

Town of Washington Board of Selectmen's Meeting – February 3, 2014

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner, S. Lennon and M. Case.
2. After reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, the first order of business was to interview 3 candidates for the open position in the Assessor's office. K. Avalor, M. Jarvie and R. Spencer joined the Board for this purpose. Interviewees were Mark Powell, Greg Viner and Donna Stimpson. When the interviews were completed the Selection Committee went into executive session and chose two finalists for reference and CORI checks.
3. At the conclusion of the executive session, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes from January 27, 2014. M. Case seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
4. R. Borgnis was videoing the Selectmen's meeting.
5. J. Huebner reported receiving a report from E. Bond in which he stated that he had placed mouse bait in Town Hall offices and in the mechanical heating room. He had met with Cynthia Taylor and reviewed her performance appraisal. He also gave her keys to the custodial supply closet and to the Town Clerk's office. He submitted her job description to the Administrative Assistants.
6. D. Fish told the Board that, as requested, Ray Huntoon of Hinsdale Department of Public Works (DPW) had placed a weight limit warning sign on RT. 8 at the entrance to Kirchner Road. He also told the Board that the Washington DPW is all ready for the coming snow storm.
7. J. Huebner reported that he had attended the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) Dinner last Thursday. There was a presentation and discussion of the state's Community Preservation Act. He learned that about half the towns in Mass. have joined this program. Member towns receive matching funds from the state to restore/preserve historically significant buildings, open spaces, parks, cemeteries etc. The towns participate financially by placing a surcharge on their property tax rate of about 3% with the first \$100,000 of valuation exempted. This creates a fund for each town's use. He is going to research the program further and is considering putting this on the (ATM) Annual Town Meeting ballot.
8. M. Case and J. Huebner attended the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting in Pittsfield last week. They received copies of the regional transportation plan. The Washington Mountain Road (WMR) reconstruction project is listed on the Governor's budget and is expected to be approved by the House and Senate.

9. J. Huebner told the Board that he had received a quote from John Les for his work to upgrade the Town's computers. The total for labor and software would be \$3500. There was discussion about covering this cost from the Town Building Maintenance account.
10. Ms. Jewell, property manager at Bucksteep, asked the Board when she would receive the alcoholic beverage license and permits needed to continue operations at the Manor. She was informed that the license and permits had been prepared. She was referred to J. Hostetter for details.
11. M. Case told the Board that he had attended a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Selectmen of Berkshire County. In his capacity as school committee chair, he also reminded everyone that there will be an important seven town meeting of the Central Berkshire Regional School District (CBRSD) on 2/25 at Nessacus Middle School at 7:00pm. This is an open meeting to discuss the serious financial challenges the District faces. As there is about a \$1,000,000 shortfall some tough decisions will have to be made, including the elimination of a number of positions.
12. As scheduled, at 7:15 J. Huebner introduced two residents of Peru, Peggy White and Kevin Cahill, who had asked to address the meeting about the controversial industrial wind turbine project planned by a developer for their town. They are members of a group called Peru Concerned Citizens. They explained that a majority of residents have twice voted to hold a moratorium on this development in order to better understand the impact it would have on their town. However a 2/3 majority is needed to impose the moratorium and they are 18 votes short. J. Huebner asked about the status of the project now. K. Cahill replied that they are in a holding pattern waiting for the developer's next move. The developer tried to get the noise restrictions loosened, but that was voted down. Peru had written a wind power by-law ten years ago, but it did not cover industrial wind turbines and so has offered no protection for the town.

The developer plans to erect five 500ft. tall towers on a ridge south of Garnet Lake in close proximity to sixty or seventy homes. They explained that the development would return little money to the Town, would lower residents' property values considerably and even prevent some properties from selling at all. A large number of homes would be affected by the noise and vibrations from the turbines and many residents would be deprived of the peaceful enjoyment of their properties. Wildlife and conservation areas will also be negatively affected.

They passed out materials with information about the impact of industrial wind turbines on peoples' property and health. These materials will be sent to us for posting on the Washington Town web site. The materials included maps of the project in Peru which show that several sections of Washington are within a three mile radius of the turbines and may experience both noise and vibration effects as well as potential loss in property value. Another map shows that over 40 sites on state-owned land in the Berkshires or in

adjacent towns have been identified by the state as potential wind power sites. There are 3 of these sites within the Town of Washington. Many other wind turbine sites have been identified on private lands throughout the county.

They mentioned that BRPC has written a model zoning by-law for commercial turbines and that it is available upon request to all towns. Peru did not have such a by-law in place before the developer leased 300 acres in town and made his plans known.

Much discussion ensued, with Washington residents raising issues about the limited financial return to a town from such a project versus the cost to residents in terms of quality of life and property value. Most people agreed that proper siting and scale of any wind project are critical factors along with involvement and decision-making from all of the affected communities. The representatives from Peru said that they will be having an open public hearing soon and that they would be grateful for any support from the neighboring towns or from individual residents. The Board thanked them for speaking to the Town.

J. Huebner asked M. Wiley to contact the BRPC immediately to obtain a copy of their model zoning by-laws for commercial turbines. He asked her to discuss with BRPC the issues of siting and set-backs from homes, decommissioning bonds and noise and height restrictions.

13. D. Parnell told the Board that he will be on vacation starting March 1. G. Grogan is ready to cover for him. He has done a data extraction from Vadar for the Director of the CIC grant project. He is not sure if this will work as a way to use the Hanover software. He expects to hear by the end of this month if we will get the CIC grant. He did contact Vadar and was told that their maintenance fee will be \$3000 per year. Before making a decision on Vadar, he wants to wait until the end of the month to see if we have any other option for software. He reported that he has balanced the general ledger this week. We will not have much free cash as we had considerable expenditures on building repairs/maintenance.
14. G. Grogan told the Board that he has been successful, after many attempts, in getting someone from the Department of Unemployment Assistance to call him. He gave details of the DUA's billing error on K. Sharp's case to Richard Carney. Mr. Carney promised to research the case in DUA's files and get back to him.
15. J. Huebner said that the Board had not received a reply from Comer Contracting to our letter demanding reimbursement for the road sanding. Nor were there any new developments on the transfer of cemetery land from Pittsfield or on plans for a new bridge on Cross Place Road.
16. The Board recorded receipt of a \$100 check from JSSjr Industries for a septic hauling permit.

17. J. Huebner said that the Selectmen will meet next Monday , but not the week after as that is the President's Day holiday.

18. J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 pm. S. Lennon seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Accepted: _____ Date: _____

Accepted: _____

Accepted: _____

Minutes written by J. Nelson