

Town of Washington Board of Selectmen' Meeting - November 4, 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 leading the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of October 28, 2013. M. Case seconded the motion and the vote to accept was unanimous.
3. D. Fish updated the Board on activity at the Highway Department. This week they have been working to get all of the trucks and plows in good working order in preparation for winter. They finally have decent tires on all of the trucks. D. Fish spoke with P. Massey of Frost Road about taking down the rotted, big tree on Lover's Lane. Mr. Massey approved this work. M. Case mentioned that the highway crew had taken down some large trees that overhung Kirchner Road to a dangerous degree. J. Huebner asked D. Fish about the highway department's clothing allowance for boots. D. Fish had searched his files and came up with minutes from 2007 in which the Board had approved the purchase of one pair boots per man per year. After discussion, it was generally agreed that a good pair of work boots today costs \$150. J. Huebner made a motion to amend the personnel file to stipulate an allowance of up to \$150 for boots per highway crew member per year. S. Lennon seconded and the motion carried unanimously. D. Fish reported nothing new on NOI documents for the culverts. He said that he observed a second survey crew coming through Washington Mountain Road (WMR). He had hoped that they would be marking the center of our right of way, but they were not. It would be a great help to him to know exactly where the Town's right way lies along that road.
4. Residents living at 521 WMR asked if the Highway Department would put up snow fencing this winter to cut back on the drifting problems. D. Fish replied that we have snow fence available and that he will do this. For the long run, he would like the Town to consider planting pine trees along that open stretch of the road as a windbreak.
5. Superintendent William Cameron of CBRSD joined the meeting and asked to hear our ideas and concerns about next year's school budget, what we would like to see at the schools etc. CBRSD's Business Administrator, Melissa Falkowski, was also in attendance. P. Blake began the discussion by asking D. Cameron about any plans to reinstate some degree of Industrial Arts (IA) in the high school curriculum. He had read several articles lately in the Berkshire Eagle about the need for more IA instruction in the county schools. McCann Tech and Wacannah have about the same number of students. Dr. Cameron said that in the 1980's they began to phase out IA programs at Wacannah. There are currently none. Students interested in IA go to McCann, Taconic and Smith. It would be prohibitively expensive to equip the school for IA and to hire a new slate of teachers to teach the curriculum here. The state would mandate equipment, space and faculty. Interest is not that strong here and even if it were, some students would still

choice out of Waconnah seeking specific programs offered at the other schools. Pittsfield will keep the comprehensive high school model, given their greater volume of students.

Dr. Cameron said that the vocational schools are currently debating where the IA students will find work locally. The employability of these students is a big question, as many of the manufacturing companies which would have given them jobs have closed. This is a county-wide problem. P. Blake said that we have to plan for the future and suggested that we form a coalition with local green businesses to make jobs available. J. Huebner mentioned that Waconnah has made several cross- training programs with Berkshire Community College available to our students.

D. Spencer asked Dr. Cameron if the students and their families know what the IA options are for their non college- bound children. Jan Huebner asked if our kids tour the three vocational schools. Dr. Cameron responded that the schools all make presentations to the parents. He agreed with D. Spencer that some kids do get lost if they can't see a path through high school to some kind of good job. He said that there are some inter- school communication problems. Jan Huebner asked about the technology status of our schools. Dr. Cameron said that the teachers in the district have been surveyed about their technology needs. There was general agreement that the need for additional bandwidth is growing and that teachers need more technology training. The state will introduce new online courses and testing, making the need for both equipment and training more critical. It is a continuing issue for the district and for the entire state.

S. Connors asked about the possibility of having a work/study program at Waconnah like the one at Northeastern University in Boston. Dr. Cameron replied that the coop model or any departure from the current structure is not possible here. The state controls how schools are run. It issues regulations mandating what can be done. No public school has latitude to experiment. D. Spencer mentioned that we did have a work/ study program years ago. It permitted the vocational students to intern or apprentice at various local companies as part of their school day. When they graduated, these students were often hired by the companies they had worked at as apprentices. There were lots of companies to work at then, but not now.

D. Spencer asked how we can lower school costs. Dr. Cameron said that larger classes and fewer teachers are the only significant way to save money. Maybe heavy use of technology can also reduce costs a bit. CBRSD has reduced headcount slightly every year under his management. P. Blake asked about installing solar panels on the school roof to save on electricity. J. Huebner said that was as looked at, but a vendor was not found. J. Huebner asked about a septic system problem at Becket/Washington School. Dr. Cameron explained that that had been taken care of. J. Huebner thanked him for his service to our schools. He is retiring after this year. S. Connors thanked him for his diligence in managing the district well. D. Spencer thanked him for his consideration of

the towns and his commitment to maintaining the budget while delivering a quality education to our students.

6. J. Huebner recognized Mr. Jeff Bolduc of Bolduc Tree Service in Hinsdale. He had been hired by the Town to remove trees from the Drugmand's property and to clear brush and cut tree limbs to log length per the remediation plan drawn up by P. Clark. Nine trees were marked on the plan for removal. The Board sought to understand why 24 trees were removed instead of nine. T. Drugmand presented the Board with pictures of the stumps. She explained that the 24 trees removed each came from only nine stumps. There were 24 major secondary trunks growing from the nine stumps. Technically, only nine trees were removed. Anything that comes out of one trunk is considered one tree. D. Drugmand asked if the town will also pay for the forester Jeff Jordain's services. The Board said that both Mr. Bolduc and Mr. Jourdain will be paid in full by the Town as agreed in the remediation plan. J. Huebner talked to our insurer today about this.
7. P. Clark told the Board that he had no communications from FEMA on our grant application. He spoke to Carrie Banks of Westfield Wild & Scenic. They would like to schedule a meeting on the Cross Place Road bridge situation. P. Clark will follow up on this. J. Huebner asked P. Clark for a maintenance plan for the Town's culverts. DOT requires this. The Highway Department also needs it, as does FEMA. J. Huebner reminded D. Fish to get an estimate on a pre-cast bridge for Cross Place Road.
8. J. Huebner talked to the Town's insurer about the chip seal/tar issues. They had denied the tar damage claim from resident Gail Jones. He has had no response to the Board's letter to Comer Contracting stating their liability for tar damage to residents' property and requesting restitution. He will follow up with them on this.
9. P. Blake, veterans' agent, told the Board that he has received calls from several elderly veterans requesting assistance. Some need help with Alzheimers care. He believes the town's costs will be going up as a result. He asked when he should do his budget for next year. He reminded the Board that he had suggested some ideas to increase Town revenues, such as cutting trees in the right of way and selling the timber. He wondered if we could charge a user fee for state owned property in Town. The Board asked him to present his development ideas to the Planning Board for consideration. J. Huebner told him that our business bylaws are weak and it is difficult to know what would be permitted. He mentioned that all private preserves pay taxes to the Town. He encouraged P. Blake to go to the Assessors and Tax Collector for further information on this.
10. D. Spencer asked the Board about the budget for winter roads. He had discussed this with D.Parnell, who told him that it is not always clear why some work gets charged to winter roads that might more logically fall under roads and bridges. He assured D. Fish that they do not want to take any funds away from the Highway Department, just to keep the accounting more accurate. D. Fish replied that he is not always sure what work

should go to what account. D. Spencer suggested that in some cases we can use the timing of the work and the season to decide what account it should be charged to. D. Parnell raised the issue because D. Fish was charging Drugmand's project to winter roads. It seemed that this would be better charged to road and bridge. The material should certainly be charged to road and bridge. The Board asked D. Fish to talk with D. Parnell about how this and other non-routine work should be billed. D. Parnell has to explain to the state DOR how and why we spend the highway funds as we do.

11. The Board asked Chief Breen for an update on the school bus status. Chief Breen said that we do not have the bus yet because the dealer does not do the registration or inspection. The Board had instructed him to have the dealer provide these services. That caused the delay. He has now spoken with our insurance company and they will register the vehicle. He will get it inspected. He also reported that we had a break-in in Town recently. He notified the State Police. It occurred on Middlefield Road. The Board reminded him that we will have the sealed-bid auction of the old school bus on November 25 at 7:30. Details will be in the Tracks.
12. J. Hostetter told the Board that Ed Bond will take care of the hallway roof leak. He will schedule Woolover for the repair. He has installed the new thermostats. Climate was here and successfully dealt with the loss of heat problem. J. Hostetter asked him again for the custodian's job description. J. Nelson told the Board that she had spoken with him about the Town's interest in pricing the cost of exterior LED lighting to save on the electric bill. He will get the estimate done. J. Nelson to give him contact information. J. Hostetter reminded the Board that they needed to re-appoint the Kennedys to the Cultural Council and to re-appoint Doreen Jewell to the Chapel Commission. M. Case made a motion to approve both appointments. J. Huebner seconded and the re-appointments were approved unanimously. J. Hostetter told the Board that she had completed the appointments and contacts lists and would be sending them out shortly. She will meet on Wednesday for training on web site management with J.Les. She mentioned that she is still working on bylaws scanning with Allison.
13. D. Parnell has heard from Rebecca Krause. She was the focal point of the last year's CIC Grant application to further develop the municipal accounting package originally developed by the town of Hanover. D. Parnell is investigating whether we can use that software in its current state as a beta site. He wants to make sure that he is not repeating our mistakes with the Vadar software. If we can't find an alternative, we will have to purchase SoftRight for \$16,000 and pay \$3100 per year for maintenance. D. Parnell is also looking into the possibility of buying SoftRight at a discount through HCOG, though we may have to sign up for the service before we can get the discount. J. Hostetter to follow up on survey sent by HCOG and assist D. Parnell with completing it. The MMA Personnel survey has been given to Glenn Grogan to complete and submit.

14. The Select Board will not meet on 11/11 as it is the Veterans' Day Commemoration. The next meeting will be on November 18. As he will not be able to attend, J. Huebner will draft the agenda in advance and S. Lennon and M. Case will conduct the meeting.

15. J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn at 9:04. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

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Minutes written by J. Nelson