

Selectmen's minutes of meeting March 3, 2014

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

Members absent: Rosario Messina, Stephan Harasyko

Called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mike Leavitt and Doug Bruce in from Berkshire Natural Resources. They acquire land for recreation use. BNR owns the land around the Town Hall Annex. They have created walking trails. Parking is a problem for them. They would like permission to use the parking lot at the Town Hall Annex next to the dog pens. They would not use it on days the COA are here as parking is limited. The trail starts at the Town Hall Annex and makes a one mile loop. They would also like to place a marker sign and a kiosk with maps at the entrance of the trail. Discuss car pooling from the Old Town Hall if they have a large group. They will post ahead of time the dates of the hikes. They are willing to assist group hikes such as Boy and Girl Scouts, School Clubs, etc. Reviewed liability issues. Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to allow the parking for 1 ½ year and revisit the situation to see how it is working.

Patrick asked about trails connecting to Yanner Park. They will come in to review the Master Plan for Yanner Park and consider connecting the trails. Kathy Jacobs suggested combining this project with the Recreation Committee.

Jane Hason and Joseph Zeller in to discuss ongoing issues with Joe Zellers property. She has been requesting for over a year that Joe clean up his property. She is trying to sell her property and feels that the condition of Joe's property is directly affecting the value of her property and she is having a hard time selling it. She reviewed the town's bylaw regarding unregistered vehicles. She has spoken to the Building Insp., Board of Health and Selectmen regarding the condition of the part of the garage falling of the building. She does not feel Joe is working fast enough. Joe responded that the weather has been a big factor. He has been in touch with Formel's to remove all the vehicles. As soon as the snow has melted and his yard has dried up he will get a dumpster for the building. He has already contacted Valley Roll Off. Jeff asked him to prioritize the vehicles as soon as possible, Joe agreed.

The Selectmen thanked Joe for all his additional Constable work.

Assessor Bethany Perry and Treasurer Teresa DellaGiustina in to review the overlay account. Bethany explained the history and purpose of the account. The amount fluxgates every year. Originally when the town had it's own school this was considered a slush fund for the school. There is approx. \$200,000 available in the account. The Assessors do not feel that the request for a new police cruiser is an emergency and are not comfortable funding it from this account. Teresa reviewed her discussion with the DOR regarding Free Cash and the Stabilization Account. With the current economy he suggested keeping a minimum of \$500,000 in Free Cash and \$750,000 in Stabilization. He feels anything above those amounts could be used for funding. We will be using

\$50,000 from Free Cash for the New Hartford Rd loan. Currently we have \$600,000 in Free Cash and \$1,000,000 in Stabilization.

Discussed the history of the stabilization account and paying ourselves back. The stabilization has been used to borrow from ourselves instead of outside financing. Paying ourselves back has Discussed the Senior Tax Workoff program which comes from the Overlay Account which is valued at \$10,000.

Discussed funding the new police cruiser through the stabilization account and pay it back over the next five years.

Discussed the proposed article from Finance to transfer money from free cash to the stabilization to pay off the remaining payments for the old ambulance, salt shed, old dump truck and old plow and sander. Patrick suggested paying off the first two which are items 9 & 10 from free cash and leaving the other two on the stabilization sheet. Jeff would like to forgive, not payback, the last two items which are 11 & 12. Discussion followed. The selectmen will hold off a decision until next week when they have a full board as Rosario is not in attendance at this meeting.

Lisa clarified how the meal tax works.

Kathy Jacobs will contact John Burrows to reconfigure the stabilization spreadsheet including 3 scenarios.

Discussed the Town Admin. budget. Patrick explained that a majority of the selectboard are supporting a full time town administrator. Kathy Jacobs asked about hours and benefits for full time. Lisa responded that it would be a full time salaried position. Depending on the time of year the hours would be 35 to 50 a week. She does not need medical benefits and will negotiate personal and vacation time with the selectmen only after it passes the annual town meeting. Kathy feels that there should be a 6 month review before going to full time. Lisa responded that by town meeting it will be 6 months and that in order to budget for the next year she has to submit the budget for full time now so that it will be on the warrant. Patrick explained the need for full time. We have been behind on working for a long term plan for the town. We are missing several elements to be considered for any grants. This full time position would be an investment in the town's future.

Treasurer Teresa DellaGiustina reviewed her budget. She gave herself and assistant a 2% increase in salary. The increases in her budget are mostly for attending educational and mandated meetings. There are also software increases.

We will level fund budgets not received to date, Board of Health, Ins. Prem and Bonds, VNA and Brien Center.

Motion by Patrick, second by Jeff to accept the above budgets.

Discussed union contract negotiations. We will change the date to April 7 at 7 p.m.

Minutes reviewed and signed

Selectmen Rosario stopped in earlier in the day to ask Dolores to relay a message to the Selectmen and Highway Dept. He wanted to commend the Highway Department for their assistance this past week on a problem on Route 183 in which someone dumped a very large amount of trash. There was enough trash to fill a 20 yard dumpster. The police were able to determine from the trash where it came from and will pursue reimbursement for the dumpster and the highway dept. time.

Mail reviewed
Warrants reviewed and signed

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Jeffrey Gray

Patrick Barrett