

Selectmen's minutes of meeting February 23, 2015

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

Called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Narain Schroeder from Berkshire Natural Resources in representing Dominic Konstam. Mr. Konstam is seeking approval for a conservation easement for 73 acres at 19 Clark Rd. with the right to build a sugar shack. The easement is a negotiation between the owner and the town. It removes building rights forever. It requires approval of the Board of Selectmen per MGL 184. The land stays on the tax rolls but at a greatly reduced rate. It will be taxed the same as Chapter 61 forestry which the land is already assessed at. Discussed the different chapter programs. Patrick asked what the importance of this land is. Mr. Schroeder responded that it is in an area without a lot of houses, there is a large diversity of wildlife, clean water, clean air. Patrick said that he was surprised by this new easement so soon after the last one was granted. For the last easement Mr. Konstam explained he was setting up the future use of the land for his family. Patrick explained that when easements are granted every taxpayer will be paying more to make up the future of the tax revenues lost. Patrick asked why this property is so important. Mr. Schroeder responded that it is part of his estate planning. There could be building lots within the 73 acres but it would be difficult. Patrick reiterated that one of the areas of frustration is that these easements get a significant tax reduction but the towns people are unable to use this land for hunting or recreation. This easement does not grant public access. Jeff referred to the last easement of over 200 acres, there is building lot availability on this easement. Dolores asked if the former Green property, which Mr. Konstam now owns will be the next easement Mr. Konstam will be requesting. Mr. Schroeder responded that it is possible. Mr. Schroeder feels it would make sense to have a sit down with Mr. Konstam regarding all of his properties. Patrick does not have a problem with this as long as this is the last easement request from Mr. Konstam. Mr. Schroeder will get in touch with Mr. Konstam to set a date to have Mr. Konstam present his entire easement plant. Jeff is not in agreement with another easement.

Steve provided highway department updates. They have been extremely busy plowing and cutting back snowbanks.

Lisa presented an update on the New Hartford Rd. project. She explained that the original vendor quote was off. The cost is going to be more but she is not sure about how much. She should have more information regarding chapter 90 funds after March 1, 2015. We will do the FDR and put off the top coat. BRPC has a bid packet ready to go out to bid. John Burrows asked about the funding. Barbara Cormier said perhaps we should put off the internet and new town buildings and put that money into the roads. Bogart Muller said he likes the way Steve has widened the roads. Bogart suggested considering returning to gravel roads in lieu of paved roads. Jeff responded that gravel roads will not hold up as well as paved roads especially on heavier traveled roads. Jean Atwater Williams responded to Barbara Cormier that Wired West will be self sufficient

and that the town needs it in order to survive and attract more people here. Dolores asked Lisa about a firm timeline for the New Hartford Road project. Dolores explained that we hired Berkshire Regional Planning to work on this project last year and would like to know why we are just learning about the funding issues and costs now. Lisa explained that she met with DOT Kathy Stevens in late January 2015 and they do not have solid chapter 90 numbers yet. Lisa will verify final numbers and chapter 90 available funds. Lisa feels this project should get done this year. Lisa presented chapter 90 paperwork for this project. Reviewed and signed.

Brian Cruey commended the highway department for the work done on North Beech Plain Road.

Barbara Cormier asked Steve to cut back the snow banks at the end of Norfolk Rd.

Town Administrator updates. Lisa spent time on the New Hartford Rd. project, dealing with the road salt shortage on a daily basis, working on phone and internet service, working on budgets, streamlining the annual town warrant, cemetery committee meeting and personnel issues.

Discussed the MMA meeting Lisa would like to attend. She is willing to take the time off as a personal or vacation day if it is a point of contention. Patrick said it has never been about a point of contention but a matter of keeping the selectmen informed of when she is out of the office. He feels that MMA meetings are important and values these and the STAM meetings. However we have many issues being worked on at this time that require her to be in office such as budgets and warrants. He asked Lisa if she can get this amount of work done and still attend these meetings, she responded that she could.

Bogart asked what the MMA meetings are all about. Lisa explained that she has been elected to the Board of the MMA. She feels it is important for Sandisfield to have a voice. She addresses regional equity. Barbara Cormier asked if she is there representing Sandisfield or North Adams. Lisa responded that she gets called on to represent Berkshire County but is also a council woman from North Adams. Lisa will be taking a vacation day for the March 3, 2015 meeting.

Ron Pachulski asked if there will be informational meetings regarding Wired West before the annual town meeting, Jean responded that there will be at least one.

Gary Bottom presented bylaw draft copies of the Right to Farm, Driveway Permit and Access Road Permit. Jeff has reviewed the Access Road bylaw and is happy with them. Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to accept the bylaws as presented pending approval from Town Council.

Gary provided an update on the Master Plan process.

The Cemetery Committee presented a request for permission to cut trees at the cemeteries. John Field has volunteered his services for this. Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to allow the removal of trees and for the volunteer pruning days. Lisa checked with the town's insurance company and all volunteers are covered for liability. Bogart and his employees are also volunteering.

Reviewed and signed the annual Porch Light Visiting Nurse contract.

Reviewed and signed minutes of meetings.

Lisa has received an application for the Police Department. She would like to know if we have to advertise. Patrick directed Lisa to get a ruling from Town Council.

Brian Cruey introduced himself as our new website administrator. Patrick thanked the people that have been volunteering to work on the website and is excited to welcome Brian to our crew. Dolores suggested discussing the use of the website at the next all boards meeting so that all boards will start to post agendas and minutes to the website.

Mail reviewed

Warrants reviewed and signed

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Patrick Barrett

Jeffrey Gray