

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen – September 30, 2013

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner, S. Lennon and M. Case
2. After he led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of September 23, 2013. M. Case seconded and the vote to accept the minutes was unanimous.
3. J. Huebner reported that he attended the Board of Health training in Pittsfield last week. He gave M. Case and Shaun manuals from the training session.
4. D. Fish told the Board that he will be finishing up drainage work at the Drugmond's property on Washington Mountain Road (WMR) in the next 2 days. He will be speaking with forester Jeff Jordain about the trees on that property and throughout Town. P. Clark will meet with him at Drugmond's tomorrow to identify any further work to be done.
5. S. Lennon pointed out to the Board that taxes on his empty land holdings seemed to have increased sharply and that other residents must also be concerned about this. K. Walls voiced a similar concern. M. Case mentioned that he had received some complaints already. J. Huebner replied that property taxes have risen this year because the Town is not presently able to hold down the tax rate with cash reserves which were available for the past few years. Some of our costs such as school levies, transportation and energy have also risen over this time period. We have \$120,000 in costs not covered by funds available to us last year. He mentioned that he will be sending a more detailed explanation of the tax rate to be published in October's Tracks.
6. J. Huebner mentioned that the surveying work on WMR continues. D. Fish said that he has talked to the surveyors. They are not marking the middle of the road. Just marking where it is now. He also mentioned that we need culvert work down by the old school house and by Phillips Road. DOT will have to meet with the Conservation Commission on this. The Notice of Intent (NOI) is not ready yet. Al Rosner is coming out to give us an estimate on guard rails for Cross Place Road. DOT is asking us for the age of the bridge on Cross Place. We do not have this information.
7. Glenn Grogan delivered his resignation from the post of Town auditor. The Board accepted the resignation. Resignation was necessary so that he could assume duties as the Town's newly hired Treasurer. He is in the midst of training with outgoing Treasurer Cathy Briggs. J. Huebner told him that he had received an email from Berkshire County Insurance about an unpaid bill. G. Grogan will look into this. J. Huebner also asked him to check ICS certifications for the Board and the emergency management team. He asked about the status of the school bus bond. G. Grogan said that he will review this with C. Briggs. J. Huebner reminded him to be sure we are making progress switching over to the state unemployment program.
8. J. Huebner reported a discussion with Mr. Walto of Dalton that the highway department there is supportive of our efforts to get a weight limit placed on Blotz road.

9. J. Huebner asked the administrative assistant to keep a resume he received from Melissa Keith of Becket on file.
10. On the subject of chip sealing, J. Huebner reported that he had tracked down Mack Kerwood of Berkshire County Insurance. All Berkshire county towns are members. We do not have a representative to this Board. The contract with the chip seal company, Cromer Contractors, indicates that if we have any problems with the work, they will remedy the problems. Discussion followed over what we want fixed and when. Comer has offered to return to Town in spring to fix what we think was done incorrectly. D. Fish said that most important would be Summit Hill Road and perhaps the Lower Valley Road intersection with Johnson Hill Road.

J. Huebner asked D. Fish to submit a list of what he wants done. D. Fish said that he is not sure where the problems are now. He sanded all the roads at the suggestion of Comer and C. Stevens of DOT. This turned out to be a mistake, creating hazardous conditions in some areas and making the tar harder to clean off vehicles. The chip sealing problems started just after Memorial Day. It was a double chip seal job. Nine to ten miles of Town roads were done. We paid \$375,000 approximately for the work. Damage to cars will be covered by the Town's insurance company, MIIA. However the Town needs to recover the cost of the highway crew's time putting down the sand and the cost of the material itself. J. Huebner asked D. Fish to give him the details of the cost of the sanding work.

There was general agreement that DOT should be working with us to correct the contractor's mistakes. Comer is on the DOT list of state contractors for this type of work. In addition to the problems with the material Comer used, we were told by DOT to sweep up the stone chips right away. We have learned since that this too was incorrect advice, along with the sanding. P. Clark said that we need to have specs on the material. How cold can the temperature be when it is applied? P. Clark advised that maybe we shouldn't tell the contractor what to do. If we are mistaken in the remedy, then we have no recourse. Mass DOT should be working with Comer to resolve the problems. Berkshire County Insurance will stand behind the Town. P. Clark said that our objective should be to have roads that don't produce complaints. The contractor has to do whatever is necessary to meet that requirement.

11. P. Clark told the Board that the Conservation Commission will meet Thursday night. He has asked the state for plans on Town culverts, wet lands etc., just as any land holder would be required to do to assure compliance with regulations. DEP will get a copy.
12. Ken Walls told the Board about a developing wildlife trail across Route 8 between Summit Hill Road and Upper Valley Road. A deer actually ran into his car there damaging the left front fender. A few days later he encountered a bull moose on that section of the road and on the next day a large flock of turkeys. He requested a "Deer Crossing" sign be posted. The Board told him that the Town will send a letter to DOT requesting deer crossing signs to be posted between Summit Hill Road and Upper Valley Road on Route 8.
13. Chief Breen gave the Board an update on the school bus situation. We will have to continue using the old bus for another few weeks. He has had it repaired after snagging a large branch underneath the vehicle. Delivery on the new bus is promised for October. The delay has been caused by our need for a third seat in back. He bought reflective tape to cover the word Police on the cruiser if he needs to use it to transport students in the meantime.

14. Regarding the Town Auditor position, J. Huebner read the job description from Mass. General Laws. It appears that our current Accounting Officer ,D. Parnell, could be appointed to the Auditor position vacated by G. Grogan. He would be paid a nominal amount to audit all Town accounts each year. This would have to go to Town Meeting for approval.
15. Assessor Consultant Karen Avalle joined the meeting at the Board's request. J. Huebner thanked her for her note explaining the reasons for the Town's tax increase this year. Much of the change is seen most clearly in increased vacant land valuation based on the state formula. She had to use the state formula due to the fact that no vacant land sold in Town last year. She had no comparable sales to use when the rates were set. J. Huebner will send her note to Tracks for publication.
16. The Town Clerk told the Board that she had received a letter of inquiry from the state Ethics Commission. She asked the Board if we have any special municipal employees. J. Huebner replied in the negative. She asked the Board about E. Bond's status as Town Building Maintenance Coordinator, Zoning Board of Appeals member and Moderator of Town meetings. She confirmed that E. Bond has filed with her the paperwork disclosing his Town positions and the small amount he is paid annually. The Town Clerk noted that this disclosure needs to be done annually. J. Huebner mentioned that P. Clark is in a similar position for his unpaid advisory work for the Town.
17. Chief Breen congratulated and thanked the Board for successfully negotiating total reconstruction of the Town's 6.25 miles of Washington Mountain Road with the state.
18. J. Huebner asked J. Hostetter for her update on Administrative Assistants' tasks. He asked her to find out how the Town appoints its Board of Health according to the By-laws. This question came up during the Board of Health training he recently attended. If we have no by-law it defaults to the Select Board. He also requested that she find out who is responsible for records retention. She will check with the Town Clerk about this. He asked specifically about Executive Session minutes – do we open them after a while or keep them confidential? J. Hostetter told him the Annual reports and job descriptions still await information from the Treasurer and Town Clerk. She reported that the Town Hall Usage Committee will consider updating the building's cleaning needs and equipment. The Board asked her to have John Les teach her how to post the Board minutes on the Town web site. She told the Board that he has agreed to so and will take her laptop to install the software needed. J. Les has submitted his bill for services to date. She also told the Board she called Bucksteep to inquire about a possible change in management as that may affect their alcoholic beverage license application process. J. Nelson reported contacting the state about LED lighting contractors should the Town wish to install energy saving LED bulbs in all exterior lights on Town buildings. She also requested information from CET.
19. J. Huebner commented briefly on the following:
 - a. He has no reply yet from HCOG on reducing our electric costs.
 - b. On Nov. 14 there will be a BCBOHA meeting. He will be unable to attend. S. Lennon may cover this meeting for him.
 - c. M. Case is being considered for Chair of the CBRSD school committee.
 - d. J. Huebner will call Mr. Collingwood in Pittsfield about the transfer of land to Washington for cemetery use.

- e. The Berkshire County Select Board Dinner will take place Nov. 7.
- f. There will be a Community Forum on pain killer drug use at the end of October.
- g. The Board received Notice of Filing from WMECO for an electric rate increase. To be posted.
- h. The Board received a newsletter from Westfield Wild and Scenic as well as minutes. To be posted.
- i. M. Case and J. Huebner attended the recent Legislative Breakfast and learned much about the current state of the county and the state from our representatives to Beacon Hill.

20. J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Minutes written by J. Nelson