

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen – February 29, 2016

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner, Shaun Lennon and Mike Case.
2. After leading the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to approve the minutes for February 22, 2016. The motion was seconded by M. Case and passed unanimously.
3. Next J. Huebner made a motion to approve the March monthly Selectmen's letter. S. Lennon seconded and the letter was approved unanimously.
4. Mike Burke of the Finance Committee (FinCom) told the Board that he has seen much debris in the Town roads left from the wind and rain storm of last week. J. Huebner said that D. Fish and the road crew have been working on cleaning up numerous washouts and downed limbs. He has had an accident on his motorcycle and cannot be here tonight.
5. Kent Lew asked if we have received any acknowledgement from Holden that we are entitled to use the design work that they did for Cross Place Road. Now that we have declared them in material breach and cancelled our contract we need to be sure we are clear to proceed with using the work they have done. The Select Board and FinCom members present all agreed with this caution. It was mentioned that Holden could place a mechanical lien on us. J. Huebner said that we have amply documented that they did not do the job for which we contracted and for which we have paid in part. We heard that they also failed to pay a tradesman, probably a surveyor, whom they hired. Phil Clark added that we will credit Holden for their work as we move forward with re-bidding the job and finishing it.

6. K. Lew said that we estimated \$25,000 for design and \$100,000 for construction of the Middlefield Road Bridge. This was not a hard estimate. We will need to use Chapter 90 money on this project. P. Clark said that we will have to apply before we expend the money. We have already spent about \$10,000 on the bridge for which we probably cannot use CH. 90 funds. He added that although a box culvert will increase expense over our preliminary estimate, going that route will be safer for fire trucks and other large vehicles. J. Huebner made a motion to budget \$36,500 to hire HCS for the Engineering work needed. M. Case seconded and the vote to approve the plan was unanimous. P. Clark told the Board that 3 bids will go out in April: Eden Glen, Cross Place Road and Middlefield bridge. The projects will be advertised as culverts and not bridges. This should attract smaller contractors and give the Town Better pricing. He believes there could be more money available to us if we position the work as smaller-scale projects. Mass Highway has accepted all of the documents he submitted. The Army Corps will issue their order in the next few weeks. He agreed to finish the culvert inventory and the Road Maintenance plan.
7. Chief Breen told the Board that MEMA will not be coming tonight as expected. He will call them to firm up the schedule.
8. M. Case reported that he had delivered the documents signed last week to the Pittsfield Mayor's office accepting the City's offer to take charge of Washington's veterans' services.
9. Regarding previous discussion by the Board of instituting a retirement policy for the Highway Department, K. Lew said that his research inclines him to think that it would not be a good idea for Washington. Dan Parnell told him that Becket did adopt a Highway Department retirement plan and it has not accomplished what they hoped. It is inflexible once adopted. J. Huebner said that he sees no compelling reason to go forward with such a plan at this time.

10.K. Lew told the Board that there is about \$100,000 in the stabilization account now. D. Spencer made that estimate closer to \$200,000. We will have a more accurate estimate at the start of FY 2017.

11.J. Huebner reported that he attended the MMA legislative breakfast on Friday. None of our legislators attended. He learned that MMA has a best practices series of reference materials for members. These appear to be well researched and well written, covering many topics of importance to municipalities. K. Lew will download this data and hopes to use it to support the Fincom's efforts where relevant.

J. Huebner also learned that CH. 90 will be budgeted for only \$200,000,000 for FY 17. The Governor has proposed a \$918,000,000 bond bill over the next five years for economic development. J. Huebner was told that there is no stand-alone broadband bill, but the funding is in place. The Governor is looking into broadband progress in Western Mass at present.

12.Trish Drugmand asked about the Town being over budget on winter roads. J. Huebner told her that D. Fish did report on that question. We went over budget by about \$5000. K. Lew said that \$5694 went to Mortons for road salt. Sand was supplied by White Wolf. K. Lew added that it is possible we will come in under budget at the end of winter as we are under for overtime worked by the highway crew. J. Huebner sounded a word of caution saying that we will wait until the season is over before drawing our conclusions. He added that the Board voted to support pre-salting of roads as a safety measure before snow/ice storms hit.

13.S. Nelson, Town delegate to WiredWest, provided an update on broadband activity to the Board. He was asked to step down from his position on the WiredWest Executive Committee in order to minimize the negative impact on negotiations with MBI of an OpEd column he wrote recently in the Berkshire Eagle. The OpEd was critical of MBI and was deemed inappropriate by the WiredWest Executive Committee. He did not want to

prejudice the state and MBI against WiredWest and so stepped down. He has gained more flexibility now to criticize and speak out as a delegate from the Town to the Board of Directors of WiredWest.

J. Huebner told him that attendees at the MMA meeting were very upset that nothing seems to be going on with the broadband effort. He thought that MBI will benefit from this delay and is using up money that should go to building the network. S. Nelson said that the intent is still there by the Governor to build the network, but that progress is stalled while he and his staff get up to date on what has been achieved so far. The Governor is understandably concerned that state money may be at risk. S. Nelson said that DOR is worried that a number of our smaller towns may not be able to afford to participate. DOR is looking at all towns and their bondability.

S. Nelson added that the Governor should be supportive once he understands the extent of the financial modeling work WiredWest has done and the expertise of the individuals who have done that work. P. Clark said that the work to build a broadband network is comparable to the successful public/private partnership the state used to build the public water supply. M. Case added that he has heard that progress will be slow until FY 2017. Such a long delay would be hard on both WiredWest and MBI and raises the risk of outside competition. S. Nelson acknowledged that possibility, but stressed that the risk is far greater if MBI's plan of separate towns owing their portion of the network is adopted by the state than it is under Wiredwest's regionalized structure.

14. Residents from Washington Mountain Road addressed the Board about extensive ice buildup in their driveway which they believe may be caused by Balthazar's work on a nearby culvert. The ice is 4 inches thick and they never had this problem before. There appears to be no grading left. J. Huebner told them that we will talk with DOT tomorrow about what to do to correct this problem. The couple said that they want it restored to its original state when the work is done on that section of road

15. The Selectmen and FinCom discussed the Town's budget which is now being developed. K. Lew said that a modest cost of living raise is being considered. Dick Spencer mentioned that we have 3 years of actual expenditures to use as our benchmark. Mike Burke of the Finance committee said that ants are getting into the Chapel. It was agreed that E. Bond can supply information on the Chapel's condition and estimate the cost of any repairs needed. Regarding Bucksteep, Vera Cormier of the Board of Health told the Select Board that she has seen a light in the woods at the property. Treasurer Glenn Grogan is expecting health insurance costs to go up this year. D. Parnell will check on some invoices for about \$4,000 from Covanta. At D. Parnell's request J. Hostetter researched a \$3000 mini grant for emergency preparedness originally given to our public health inspector several years ago. Chief Breen would like to use the \$2400 still on the books for some much needed safety equipment.
- 16.J. Huebner presented J. Hostetter with a letter of reprimand as discussed on 2/29. After discussion and a slight wording change the document was signed and placed in her personnel file.
17. She told him that she is working on the Annual Report and is putting together a list of individuals who still owe her their write-ups. J. Huebner asked her to tell the Board where she needed help with the report or anything else so that the Board could help her.
18. J. Huebner briefly mentioned the following:
 - a. He sent the Washington Mountain Road plans to the Clerk. Residents can review them in her office during her regular hours from 7 to 9 on Monday nights.
 - b. BRPC will hold a dinner at Mazzeo's Restaurant on Thursday at which they will review their Complete Streets program . J. Huebner and D.

Fish have already attended a presentation on this program and found it too urban in orientation for Washington.

- c. He received a letter from UMASS announcing that Adam Southard has been awarded his "Roads Scholar" certificate for having successfully completed that course at the University.
- d. The Town received a Small Business Report from the SBA and made it available to all interested parties.
- e. He gave Vera Cormier a brochure on an upcoming public health seminar.
- f. He received an update of OSHA compliance regulations for the Highway Department.

19.J. Huebner called for a closed door Executive Session at 8:16 pm. The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:27 pm.

20.J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting at 8:28. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Respectfully submitted, Jan Nelson