

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen – August 31, 2015

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 meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance J. Huebner made a motion to approve the minutes of August, 24, 2015. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.
3. J. Huebner noted that Chief Breen had seen to it that Ralph Simmons' name had been added to the Boston Cane plaque honoring the oldest residents of Washington. Busty's name was also on that plaque and J. Huebner asked Chief Breen to see if additional residents should have been listed or were listed on a second plaque.
4. D. Spencer raised the subject of a recent announcement by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service asking for public comment on a Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement concerning the proposed expansion of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. Basically all of the southeast quadrant of the Town is within the boundaries of this expansion. Increased wildlife conservation is the goal of the expansion. Much of the Westfield Wild and Scenic territory is involved. Virginia Lake Estates (North Lake) is in this area. General discussion followed on if or how the Town could benefit from the government "taking" the Virginia Lake property and reimbursing the Town. K. Lew mentioned that roughly half of the Virginia Lake property owners still pay their taxes to the Town. There will be a public informational meeting on September 14. D. Spencer will attend. D. Spencer said that a big piece of his property will be within the conservation area. He will find out whatever he can.
5. S. Nelson gave the Select Board an update on the status of Wired West working with the Mass. Broadband Institute (MBI) to bring fiber to homes

in Washington. The pre-construction phase of the project begins next. This involves physically surveying all of the poles in each participating member town with Verizon and /or Eversource in attendance and getting their sign-off on how best to accommodate Wired Wests' cable on each pole. This is the "make – ready" process. The next step toward make-ready for Washington will be deciding when to do our debt exclusion vote. Washington and 3 or 4 other Wired West towns postponed their debt exclusion vote for legitimate reasons of finance scheduling. No deadline had been established by MBI. However in late July MBI indicated that make-ready would begin first in towns which had already done their debt exclusion.

Debt exclusion requires the Town vote at an actual election. S. Nelson suggested that we can wait until spring and combine the debt exclusion vote with the Town elections. Various bureaucratic processes could slow down the start of make-ready region-wide. Another option would be to set up a half day special election and do it this fall. K. Lew will research what it would cost the Town to hold the special half-day election. S. Nelson said that he will find out if it is worthwhile to make that effort. Ken Nakajima will hold a meeting here in Washington in late September. S.Nelson said we should decide on when we will hold our election before that meeting.

6. K. Lew gave the Board an update on the electricity purchase aggregation program managed by Hampshire Council of Governments (HCOG) which the Town joined last winter, to go into effect this winter. The individual who managed the program at the time we joined has retired and we have had some difficulty getting up to date on the process. However, Kent has contacted HCOG and learned that they are searching for a new Director and that they have been playing catch up with their member towns in the interim. He will maintain close contact to be sure that Washington is in the loop as the program is finalized. Thirty five western Mass. Municipalities joined the program. Each resident in member towns has the option to stay with their current electricity provider, National Grid or Eversource, at their

published rates or to go with HCOG and benefit from the lower rates available through bulk purchase.

7. Chief Breen requested that the Town provide him with one “hidden driveway” sign for his residence. He did the research and the state does not make such a sign. D. Fish can purchase it. The cost will be about \$50.00. The Board agreed to take it out of the Town budget.
8. Chief Breen reported that he has been told that a young man was seen engaging in very dangerous activity in Town. He has been skateboarding on RT. 8 at night. Chief Breen will try to contact that individual.
9. D. Fish told the Board that the highway crew has moved the TV/computer Box out of place at the Transfer Station. He asked if the Highway Department could use this old bin for storage. K. Lew said that they had planned to scrap that container. The Town will get an estimate on the scrap value of the container and make a decision at that time. Vera Cormier offered to get an estimate.
10. Barbara Keyes of the Board of Health mentioned that she has spoken to the EPA about the status of the old Borgnis dump on Frost Road. There seems to be some confusion about whether it was encapsulated at one time or not.
11. J. Nelson told the Board that she is trying to get confirmation from Verizon if we can get 911 service for a Town Hall phone.
12. D. Fish reported that he has received a variance in the weight classification from MassDOT allowing us to use the Summit Hill bridge for our snow plows. He has to apply separately for variances for each type of heavy vehicle. He confirmed that Balthazar won the contract to re-construct Washington Mountain Road. They will set up a field headquarters to

prepare for work in the spring. This fall surveyors will continue mapping out all of the culvert locations.

13. Phil Clark informed the Board that although Holden still has to complete some additional work he requested on the wetlands plan, the DEP did grant them a project number. The Conservation Commission (ConComm) will hold the Cross Place public hearing next Thursday, September 3 at 6:00pm at Town Hall. P. Clark also mentioned that we need additional data from Holden for tomorrow so ConComm can review that before the hearing. P. Clark added that we need a letter from MassDEP before we will get any contractor to bid on the project.

He told the Board that he has the easement map and description regarding access to the pond at Eden Glen ready for the Cadmans. Those documents are to be reviewed by our attorney. He is working with the materials supplier to develop an estimate on Eden Glen costs. He has put together a Mass Works grant for \$200,000 for the Middlefield Bridge work. J. Huebner mentioned that the Town voted notionally to appropriate some funds for this project and that we should acknowledge this to the state. It was itemized at Town Meeting. No funds were actually committed. He hoped that Becket and Middlefield will give us support letters. G. Grogan informed the Board that we did borrow some money for this to hold in reserve. The interest is accruing. J. Huebner said that the issue is that we have 3 major projects going on and the state needs to be reminded of that.

14. G. Grogan told the Board that he had conferred with Dan Parnell and both agreed that it is in the Town's best interest to move our financial business from TD Bank to Easthampton Savings Bank. Easthampton will give us interest on our stabilization account among other advantages. He asked if we are set for paying the bill for the Highway Department's insurance of about \$7500.00.

- 15.J. Huebner offered congratulations to our Assessors and our financial team. We are the fourth town to have our tax rate certified by the state. It is a great accomplishment.
- 16.J. Huebner said that he did follow up with Mr. Kerwood of Berkshire Group Purchasing who agreed that Ms. Wood is not a great responder to Group members, including Washington. They will put together a bid package for us in the spring. He asked that D. Fish be in touch with him and he will make sure that we are on the list. J. Huebner told D. Fish that he should always go direct to Mr. Kerwood.
- 17.D. Fish told the Board that we will need 600-800 tons of salt this winter. Discussion followed about the best salting policy. The Board decided that it will take responsibility for setting the policy and agreed to support salting roads before they are snow-covered in an effort to keep the roads bare longer. D. Fish said that he uses salt with an additive that helps it stay on the roads longer. J. Huebner made a motion to endorse the policy of pre-treating the roads in advance of winter storms. M. Case seconded and the vote was unanimous. The Board will take the heat.
- 18.M. Case said that there is no news on the cemetery or on the Pittsfield veterans' program.
19. J. Huebner reported that the Town had received a number of checks. From Clifford Propane we received a check in the amount of \$5.00 and another in the amount of \$ 25.00 for gas fitting at 440 Frost Road. From White Wolf We received a check for \$225 for a well drilling application at Lot 5 Lovers Lane. A second White Wolf check was received in the amount of \$100 for related work at the same property.
20. J. Huebner pointed out that the current issue of Berkshire Magazine contains an article mentioning "The Cut" and Washington as the high point between Boston and the western terminus of the railroad.

21. Phil Clark mentioned that he has just discovered that there are multiple liquid propane storage tanks of great volume owned by George Propane located close to the Hinsdale/Washington line on Bullard Crossing Road. Sixty thousand gallons was mentioned. He believes this is a safety threat. The Board asked Chief Breen to check to see that the appropriate emergency procedures are in place. P. Clark said that we should speak with Ray Bolduc on this first. He is Hinsdale's Emergency Management Chief.

22. J. Huebner asked the ConCOMM if there were wetland violations at the house on the corner of Watson Road and Washington Mountain Road. The owner might be facing fines. K. Walls said the ConComm is aware and dealing with it.

23. At 8:07pm J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. M. Case seconded and the motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Accepted: _____ Date: _____

Accepted: _____

Accepted: _____

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Nelson