

Washington Board of Selectmen's Meeting – April 1, 2013

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner and M. Case.
2. After leading the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of March 25, 2013. M. Case seconded the motion and the minutes were accepted unanimously.
3. Steve Southard addressed the Board to complain about all the salt and stones used on roads this winter. Town plows had pushed much of this material up onto his property at the corner of Upper Valley Rd. and Rt. 8. He spoke about this with D. Fish who told him that the Highway Department cannot go onto private property to clean up. S. Southard asked if the Board would authorize this. J. Huebner said that although he appreciates the problem, the Town can't go onto private property.
4. J. Huebner recognized two representatives from the Becket Select Board who were attending to discuss the issue of shared services between the two towns. The Becket attendees were Jean Prior and Bill Elovirta. Joe Kellogg of Becket could not be there. J. Huebner expressed Washington's full support for the services shared with Becket. These are fire/emergency services, school transportation, Becket beach and ambulance. Both the Becket Select Board members attending and the Town Board agreed that no formal, written agreements exist now regarding these services. J. Huebner said that we contribute \$8000 for fire service currently. The Becket Board members told him that they need to raise that to \$10,000. J. Huebner and D. Spencer agreed that item would be included in our warrant at the spring Annual Town Meeting. He pointed out that we have paid Becket \$1,000 for use of their Town Beach for last year and will pay another \$1000 for this year. Becket would like to have a 3 year renewable agreement with the Town for these shared services. J. Huebner suggested a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two towns rather than a formal agreement.

Raising the subject of the two towns' responsibility for maintaining Washington Mountain Road, J. Huebner gave copies of his correspondence with Mass. Secretary of Transportation Davey to the Becket representatives. M. Case and J. Huebner met with Secretary Davey at the Lenox DOT office today to discuss funding for repairs long overdue for the road. They protested the dropping of Washington Mountain Road from the TIP list. The Board had been seeking answers to questions about work the state had done on the Road 20 years ago which never resulted in any repairs. DOT agreed that we will get data from their records about this ineffective program. Apparently the goal then was to address the dangerous state of the Road. Total reconstruction was the goal. Bill Elovirta from Becket said he remembered that all the work at that time was to be paid from TIP funds, "but it all went bad". He stated that the Becket Board is 100% behind supporting Mountain Road repairs. The Becket attendees mentioned that they found in their files some of the preliminary plans for the Mountain Road work when

they did bridge repairs several years ago. They believed that Dalton would also be supportive of our efforts as they also share in responsibility for a portion of the road.

J. Huebner told them that Washington Mountain Road is now back on the TIP list. He asked for Becket's support when we go after the state for money. The Becket representatives promised their support. J. Huebner asked them to find out who their town representative on the Metropolitan Policy Organization (MPO) is. The MPO makes decisions on where the TIP funds are spent and we will need their support. He also reported that the DOT agrees that we need adequate drainage the length of the road. He will write a letter for Tracks about the status of funding for and repairs to the Mountain Road. The Board will consult with the Conservation Commission and Phil Clark about drainage.

Observing that the Mountain Road is heavily used and seems to have a higher than normal number of accidents, J. Huebner said he would draft a letter to the State Police requesting crash reports on the road over the last 5 yrs. Our visitors mentioned that Becket will also have some accident reports, as will Dalton. J. Huebner will also send this request to the RMV. Becket had traffic counts on the road from a few years back and offered them to the Town. J. Huebner expressed his appreciation and said that the BRPC may also have traffic counts available. Letters of support have been received from Rep. Pignatelli and from Sen. Downing. J. Huebner read from Sen. Downing's support letter. D. Fish added that Cathy Stevens and Mark Moore of DOT told him to just fill in the pot holes and maintain the drainage for now. That is all he can do until funding for the Mountain Road is available. J. Huebner said that he will keep the Becket Board updated on developments with the road. He will write a thank you note to Sen. Downing for his support to be signed by him and the Board.

5. J. Huebner reported that the Board had received a permit application from the COA to hold yoga classes at Town Hall. Cost for the course of classes will be \$30 for seniors and \$60 for non-seniors. Heidi Nugent is the instructor. The Board signed the permit and will charge a \$50 fee to the instructor as she will be making money using the Town's facility.
6. Regarding the claim against the Town filed by Mr. Patel for damage to his son's car on the Mountain Road last week, J. Huebner said that the Town may pay when the condition of our roads causes damage to a vehicle. He will talk to C. Briggs about the claim.
7. Craig Willis advised the Board that he is working on Beach Road for Ayal Shapira. He has started work. His crew is there cutting trees. The obstacle course is popular. Several cadets have been training there and have won acceptance to the Navy seals. Mr. Shapira will build an indoor pool on his property.
8. J. Huebner asked the Administrative Assistants for an update on the job descriptions. They have not gotten to them yet. They reported that the Public Health Mini-Grant

Application was submitted to the state last week. No reply has been received yet from CSX . J. Huebner asked J. Hostetter to draft a letter of inquiry to CSX. J. Nelson will attend the MASS Buys Expo in Worcester for the Board on May 2 in Worcester. J. Hostetter reported that she is waiting for final numbers from D. Parnell to finish the Annual Reports. J. Huebner announced that there will be a Board of Health Meeting on April 8 and no meeting on April 15. He will not be in attendance at the Selectmen's Meeting on April 22. J. Hostetter told the Board that she has finished setting up the new Veteran's Agent's file cabinet and has given him keys and an orientation to the building. J. Hostetter had got new Vet's file cabinet set up. Has oriented him to the building. J. Huebner said that J. Hostetter had provided the Board with a list of the building permits. There have only been a few issued for this year so far. In 2012 there were maybe a dozen permits. He thanked J. Hostetter for doing this and asked her to keep the list updated.

9. C. Briggs told the Board that she had not researched ad rates at the Eagle for the Mapleview auction yet. She will check to see if Jeremiah Pollard, Town Counsel, will be the auctioneer. J. Huebner reported that he had spoken with the Viners and they are still interested in the property. We need information from J. Pollard about the timing of advertising and other requirements of the auction process. C. Briggs will investigate switching the Town to bi-weekly payroll. C. Briggs said that all Handbooks have been distributed to employees. She has not received paperwork from Mr. Patel yet.
10. Computer consultant J. Les told the Board that he had discovered that we do have a fixed IP address and so can set up remote access to her system for Assessor Consultant Karen Avalle. He can set it up for her tonight. She will only be able to access her own computer at Town Hall. No other Town computers will be affected. She will have a remote desktop and will see her regular dashboard.
11. J. Huebner asked D. Parnell if the auditor has been in to see him yet. D. Parnell reported that they have not yet connected. Regarding the Emergency Management Grant, D. Parnell said that the Town can make the case for using it for the emergency lighting equipment. We will have to break it down into \$1000 segments.
12. V. Breen will attend the Selectmen's dinner Thursday night. He has purchased and will bring the raffle gift. He will speak with Becket and Dalton police and collect crash data for the Mountain Road. He will also call the State Police for any information they might have. J. Huebner will write a letter explaining our need for the data. He will contact the RMV and BRPC. V. Breen said that he can provide an estimate of the minor accidents on the Mountain Road. J. Huebner asked him to do so.
13. J. Huebner raised the subject of state taxes on businesses in town. The Assessors have been contacted by the DOR who pointed out that the Town has been remiss in taxing local businesses. This is a tax on equipment such as computers or tractors used in

conducting business. Personal property used in business is subject to taxation. The Town can vote at Annual Town Meeting next month to exempt up to \$ 10,000 in valuation. This is the highest level of exemption allowed by the law. It will help to minimize the tax impact on Town.

The Assessors sent out notice of the tax to a few local businesses. K. Avalle of the Assessor's office said that we were supposed to have done this 3 years ago. There is no comprehensive, up to date list of local businesses. E. Bond mentioned that he knows many businesspeople in Town who have not received the Assessors' letter. The Board agreed that currently there is no one in charge of updating the information we have on Town businesses. Some individuals have registered with the Town Clerk, but that is only if they need a DBA certificate for their bank. The Planning Board also has some information on Town businesses but it is not complete or updated. The Selectmen and Planning Board have recently discussed many business – related issues including requiring registration of all Town businesses and what sort of fee to charge for this registration.

J.Huebner made a motion to place the \$10,000 equipment exemption on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. M.Case seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. K. Avalle told the Board that state law requires that all businesses fill out a form. Enforcement is an important issue. There is a depreciation schedule available from the state. She will do the appraisals. Even if your equipment is fully depreciated, there will still be some value taxable by the state.

Discussion followed on how best to compile a roster of businesses in town. J. Huebner said that he wants a by-law that requires all business to voluntarily register. We would have a small registration fee. Others suggested basing the fee on the size of the business's gross revenues. We could list ranges of gross revenue and have check off boxes. Some thought that we should charge big and small businesses the same fee. \$25.00 was suggested.

J. Huebner asked the Planning Board to put together a by-law to address the issues discussed here on business registration. K. Walls said we should put this information in Tracks. J. Huebner made it clear that we are asking for a registration fee, not issuing a permit. Failure to comply could result in a fine of some amount. D. Spencer added that we need a clear definition of what a business is. The Board said that would be anything done for revenue. Fee exemptions could be granted for hardship.

14. J. Huebner briefly reviewed the following correspondence received and other issues:
 - a. Copy of a letter to the BRPC from FEMA. We can apply to FEMA for grants that they administer. J. Huebner will review this for opportunities for the Town.
 - b. J. Huebner attended the recent WMECO meeting on emergency management. It was the same as last year. He asked about burying cables to minimize outages. WMECO told him that is too expensive.

- c. D.Fish reported a \$1600.00 design error on 2 steel doors delivered to the garage by L.P. Adams. He will get them to correct their error.
- d. J. Huebner reported that S. Lennon had learned that the towns of Dalton and Windsor paid proportionately for their shared 911 service from Hinsdale.
- e. Regarding the possible support from Westfield Wild and Scenic for repairs to the Cross Place Bridge, J. Huebner said he received no reply to his inquiry from R. Bryan, our representative to that organization.
- f. E2 Sol has told the Board that they will no longer be able to finance our solar farm. We are considered commercial by the electric company.
- g. A letter from the Patrick administration on sustainable re-cycling strategies was to be given to M. Lampro.
- h. J. Huebner asked that all Town officials, including non-residents, should be mailed the Tracks.

J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn at 8:55 pm. M. Case seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Minutes written by J. Nelson