

Washington Board of Selectmen's Meeting - 4/22/13

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 6:56 pm. attending for the Board was J. Huebner and Mike Case.
2. After leading the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the Minutes from April 8, 2013. M. Case seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.
3. Keith Sharp addressed the Board on the subject of inspection of the Town school van. He had checked with the Mass. RMV and inspection is long overdue. J. Huebner asked Chief Breen why the van had not been inspected. Chief Breen had been told by the RMV that the van did not need to be inspected because it was a private bus. J. Huebner asked the Chief to get an opinion in writing from the RMV. He thanked K. Sharp for his concern and said that he would follow up on this question.
4. D. Spenser addressed the Board on some of his concerns regarding the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. He wondered if the Board had received any clarification on business property tax concerns and a governing by-law from the Planning Board. J. Huebner said that he is hoping the Planning Board will attend next Monday's meeting and report on this. The Board wants a by-law requiring all businesses to be registered. There would be a modest permit cost and a fine for failing to register. The Town only has one week to formulate a by-law or will have to wait for a Special Town Meeting to do so. We can at least ask for the ATM to approve a \$10,000 tax exemption on personal property used for business. D. Spenser said we will have to adopt a specific provision of MGL CH. 59, Sect. 5 to do so. He thought that we can transfer enough money from free cash to prevent an override on the tax rate. It will require about \$60,000 to avoid an override. The rest of the Town's cash will go to replenish stabilization. D. Spenser will call a Finance Committee meeting for next week to finalize the Warrant. It must be posted by 5/4.
5. J. Huebner asked K. Walls for an update on the Planning Board's work on the business by-law. K. Walls said he will check with M. Wiley, as he understood after their last meeting that she would be sending the Board a draft.
6. Chief Breen had collected accident data from Dalton and Becket and presented it to the Board.
7. E. Bond reported on repairs to the West wall of the auditorium. The contractor will start work on 4/23 and expects to finish this week. He will check every day this week to be sure the work is progressing on schedule. The contractor will also make adjustments to the doors already installed and will install the two remaining auditorium doors.
8. B. Philips complained about the Tax Department's mail delivery. She said that she was not getting her mail in a timely manner. E. Bond offered to give her his mail box key and the Board approved this.
9. M. Lampro told the Board that she was working on the Transfer Station permit renewal. J. Huebner suggested that she coordinate with J. Hostetter about the permit process. C. Willis and M. Lampro discussed the issue of a new Transfer Station bin. We could sell the old bin. It has new hydraulics. He could fix the existing bin door. A new bin could cost about \$5,000. We have

money in the budget left from last year in the amount of \$4,000 which, along with the money we make on selling the old bin, may cover the cost of a new one. Additionally there is a CET grant for up to \$2500 in matching funds which the Town could apply for.

10. As Town Tree Warden, C. Willis mentioned to the Board that he had made note of many old trees in town that need to be taken down and brush to be cleaned up. There are many on the Mountain Road and some on Kirchner Road. Some will need to be chipped. Some residents want to take wood to burn. He wanted the Board to know about this. Most of the wood is soft pine and would only be good for camp fires. D. Spencer said that D. Fish has budget on the new warrant to do this tree work. J. Huebner asked C. Willis to mark the trees that are to be removed. He said that there are some trees on Lower Valley Road to remove also. He reported no beaver problems on Upper Valley. The deceiver installed by USDA is working well.
11. J. Huebner asked J. Hostetter about mail distribution in Town Hall. She told the Board that she picks it up and distributes it 3 days a week. He asked her to talk to B. Philips about this schedule as she had expressed some problems with it.
12. J. Huebner mentioned receiving notice of a meeting of the Pittsfield Development Board on July 17th and asked that that be posted.
13. J. Huebner also mentioned receiving a letter from Tom Soules ' lawyer regarding his accident claim against the Town. This should go to C. Briggs.
14. J. Huebner asked D. Fish for his update. D. Fish mentioned lots of beaver activity in Town threatening roads. He mentioned the brook beavers on Lower Valley Road and on Watson Road. J. Huebner asked him to get a trapping permit from J. Hostetter. D. Fish said that Cathy Stevens of DOT will be visiting Kirchner Rd with him tomorrow. C. Willis brought up the subject of trees there. D. Fish said that he takes down what he can if there are no wires. Board told him to hire someone to do this. He has about \$1000 to spend. Craig will mark the worst trees. D. Fish asked if he is to clean up brush and trees or leave it for residents to take. He could make a pile at the transfer station. It needs to be away from the brook. D. Fish to check with Phil Clark on where to put it.
15. J. Huebner asked about Notice of Intent filing for the Mountain Road. D. Fish is working on the permits. He has started on drainage work on Mountain Rd. He had asked Tom Delaney for a quote on paving the Town Hall parking lot. He will get another quote too.
16. The Assessors joined the meeting to discuss business permits and interior home inspections. K. Avalle told the Board that the details of the business permits are confidential. They are not open to the public. This is different from houses. Residential details are public information. J. Huebner asked why we are just getting around to doing residential inspections and the business taxes now. K. Avalle said that the previous assessor had not done either of these tasks in the eight years he served the Town, though they are required by the state. Town Counsel had not heard of the home inspection requirement. J. Huebner asked K. Avalle to wait until first week of May to resume inspections. She will do so and reminded the board that they all have to be done by 2016. Responding to a question by D. Spencer, K. Avalle told the Board that anyone who refuses to allow residential inspection does still have a right to ask for an abatement, but will have to allow an inspection if he is to receive one. Regarding business taxation, J. Huebner

was concerned that not all businesses will come forward to register. K.Avalle is supposed to assign a value if a business doesn't come forward. . D.Spencer asked about dual use personal property. K. Avalle said that if the equipment is used for both personal and business tasks, the owner must declare percentage of use for each on their tax filing. People have to come in to talk to the Assessors with questions. J. Huebner asked the Assessors how little business income is worth taxing. The Board agreed that we cannot adopt business bylaws at the ATM because there will have been no public hearings.

17. C.Briggs told the Board that she had discussed switching payroll from weekly to bi-weekly with D. Fish. He raised the question with his crew and they were not in favor of this change. Having the weekly paycheck was very important to them. C.Briggs will investigate less costly options for doing weekly payroll. Switching to bi-weekly would save about \$600 per year. She had been able to speak with Jeremia Pollard, Town Counsel, about the Maplewood auction. He instructed her to read MGL Ch. 60 about property auctions. We must post our advertisement in the local papers for 14 consecutive days. We will pay a fee of \$1000 to Jeremia. The auctioneers receive 10% of the sale price. The auctioneer also charges the seller a fee. The buyer pays this commission. She will be speaking to local auctioneers.
18. Dan Parnell told the Board that he has been working on getting the emergency grant money. He spoke with Paul Mikaniewicz about this. He has also talked to the Town auditor and will schedule work with him shortly. D. Parnell has put in much work on our new Chart of Accounts. He asked the Board what rate they will pay for this work. Sandy Brazee charged \$35/hr for her work on the previous Chart of Accounts. Board agreed to pay him at this rate for his work on the Chart. He is setting up in anticipation of the switch to Softwrite.
19. J. Huebner asked D. Spencer about the budget status. D. Spencer said that he needs to talk with D. Fish about the cost of work on the fuel pumps. D. Fish should get a second quote. He also must talk with him about the cost of paving the Town Hall back parking lot. D. Fish said that \$4300 was the quote from Delaney. D. Spencer asked him to get another quote.
20. J. Huebner still has no reply from Roy Bryan and Westfield Wild and Scenic about help with fixing Cross Place bridge. After many unsuccessful attempts to get status, he will drop this effort.
21. J. Huebner wants all Board members to take the Public Health Training on May 17 in Pittsfield.
22. M. Case agreed to be the Town's new Transportation Advisory Committee representative, taking over from D. Fish. .
23. The Department of Public Health has asked the Town to appoint a contact for the tracking of West Nile Virus. J. Huebner volunteered to be one. Chief Breen will be the other.
24. J. Huebner reported on the Board's efforts to get DOT to take notice of the extremely poor condition of the Mountain Road and the immediate need for repairs. As a result of these efforts the Town has been reinstated on the TIP list and DOT has restructured the cost of our project. We have collected crash data that determines the Mountain Road crash rate has steadily increased. The road is currently classified as a "minor collector" and as such is below the state average crash rate. But if we can get re-classified as a "minor artery" based on traffic volume,

our crash data from the past 5 years shows us as above average. We have asked DOT for traffic counts and truck traffic counts. We could split the road repairs over two years and will be more likely to get funding. We are definitely gaining DOT's cooperation. J. Huebner asked Clete Cus at BRPC to do a traffic count if we can get funding. We have to deal with just Washington's portion of the Road, not Dalton's or Becket's. Residents have made many calls to Sen. Downing's office and he is listening. He has stated that he will act on the Town's behalf to the extent he can. We are definitely being paid attention to.

25. Regarding our weight restriction on Blotz Road, Chief Breen reported seeing large trucks using that road. J. Huebner said that he has had no response from Hinsdale on signage. The question is - Can we impose weight or axel limit on that road without incurring loss of Ch. 90 funds? D. Fish will ask C. Stevens if we can do this.
26. J. Huebner reported receiving a report from the state on Lower Valley Road and Lower Sargent Road bridges. The condition of both is poor. Repairs should be prioritized. J. Huebner asked D. Fish to speak with C. Stevens of DOT about these bridges.
27. J. Huebner briefly reviewed the CSX file. They have responded to the Town that our claim form is incomplete and they cannot proceed until 2 questions are answered.
28. The Board discussed finalizing the ATM warrant at next Monday's meeting. We need to determine if the Planning Board held hearings before they submitted the Solar and Wireless Communications by-laws to Jodi for inclusion on the Warrant. J. Hostetter will email the work she has done to date on the Warrant to the Board and D. Spencer. It is complete up to the budget section. She needs the School Board voting details. This would be on a letter from the School Board that is in our files. D. Spencer reviewed the increases which D. Fish had requested for the Hwy. Dept. Costs are up sharply, but after discussion the Board agreed that his estimates are not unreasonable.
29. F. Kennedy asked the Board if he would be required to pay the Town a fee to continue holding his computer classes in the auditorium. Heidi Nugent, the yoga teacher, told him that she was required to pay a \$50 fee. F. Kennedy felt it would be unfair if she had to pay and he did not. The Board told him that they would discuss this issue and get back to him.
30. J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:02. M. Case seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

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Minutes written by J. Nelson