

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen – January 13, 2014

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. 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 January 6, 2014. M. Case seconded and the minutes were accepted unanimously.
3. R. Borgnis was videoing the meeting. J. Huebner asked R. her her reasons for recording this and many of the previous meetings on video. She replied that many residents were interested in seeing what is happening at the meetings.
4. S. Nelson, Washington's delegate to WiredWest and member of the Executive Committee of that organization, gave the Board an update on recent developments in WiredWest's work to bring broadband to homes and businesses in Western Mass. He said that the IT bond bill, which has passed the Massachusetts House of Representatives and is moving through the state Senate, includes \$50,000,000 for last mile construction. The funds will be administered by the Mass. Broadband Institute (MBI), which built the recently completed "middle mile". The total cost of the project is about \$100,000,000. MBI and WiredWest are considering several strategies to raise the additional necessary funds.

One strategy might be to apply for a loan from the Rural Utilities Services (RUS) program at the Us Department of Agriculture. Another might be to ask each WiredWest member town to issue a bond, because MBI wants the towns to participate in funding the last mile. The bond amounts would be proportional to the town's size. Since Washington, like almost all other WiredWest towns, has no bond rating, this would require the state Treasurer to issue a "shadow rating" for each participating town. The state would make the payments on the bonds and deduct those amounts from town "Cherry Sheet" allocations of local aid. The state's backing would make the bonds acceptable to the bond market.

S. Nelson told the Board that WiredWest has come very far on very little money, but to get to the next level and put financing in place to finish the last mile, it needs some operating capital. Although under its charter WiredWest can levy an annual fee on its member towns, it has not done so for the past 2 years, but must now. When this issue was brought before WiredWest's Board of Directors (consisting of the delegates from all 42 of its member towns) at their meeting in December, they voted unanimously to assess a fee of \$1000 per town for the fiscal year beginning July 1 to be approved at the upcoming Annual Town Meetings. J. Huebner said he would pass this information along to the Town Finance Committee to be put on the warrant. S. Nelson asked the Board if

he and a few other WiredWest delegates could use the small conference room at Town Hall for a meeting on the afternoon of Saturday, January 18 with a bond attorney from Becket who has volunteered to give WiredWest some free advice about a possible bond issuance. The Board agreed to this use of Town facilities.

5. D. Drugmand inquired about the status of the remaining paperwork for his claim filing with the Town's insurer for tree damage on his property by the Highway Department. G. Grogan said that he had the insurance form on his desk, but was still waiting for a signature from Craig Willis, the Town Tree Warden. C. Willis was unwilling to sign as he had not been involved in the dispute and didn't know the details. The Board agreed that under these circumstances the Highway Department could sign the form. D. Fish agreed to do so. D. Drugmand pointed out that the insurer has a copy of the Forester's letter to back up the tree claim. G. Grogan said that the insurer has asked for another copy of all the bills submitted to date. He will send those out again as requested.
6. On the subject of Washington Mountain Road (WMR), M. Case observed that he had seen the surveyors out working again. D. Fish said that the newly engineered ditch in front of Harvey Fish Jr.'s house on WMR is still not draining properly. He has taken pictures of the ice build up there. J. Huebner asked him to speak with P. Clark about this. He should also discuss the drainage situation with M. Moore of DOT when they start work on the road construction. D. Fish confirmed that he and P. Clark are working on revisions to the Culvert Maintenance Plan required by DOT. He had met with P. Clark and Emily Starkman on the NOI project. He asked the Board who is in charge of the transfer station. J. Huebner said that ultimately it is him. M. Lampro manages the day to day operations under his supervision, but reports to the Board. D. Fish reported finding porcelain in the metal bin the other day and had to remove it himself. The Board told him to ask M. Lampro to make sure her helpers were trained on proper disposal of all items and to enforce the rules with the residents.
7. On the subject of the bridge on Lower Sargeant Road, D. Fish told the Board that he had spoken with DOT per their instructions. He told DOT that he thought the bridge was unsafe in its present condition. DOT disagreed. They had inspected the bridge last year and did not think it in bad shape given the height and length of its span. D. Fish called the DCR to see if another Bailey's Bridge would be available if the Town needed it. J. Huebner asked the Administrative Assistant to search files for a DOT bridge report from 2012.
8. D. Parnell said that the Town had received a bill from Mass Unemployment for \$1097.20 for "current charges" to cover Keith Sharp's claim for the period July 2010 to July 2011. Believing this to be erroneous, D. Parnell had tried to get through to the DUI for clarification, but after many tries had to give up. J. Huebner said that he would follow up with them. D. Parnell confirmed that G. Grogan was ready to cover the Accountant's desk during his vacation in February. He also told the Board that he had participated in a CIC grant conference call and had learned that they had received \$21,000,000 in

requests for \$4,000,000 in available funds. He is still working to close the 2013 books by the end of this month. He told the Board that the Highway department has spent 36% of its budget to date and suggested that we should track truck repair costs going forward. The Board asked D. Fish what truck would be the first he would replace given the opportunity. He replied that he would replace the two-wheel drive truck first, even though it is newer than the others. It constantly gets stuck and has to be towed out of ditches by the crew. This interrupts their other work, slowing down progress. That truck also has lots of repair problems. S. Connor asked about the condition of the older four-wheel truck. D. Fish responded that even though it has 80,000 miles on it, the frame is strong and he believes we will get another four or five years service from it.

- 9.** J. Les told the Board that we will need to update or replace several of the Town's computers because Microsoft has announced that they will no longer support the XP operating system after April 4, 2014. He has tested our computers to determine which can be updated and which will have to be updated. Five of our computers which he has tested so far will have to be replaced. He will submit a proposal for this work to the Town next week when he is done testing. About half the cost will be licensing and the other half will be labor. A rough ballpark estimate would be \$300 per computer.
- 10.** J. Huebner reported that he has still had no reply from Comer Construction to his recent letter requesting reimbursement to the Town of its costs for labor and material to sand the roads after their faulty chip sealing job. He will consult Town Counsel on next steps.
- 11.** D. Parnell mentioned to the Board that he is missing invoices from Berkshire Public Health Alliance (BPHA) for the first two quarters of 2013. J. Huebner responded that the BPHA is now using Berkshire Regional Planning's resources for its billings and that should help straighten out such problems. D. Parnell also mentioned that he doesn't have the IT skills necessary to set up the file extraction from Vadar that we need in order to transfer our data over to the Hanover accounting software. J. Huebner said that we could perhaps use J. Les to do this work. D. Parnell wondered if it might be best to just start fresh with the new system rather than try to make it work with Vadar.
- 12.** K. Avalor told the Board that M. Jarvie had not yet been paid the salary they had approved for her as Chair of the Assessors department. The salary is \$29.75 per month. J. Huebner asked G. Grogan to check the date the Board had approved the salary and pay M. Jarvie any back pay due her and also to pay monthly going forward.
- 13.** J. Huebner asked D. Spencer about the status of the budget process. D. Spencer and P. Borgnis were in attendance from the Finance Committee. D. Spencer had emailed the Board his preliminary budget spreadsheets. He told the Board that the Governor's budget won't be public before January 22 and there is not much we can do before that. M. Case added that the school department has just begun this process.

- 14.** E. Bond told the Board that the Tax Collector had asked him to install shades in her office as there was considerable afternoon glare there. He also said that he would arrange to meet C. Taylor at Town Hall to review her performance and discuss the Town's custodial requirements.
- 15.** The Board reviewed a list prepared by the Administrative Assistants of Town personnel job descriptions which they have received to date. There were questions about which officials required a job description and which did not. Discussion is to be continued next week.
- 16.** J. Huebner recorded receipt of the following correspondence and mentioned the following items:
- a. There will be no Selectmen's meeting next Monday, January 20 in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Day.
 - b. Notice from Westfield Wild and Scenic of a meeting on Thursday, January 16 at 6:30 in Becket Town Hall. Open to the public.
 - c. Notice from the Town of Lee of a Public Hearing on Monday Feb. 10 at 6:15 concerning the application for a special permit to encroach on existing lot lines.
 - d. The receipt of an application from Gregory Viner for the Assessors position.
 - e. Notice of a public hearing and procedural conference from Mass Department of Public Utilities on March 12 in Boston.
 - f. Notice of a conference on electrical vehicles for municipalities from the state.
 - g. He spoke with Bruce Collingsworth of Mayor Bianci's office today and confirmed that they will follow up on our request for the 5 acres of cemetery land.
 - h. He contacted Hinsdale and Dalton authorities about the Blotz Road weight restriction.
 - i. The Board will consider attending the BRPC January 30, Fifth Thursday dinner which will feature a discussion of the Community Preservation Act.
- 17.** J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 pm. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Minutes written by J. Nelson