

Selectmen's minutes of meeting April 14, 2014

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

Called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Meeting is being taped

John Skrip requested to go out of order on the agenda. He is requesting from the Selectmen that Town Administrator Lisa Blackmer take over the suggestion box on the town's website. He would like her to review and respond to suggestions. The Selectmen will discuss this with Lisa and consider his request.

Steve presented highway dept. updates. He presented two chapter 90 project requests. One is for the guardrails for Tannery Road and the other is for blacktop to be used town wide. Reviewed and signed. Ralph Morrison asked about the guardrails. He thought it was part of the bridge replacement project. Steve explained that the guardrails on Tannery Road were never part of the bridge replacement but that he had been negotiating with the people working on the bridge to do some additional work. During the course of the work other people intervened and disrupted the negotiating resulting in the town having to use chapter 90 to fund the guardrails.

Steve reviewed the additional funding the town will be receiving in our chapter 90 for repairs directly related to this winter. He credits Town Admin. Lisa for going to Boston to advocate for our town which resulted in an additional \$50,000 for potholes, repaving, damaged street signs, damaged guardrails. The funds will be available through the Chapter 90 program. Steve and Lisa are working on filling out the reports and contract to meet the deadline.

Steve reviewed the use of a demo hot box for pothole patching at no cost to the town. Discussed the dirt roads. The roads have held up very well after this very long and difficult winter.

Discussed Viets Rd. The very end is washed out due to the culvert being frozen and blocked. This area of Viets Rd. was one of the few areas that have not had ditch work done. It is on the list but has a lower priority due to there being only one house at the end. It is no less important but he has to prioritize the work to be done.

Discussed the millings that were placed on Silverbrook Rd. They held up very well. There are a few potholes.

Terry Ignace asked how often Steve drives over every town road. Steve responded that it takes about 4 hours to drive over every town road. He tries to do this once a week. It is hard to designate 4 hours a week to do just this. He relies on the highway dept. and input from the public if there is a problem. He also commented that there are people in town that think he drives around too much. He stated that after any weather event he does review all the roads.

Reviewed and discussed the process of keeping minutes of meetings and posting agendas. Lisa explained that a reasonable amount of time for producing minutes of meetings is 30 days. Most boards meet once a month. For the boards that meet every week it is not always possible to have the minutes prepared by the next meeting depending on the work load of the week. The posting of the meeting and agenda have to be in to the town clerk

48 hours before the meeting excluding Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. She keeps a permanent book of all minutes and agendas and posts the other copy at the Town Hall Annex per law requirements. Discussed website postings. The selectmen agree it is time to hire a person specifically for this job. We have a few volunteers now but they are only available to do some of the posting.

Rosario asked why certain items he requested for the agenda were not on it. Dolores responded that she meets with the Chair every week to go over the next weeks agenda. It is the chairs decision as to what is placed on the agenda. He explained to Rosario that they did not need to place the items on the agenda and directed Rosario to contact the appropriate individuals for answers.

Rosario discussed the minutes of the Selectmen's meeting from March 17, 2014 that were approved. He found an error in the adoption of G.L. c. 41, it should read G.L. c. 40. Motion by Jeff to amend the minutes to reflect the correct Chapter 40 in lieu of 41, second by Rosario, passed unanimously.

Rosario addressed the issue of town council. Rosario feels we should have used Ed McCormick for the special permit process. Patrick explained that we used a lawyer who specializes in the special permit process. He asked Rosario is he felt we were in error hiring a lawyer who specializes in this particular process only. He explained that we discussed this during last years budget cycle when we new there was a potential for special permit request for large projects. Patrick explained the difficulties we had in the past with a simple vegetable stand. Jeff responded that it was his call as Chair to direct the Town Administrator to hire council specializing in this area. He gave serious thought to both sides and felt Koppleman and Paige was the best option for the town. We actually budgeted extra specifically for this purpose. It was also discussed during prior selectmen's meetings. Our town council does not specialize in municipal law.

Koppleman and Paige only work on municipal law. It was also Koppleman and Paiges recommendation we adopt G.L. c. 40A before the special permit hearing which allows the town to set up an escrow account. By setting up an escrow account the applicant pays for all the costs, including legal cost and does not pass the cost onto the taxpayers.

Richard Campetti responded that he feels the selectmen made the right decision in using Koppleman and Paige. This process will not cost the town anything. Town Council would have charged by the hour for research and guidance. Patrick explained that many towns are going with a "menu" of attorneys. They hire per specific needs. Patrick offered to call our town council and explain their decision. Paul VanSickle asked why and who complained about the use of Koppleman and Paige. Rosario had a concern and brought it up. Susan VanSickle responded that they selectmen did what they felt was the right decision for the town and should not second guess themselves.

Town Admin. Lisa reviewed the Senior Tax Workoff Program. She presented a final draft of the policy. She suggested the Town Admin. be the point person as she has no personal ties to the community and is unbiased. This would also allow persons serving on the COA to participate in the program as they would not be part of the application review process. This policy can be modified in the future. Lisa will add a confidentiality clause to the policy. The application will require income information. The work will be given to persons that meet the requirements of the work to be done and also on a needs basis. The selectmen thanked her for all her work on seeing this through. We have been trying to get this going for two years.

Lisa reviewed and presented a grant from the Berkshire Regional Planning Comm. that our Planning board previously applied for and were denied. She is re applying for the Technical Asst. Grant which will allow for man hours to review and give guidance on our bylaws and to help with the master plan. Reviewed and signed by the chair.

Lisa reviewed another grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety to pay for half the cost of defibulators. She would like to have them in all town buildings and the SARC building. Discussed financing the half not covered. John Burrows suggested putting in a reserve fund transfer request to the finance committee. Lisa will get an accurate cost.

Terry Ignace asked about the results of the union contract negotiations. The selectmen and town admin. responded that it is not finalized yet and therefore is not for public discussion.

Terry Ignace would like to privatize the highway department. He thinks this will save money. A lengthy discussion followed. Jeff responded that as a private contractor it will actually cost more. The contractors costs of operating will be passed on to the town. Patrick reviewed that we bid out the snow plowing of Tannery road and the fire houses every year and only get 2 to 3 bids. Discussed bidding out the roadside mowing. Dolores explained that WMECO actually pays for the tractor that is used to do this and the host community receives the tractor at the end of the contract for \$1.00.

Motion by Jeff, second by Patrick, passed unanimously to appoint Gary Bottum to the Planning Board.

Rhee Kasky asked about the pros and cons of having an appointed finance committee to an elected one. She feels that an elected board would be taken more seriously. Lisa will look into this.

Reviewed and signed an order to restrain and license dogs for 25 Sandisfield Rd.

Mail reviewed

Warrants reviewed and signed

Minutes reviewed and signed

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Jeffrey Gray

Patrick Barrett

Rosario Messina