

Meeting of the Washington Select Board – December 21, 2015

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Attending for the Board were J.Huebner and S.Lennon .
2. J. Huebner made a motion to approve the minutes of December 14, 2015. S. Lennon seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
3. J. Huebner opened discussion of the Finance Committee’s recently completed “Town of Washington Financial Sustainability Report” .Brian Domina of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) was in attendance. He worked as consultant to our Finance Committee under a Technical Assistance grant secured by BRPC. Kent Lew, Finance Committee Chair, said that the purpose of this report was to gather data critical to understanding the Town’s current financial position as the basis for Town officials to chart a path to a sustainable fiscal future. K. Lew said that he believes we have made a good start in that effort. B. Domina will remain available to assist the Finance Committee as they move forward with the next phase of the work. J. Huebner said that he will write a Letter of Commendation for B. Domina’s work with the Town’s Finance Committee.

The report includes “an overview of the Town’s revenue and expenditures (for the most recent ten-year period for which data is available), a snapshot of the Town’s current financial status and a list of potential future expenses and potential future sources of revenue”. DOR Schedule A is the source of much of this data.

Reacting to this summary of the report, J. Huebner added that Washington must collaborate and cooperate with other towns to regionalize wherever we can to save money. Our legislative delegation is working to advance this model of fiscal sustainability for all Berkshire towns. He also said that we need to focus on our bridges and roads to identify what is likely to fail

currently and in the future. We need information from the state and DCR to move ahead with the next phase of our planning. The possibility of increasing our stumpage fees is an area of interest for added revenues. D. Spencer suggested that we could also look at monetizing our tax title properties including those at Virginia Lake Estates.

J. Huebner thanked the Finance Committee for their excellent work on this report. He believes that they have laid the foundation for a comprehensive financial sustainability plan. After the New Year we will set the planning agenda.

4. J. Huebner made a motion that the Select Board approve a Letter of Intent to Eric Nakajima, Director of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, documenting that in accordance with the MBI Last Mile Program Policy of July 30, 2015 Washington has: Authorized by a 2/3 Town meeting vote allowing the Town to borrow the total amount of the Town's estimated share of the project cost ; and Approved of a debt exclusion in a Town wide vote, by majority, allowing the Town to raise additional tax revenue to pay debt service on what it borrows and; Affirmed our intent to move forward as part of the MBI regional network. S. Lennon seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. The Town Clerk attested to all of the above and applied the Town seal. The purpose of the above Letter of Intent is to ensure that Washington qualifies for the pole survey work about to begin.
5. P. Clark told the Board that he has concluded that the construction package submitted by Holden Engineering is an incomplete draft not suitable for building. J. Huebner said that the only question that remains is do we go after them to recover the money the Town has spent on the project. Regarding the Middlefield Road bridge, J. Hostetter reported that she searched the files per P. Clark and found the old plans of the abutments which he requested.

6. J. Huebner made a motion that the Select Board sign a letter to Senator Downing expressing the Board's concern about the recent actions and communications from MBI over the past few months. He objected to the Town having to hold a debt-exclusion vote at the last minute in order to retain its place "in line" for broadband connection, to MBI's threat to not authorize state funds to towns which signed the WiredWest Operating Agreement and to MBI's seemingly deliberate scheduling, relocating and then cancelling a public informational meeting without proper notice to public officials. S. Lennon seconded and the vote to approve sending the letter was unanimous.
7. J. Huebner reported that the Board had received a check in the amount of \$175.00 for rental of the Chapel for carol singing.
8. J. Huebner made a motion that the Select Board sign a letter to Tracy Osimboni, Project Manager for the Summit Hill Bridge Superstructure Replacement in response to DOT's request for comments on their public hearing at Town Hall on December 14. S. Lennon seconded the motion and the vote to sign the letter was unanimous.
9. J. Hostetter reported that she had received a letter from the state Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission Executive Director concerning Bucksteep's license status. J. Hostetter to contact the ABCC.
10. J. Huebner reported that the Town has received a letter from Berkshire Medical Center describing the much improved service available there for victims of sexual assault. Sean Connors said that this program represents a new level of professionalism treating such cases at BMC.
11. J. Huebner read a complaint from Mark Powell of Cross Place Road regarding partial blockage of that road by heavy equipment working on the Massaro's driveway. He had trouble passing that equipment and there was no signage in place. D. Fish said that he was aware of the situation, spoke to the

Massaro's and learned that they were widening their driveway to correct for erosion. He had no objection to the work. J. Huebner will email Mr. Powell on this issue.

12. On the subject of document shredding at Town hall the Board decided that since our documents would not be destroyed on-site, we will not proceed with that plan, but will instead purchase a heavy-duty shredder to be used by Town staff. He authorized J. Hostetter to research and purchase the shredder.

13. J. Huebner announced that the Governor will be in Great Barrington tomorrow for the Community Compact signing ceremony.

14.J. Huebner thanked Sean Conners for donating the granite for the Veterans' Memorial.

15.Chief Breen asked for the Board's suggestions on cell phone purchase. He needs a new one and will buy it at a discount from the Police Chief's Association.

16.J. Nelson told the Board that the Becket/ Washington Community Partnership (BWCP) had asked to do a brief presentation of their goals and plans on January 11. The Board agreed to place the BWCP on the agenda.

17.J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm. S. Lennon seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Accepted: _____ Date: _____

Accepted: _____

Accepted: _____

Respectfully submitted, Jan Nelson