

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen – March 10, 2014

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7: 00 pm. 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 approve the minutes of March 3, 2014. M. Case seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
3. Trish Drugmand was videoing the meeting.
4. Veterans' Agent Peter Blake addressed the Board and provided an update on activities in his department over the last four or five months. He said that statewide there are an increasing number of veterans applying for Chapter 115 benefits. Hinsdale has had a surge in applications. He cited a trend for 501-C3's (non-profits) in the state to take advantage of these funds. Soldier On is one of these organizations. Three Washington families have applied through him for financial aid. P. Blake told the Board that he can't anticipate how many more residents will apply for aid in Town this year. He mentioned Veterans' Agent's training coming up in the fall of this year. This is a certification seminar. There is another training session in the spring of 2015.

J. Huebner asked him about the Town's war memorials' condition and mentioned that the Community Preservation Act, if approved at Annual Town Meeting, would provide some funding to repair and preserve such memorials. P. Blake mentioned that there is grant money available for preserving Civil War artifacts and archives. The grant expires in 2015. Some of these funds may be available for research and to construct memorials. The Board asked J. Nelson to see what records of Civil War veterans exist in the Historical Commission materials. P. Blake presented the Board with his estimated Veterans' Budget for FY 2015. J. Huebner told him that this document will be passed along to the Finance Committee which is now collecting data for the Town budget.

5. J. Huebner mentioned that there will be a meeting of the Governing Board of Berkshire Public Health Alliance on Thursday this week. He will attend. There is also the School Committee meeting on Thursday.
6. J. Huebner reported receiving a letter from the town of Dartmouth, MA dated Feb. 26 asking for the Board's support of a measure concerning tax credits for small businesses to be granted by individual towns. The Board discussed this and decided not to participate.
7. J. Huebner said that he had been talking to several people about the business ownership issues that have been discussed recently with the Planning Board. The Assessors

suggested that we should be collecting more information. M. Case said that if he were a home business owner he would resent the intrusion. S. Connors added that under our by-laws residents are allowed to run home-based businesses. J. Huebner said that we need to define just what constitutes a small business. J. Huebner mentioned that the Planning Board is in favor of agreeing upon a definition. He spoke to Town Counsel about several of these issues. Counsel told him that our by-laws don't specify that residents need to register their businesses. Some do it voluntarily.

J. Huebner said that we need a census of all the businesses being operated in Town now. We need to know if they have employees and how many. We need to know who has buildings on their property dedicated to their business. This raises zoning questions. We have to decide how much growth we want and how to limit it. Residents should feel that it is somehow to their benefit to come forward to register their businesses. K. Walls wondered about new businesses coming into town. Mike Burke of the Finance Committee mentioned in a previous meeting that he thought we should have a commercial district along Rt. 8. Several people voiced objection to that idea saying that there are many homes along that road.

P. Drugmand asked if the Planning Board had looked at how any other towns handled business regulation. K. Walls said that they had looked at Becket. She said that was not really relevant to Washington as Becket has much commercial activity. J. Huebner asked how we would protect ourselves if a large company buys a local business and wants to expand. We currently have no by-laws in place to respond to such a situation. The business census is just a first step. S. Nelson added that Broadband will encourage even more home based businesses. Concluding this wide ranging discussion, J. Huebner said that he will re-draft the letter to all residents.

8. J. Huebner raised the subject of the recently awarded CIC grant . He had consulted J. Les about the Town participating in the proposed remote IT services program. J. Les said that this program does look good for the price. J. Huebner asked S. Nelson to help the town choose an ISP provider for the program. S. Nelson mentioned that Cornerstone and Crocker are doing the most business in this area. He agreed to get some quotes for the Town as our MBI representative. J. Huebner made a motion that we take on the remote IT program under the CIC grant. M. Case seconded and the vote was unanimous.
9. J. Sawtelle of the COA told the Board that arrangements have been finalized for the COA's Annual Dinner. It will be held on Tuesday April 15 at Ozzie's Steak and Eggs. Several seniors have mentioned to him that they are happy not to be driving through the snow to this event. J. Sawtelle has written the text for the Tracks announcement and has made up the invitations. J. Hostetter has prepared a spread sheet for running the invitation envelopes and doing the mailing. In the meantime, J. Sawtelle said the regular senior potluck dinners will continue on the third Friday of each month. He told the Board that he wants to get the kitchen certified. J. Huebner said that he will need to

get the health agent here to inspect. He said that the Town will find the money to do the recommended changes. E. Bond changed the plugs on the stage as requested by J. Sawtelle.

10. J. Huebner reported briefly on the following matters:
 - a. He had not received a reply to his latest letter to Comer Contracting about the chip sealing.
 - b. P. Clark will provide D. Fish with a culvert maintenance schedule.
 - c. P. Clark is following up with the state on Blotz Road and the Cross Place Road bridge.
 - d. Slow progress is being made with the cemetery parcel from Pittsfield.
 - e. He received notice of the Hampshire County Selectmen's meeting but will not attend.
 - f. There is no news yet on Washington Mountain Road reconstruction. The funding bill still needs to get through the senate.
 - g. The Board received Cain Hibbard Meyers invitation for March 25 after-hours gathering celebrating 50 years of legal practice.
 - h. Announcement of Western Mass. Public Health Association seminar on housing enforcement.
 - i. WMECO March 26 dinner meeting for selectmen from 5:00-7:30 at the Crowne Plaza with a presentation on emergency preparedness.
 - j. Request from the Mass. Association of Business and Professional Women to issue a proclamation declaring April 8 Equal Pay Day in Washington. J. Huebner made a motion to this effect. M. Case seconded and the vote to issue the proclamation was unanimous.
 - k. J. Huebner received a complaint from C. Kennedy about the condition of Washington Mountain Road. He spoke with her and explained that DOT had agreed to reconstruct the entire road and said he believed that would completely address her complaints. In the meantime however, the highway department will do its best to keep the road passable.
 - l. The Berkshire County Selectman's Association dinner will be held on April 10.

11. G. Grogan told the Board that he estimates needing an additional \$300 to 400 dollars in this year's Treasurer's budget. J. Huebner asked him to tell FinComm to submit a warrant for the amount needed. G. Grogan mentioned that he had not heard anything from MIIA about our claim.

12. M. Case reported that we are not close to getting the school budget passed on Thursday night. One group of three members insists on closing Berkshire Trail Elementary School in Cummington and another group of three members firmly opposes closing the school. D. Spencer added that Dalton pays less per student than any other town in CBRSD and yet they always object to the budget. M. Case said that the school budget must be

passed by March 18 or it goes to Mass. Department of Education which will establish a temporary budget. The Secretary of State will set the final budget if none is agreed to by December 1. There has also been discussion of closing another school and further consolidating students. The current budget proposal is set by the Governor. It is a draft budget and could change. Becket's cost could go up and Dalton's go down. The towns in CBRSD could agree on a high budget and then under spend it. We cannot exceed the budget though. Superintendent Cameron is scheduled to address the Board on the budget at Town Hall on March 17.

13. The Board opened a general discussion of the Town's FY15 budget now being developed by the Finance Committee. On the subject of raises for Town employees, J. Huebner recommended level funding. D. Spencer reminded the Board that the Town Accountant had not received the raise agreed upon at last year's ATM. The Board agreed that this should be corrected and listed as a separate line item on the warrant. Assessors' computer services will be an increase. This is out of our control as it is a state unfunded mandate. Any travel D. Parnell will have related to work on the CIC grant will be covered by that grant. D. Spencer inquired about this year's free cash. J. Huebner was confident that we would have about \$100,000 and that we will have that certified in advance of our annual meeting.

Budget discussion continued, touching on the following items:

- Winter Roads – Machinery maintenance costs have been very high. There has been a jump in health insurance cost for the highway crew. It stands now at \$18,500. Currently we are about \$20,000 over budget. J. Huebner asked D. Spencer to check the unemployment account. There should be a low balance because we are now part of the state system.
- Veterans' Services - The Veterans' Agent is asking for \$8400 this year.
- Transfer station improvements – J. Huebner asked D. Fish to improve the entrance to the Transfer Station. This should be a line item in the budget. Put down a load of some material like re-cycled asphalt and pack it down. The mud is getting too deep. D. Fish to consult with P. Clark on any conservation issues raised by this activity.
- PILOT payments – State funds to the Town have increased for each of the past three years.
- WiredWest annual fee – Member town annual fee has not been levied for the past 3 years. Requesting \$1,000 now from each member town to cover legal and other costs necessary to secure funding for building the last mile.
- New plow truck - D. Fish has estimate of \$205,000. The four-wheel drive does increase the cost, but is justified. S. Conner added that this truck should help cut maintenance costs. The Finance Committee is not ready to make a formal recommendation on the truck purchase yet. The Town will have to authorize borrowing first. D. Fish suggested that we may be able to use some Chapter money for the purchase. The Board asked him to speak to Cathy Stevens about this.

14. Scenic Mountain Act - J. Huebner has spoken to Counsel about this. Counsel advised that it will not protect the Town against wind turbine development. Counsel agreed with our strategy of enacting a by-law establishing an outright ban on electricity generation in Town.

15. Chief Breen reported that a technician for the state had visited Town Hall to install a dedicated computer line from the MBI connection to the Police Office. The state is doing the work and bears all costs.

16. J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn at 9:01 pm. M. Case seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Minutes written by J. Nelson