

Selectmen's minutes of meeting March 2, 2015

Members present: Patrick Barrett, Jeffrey Gray, Lisa Blackmer, Dolores Harasyko

Called to order at 7 p.m.

Reviewed and signed Chapter 90 paperwork.

Lisa presented a spreadsheets to complete New Hartford Rd. She worked up 4 proposals all for various lengths. Lisa has been working with Kathy Stevens. Kathy Stevens recommended waiting until April 1, 2015 to go out to bid. We should have our Chapter 90 budget number by then. She would rather review and approve once we know which plan we will go with. Lisa has a proposal for 2.5 miles and would like the Selectmen to think it over. Kathy Stevens would like to bid the 3.9 miles without the topcoat after April 1. Steve and Jeff have been working closely on this and agree. Possible start date would be June 15, 2015. Kathy Jacobs asked why the push on the project. Patrick responded that we need to get this project done before next winter. The Selectmen agreed to have Lisa work on the 3.9 mile project.

Dolores presented FY2016 budgets.

Kathy Jacobs asked about part time benefits. Lisa is working on this.

Finance Committee has a problem with the new truck for the highway dept. We will ask the Treasurer to come in next week to review financing. David Hubbard would like to look into contractors in lieu of replace vehicles for the highway dept. Kathy would like to form a committee to look into more contracting. Patrick responded that the Town of Sheffield does a format like ours.

Discussed Info Tech Support line item. Jean Atwater Williams suggested increasing it. The current budget only allows for 2 ½ hours of tech support a month.

Lisa followed up on the Fire Dept. increases. Some increases are to cover state mandated items. There is an increase for EMS mandated training and recertifications.

Fire Dept. salaries are up 28%. Ralph Morrison explained to Lisa he went from \$8,000 for Fire Chief salary to \$10,000 as he wants to have a competitive salary to other towns.

David Hubbard responded that some expenses are uncontrollable but salaries are controllable. Patrick responded that the employees feel they are underpaid and under attack every year. He noted that when we advertise for jobs we get a very low response. The Selectmen will allow a 2% increase for the Fire Chief, the same as all other employees. We will ask Police Chief Mike Morrison to come in to answer questions from the Finance Committee regarding revenue from speeding tickets and other budget questions.

David would like to review the budget. He would like to take it apart to review what is in place.

Reviewed the budget line item for Forest Fire Water Tanks for \$1,500. Lisa will ask Ralph to request a Reserve Fund transfer for these tanks.

Kathy Jacobs asked about the status of the meal beverage tax. The Selectmen decided at a previous meeting to not approve this tax. Our three businesses are already stressed. David Hubbard does not agree, he feels we should pursue this. Dolores explained that

there was a well posted meeting and that the local business were contacted to discuss this tax. All the businesses explained the added tax would place more stress on their already struggling businesses.

Jeff reviewed the upcoming revenue potentials with the new nursing home, gas stations. We will be reviewing air B & B's.

Jean Atwater Williams in to present a letter of support for MBI/Wired West. Jean has invited MBI/Wired West representatives to the Selectmen's meeting March 16 to review financial requirements. There are 32 towns out of 44 that have decided to place an article on their town meeting warrant regarding Wired West. The total cost is approx. 83 million dollars, Sandisfield portion is 3.61 million. The State is putting \$620,000 towards the project leaving 2.8 million we have to provide a bond for. There shouldn't be a tax impact for 3 to 4 years. After that an average of \$211.80 addition tax per year per household assuming the network makes no money. People currently using satellite services will be able to save money.

Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to approve and sign the letter of support for Wired West.

Kathy Jacobs would like Jean to look into more state funding.

Patrick addressed the situation in the Town of Tolland's Highway Dept. Their Road Superintendent will out of work for an extended period. Steve has already offered to hold in any way. Dolores has met with one of their Selectmen and offered to assist in any Chapter 90 paperwork if they need it. The Selectmen wish their road superintend a speedy recovery and to help in any way we can.

Lisa presented an updated part time employee benefits policy for employees working 20 hours or more. Employees working under 20 hours a week would not receive any benefits.

Motion by Jeff, second by Patrick to adopt the Part Time Employee Benefits policy pending Town Council approval.

Reviewed and signed the contract for legal services regarding the "Host Community Agreement".

Lisa provided her weekly update. She has been working on the New Hartford Rd. project, continued looking into the new hire for the police dept., we do not need to advertise for this position, she has done some budget work, worked on MBI, looked into phone and internet and where to revamp and cut to prepare for the Voyp system. She has been working with the Planning Board on bylaws. She is negotiating lower phone rates. Patrick asked about the Senior Tax Workoff Program. Lisa responded that the application was mailed to all senior households, most seniors do not want to reveal their income information. Lisa would like to review the policy in the spring. Patrick would like to have department heads put together a list of jobs and reach out to the seniors to see if they would be willing to work.

Patrick asked Lisa about the Annual Town Warrant. Lisa has recently obtained samples of streamlined warrants. Since it is too late in the budget process to change our warrant we will discuss this at the end of the Annual Town Meeting this year to prepare for the change for next year.

Discussed goals for the Town Administrator. Patrick and Jeff would like to set goals for the upcoming year and review them in a couple weeks.

David Hubbards observation is that Boston decides what can and cannot be done. He feels Lisa needs to spend more time in Boston advocating for the town. He feels she needs to concentrate on the big ticket items.

Reviewed and signed minutes of meetings.

Reviewed mail

Reviewed and signed warrants.

Meeting adjourned at 10:09 p.m.

Patrick Barrett

Jeffrey Gray