian, second by Mark, passed unanimously to increase the canopy to 300,000 square feet. Roll call vote: Brian, yes, George, yes, Mark, yes.

Dolores asked for a clean copy of the bylaw to be included in the town warrant, Roger will prepare it.

Reviewed the FY2022 warrant and the submissions from the Fire Chief Ralph Morrison. Brian asked Ralph about budget submission for the Jaws of Life. Per Ralph he sent a list to replace equipment. The old equipment will not cut it with the vehicles today. Brian noticed 3 items for the Jaws of Life, a spreader, a cutter and a ram. Ralph reviewed the need for all items. Brian confirmed that they currently have all 3 items. Ralph confirmed and stated that they are all about 25 years old. Ralph would like 2 batteries per tool. Brian did some research and came up with the EVO 3 Combi Tools. Ralph said you will get more strength with separate tools. Brian asked what is the reason for the combi tool. Ralph responded that it doesn't have the reach, spread, angle or design.

Brian reviewed the request for fire hoses. Ralph said they will replace the hoses on 2 trucks. The new hose will have a locking machination to lock them together. Total of 3200 feet. The cost is \$24,496 plus shipping. Brian asked Ralph to email him with all the rates.

Ralph asked if this is going to be approved, Brian responded that they are going to review and get back to him.

Seth Kershner asked if the proposals would be posted on the town website. Brian said it would be possible if we receive the information on time. We will table further discussion until we receive more information.

Discussed the letter from the Town of Tolland regarding ambulance service. Last year we received \$30,000 payment from Tolland for ambulance service. Tolland is willing to pay \$500 per call. The Town of Tolland will have no obligation for ambulance service. Ralph stated that he went to the billing company and separated all the calls to Tolland. We lost \$26,000 for service to Tolland. If Tolland is only willing to pay \$500 per call we will lose more money. The max money for Medicare calls we get is \$300, the average ambulance call is \$1,500.

Mark asked Ralph if he felt a tier structure would work instead of a flat rate. Ralph responded that he hadn't thought of that. He doesn't understand how that would work.

Brian reviewed the meeting with Tolland about 6 months ago. This information would have been helpful. Brian asked Ralph to compile all this data so that we can present it to Tolland, Ralph will work on it.

Discussed changing the Elected Town Clerk position to and Appointed position. George received an email from Roger Brown, he supports moving to appointed. Additionally Roger would like to see the Board of Assessors be changed to an appointed board. They feel this would allow for a broader pool of candidates.

Brian asked Dolores to clarify the terms of the Assessors. Dolores responded they are elected for 3 years.

Brian asked about the salary for the Assessors, Dolores responded it's approx. \$2,500 a year per Assessor.

Brian reviewed how difficult it is to get people to come to Sandisfield for jobs.

Dolores reviewed the results when we changed the elected Treasurer/Tax Collector/Town Accountant to appointed jobs. We are paying 4 times the amount in salary for appointed versus elected and we ended up with residents in those positions. No one from out of town applied for any of the jobs.

Dolores strongly suggested separating the two jobs, Town Clerk and Admin. Asst. to the Selectmen, Brian agreed.

George feels that if we are considering separating the 2 jobs it is critical that we get a skilled candidate in those positions.

Mark wants to know if they are trying to give the current town clerk a pink slip.

Town Counsel is looking into whether we could vote on something this year that won't happen for 2 more years.

Brian does not see the rush to get this on this years warrant as the current town clerks term is not up until 2023. He would like to wait until next year.

Dolores reviewed that she has been training Pauline Bakunis as the Assistant Town Clerk. Pauline has been very valuable. All agreed to wait another year to discuss.

Town Manager updates:

Joanne provided DPW updates, mud season, she responded to 17 calls regarding mud on the dirt roads.

They used a loader and 2 dump trucks. The grader broke on Saturday. Brad has pieced it together to make it workable.

She posted an article Sunday on the website describing all that is being done for mud season.

She continues to work with the BSC on the dirt road assessments. Moving forward with updating that report which will be followed by a public hearing.

On Wednesday she met with BETA Engineers for Route 57 to go over the funding with New Marlborough.

She continues to work with the DOR on the levy limit with Jim Padoluk and the Assessors.

Senior transportation will continue with Great Barrington, we should have a contract soon.

She connected with Jeff Bye regarding broadband, he will follow up on the progress.

There are no issues with the server.

She updated the driveway application and road cut application. They will be placed on the website and part of Permit Eyes.

She wants to acknowledge the School Option Committee, they have been meeting weekly and hope to have a report in April. She is grateful for the support and brain power from this group.

She continues to work on County bids for fuel.

Brian asked if she has last years levy limit, she responded it was \$3,328,436, this year is \$3,430,455.

New growth last year was approx. 40 permits, this year approx. 85 permits.

Reviewed mail

Reviewed and signed warrants

Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair:

George asked for a p o box update, Mark responded that he is actively working on it and will have information next week.

John Burrows is very concerned about deep potholes on Route 183 near Sage Road. Also on Route 57 near the bridge there is a very large hole. There are cones in the potholes. Brian responded that the asphalt plants are still closed and it is too cold for cold patch.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Brian O'Rourke

George Riley

Mark Newman