

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen at Washington Town Hall

January 9, 2017

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner, M. Case and T. Drugmand.
2. After leading the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of December 19, 2016. M. Case seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.
3. **Job Interview – Assistant for Tax Collector and Treasurer:** Ms. Brynn Stott-Cohen, a graduate of Westfield State University and a resident of Chester, replied to our advertising for an assistant to the Tax Collector and Treasurer. She submitted her resume and her former employer's strong recommendation. She was interviewed this evening by the Select Board. Also attending the interview were Glenn Grogan, Dick Spencer, Ed Bond and Jan Nelson. After J. Huebner described the job to her, Ms. Stott-Cohen spoke about her relevant work experience and qualifications. After further discussion J. Huebner thanked her for her interest in the job and told her that the Board would be in touch with her in the near future.
4. **Highway Department:** Highway Superintendent Tom Johnson told the Board that the DPW has been keeping up with weather conditions and that the condition of our roads is good. M. Case said that a Becket resident recently told him that our roads were actually in great condition and were much better than Becket's. Theirs were still snow covered where ours were clear starting right at the Washington line. J. Huebner acknowledged the highway crew's excellent work and the Town's appreciation of it.

He reminded T. Johnson about the importance of his researching possible options for dealing with our small bridge problems using prefabricated spans. We have a number of small bridges to replace including Middlefield Road. T. Johnson said that he had been researching options for the

reclamation of a section of Lover's Lane. That road surface is very bad. He told the Board that he had not seen the documents nor heard anything about signing the contract for the Eden Glen construction. Maxymilian was the winning bidder. J. Huebner told him that DEP has some money for culvert work. P. Clark is investigating this.

J. Huebner reported receiving an announcement of a pre-construction hearing on the Summit Hill Bridge to be held at DOT District One headquarters in Lenox on Tuesday, January 17 at 10:00am. He will get the details to T. Johnson. J. Huebner mentioned that Summit Hill Road has been closed by the state a couple of times recently due to problems with their large bridge inspection equipment breaking down.

- 5. Town Hall Roof:** Building Maintenance Manager E. Bond told the Board that Wooliver Roofing will be at Town Hall later this week to repair the leaks that have been dripping into the building. J. Huebner asked if we should consider putting a peaked roof on the building. E. Bond told him that we had considered that before and decided not to do it based on the high cost of the project. J. Huebner wondered if we might find a source of grant money for building a peaked roof. E. Bond agreed that a flat roof just does not work in this climate and is constantly in need of maintenance. He advised waiting for spring to make any decision.
- 6. School Bus:** Chief Breen told the Select Board that the cost of repairs to the Bus is \$ 4400.00. The general opinion is that this was a Ford factory problem. Two large bolts were found rolling around in the engine compartment. He believes that the Town should not pay for the repair. T. Johnson added that he had been playing phone tag with Ford over the issue. He did receive a letter from Ford about the problem. The Board was glad to hear this as it is a sign of progress and urged him to continue his efforts to reach his contact at Ford. The bus was purchased through a state contract. J. Huebner agreed to call in our attorney if this is not cleared up soon.

7. Tax Collector: J. Hostetter told the Board that she had gotten the documentation on the tax software. Glenn Grogan reported that we have \$242,000 in checks in the Town's account. There was discussion of the status of our search for a new Collector and also possibly a "floater" to assist the Treasurer and the Collector. Treasurer Glenn Grogan urged the Board to check applicants' references very carefully. J. Huebner said that he would thoroughly vet all candidates. Just one candidate has come forward and been interviewed so far. J. Huebner asked G. Grogan to tell her that we would get back to her on our decision in 2 weeks. When a candidate is hired, J. Huebner expects that a member of the Mass. Tax Collectors' Association (MCTA) will help train that person. He has been discussing our situation with this organization. Whomever we hire will have to pass a CORI check and be bonded. He has concluded that Becket has no interest in being our partner in sharing a Collector.

Karen Avalle, our Assessor Consultant, joined the meeting and asked the Board about the status of our Collector search. J. Huebner told her that the process is underway and that he has been in discussion with the Chair of the Mass Tax Collector's Association. He informed her that the MCTA has promised their support. They will send a qualified individual here to insure that our collection process runs smoothly and follows state law. K. Avalle mentioned that the Assessors are concerned about getting Excise Tax bills out promptly and accurately.

8. Town Hall Key Distribution: It was brought to the Board's attention that Barbara Keyes manages two exercise classes for residents which are held at Town Hall. There is no one available to open the door at Town Hall or lock up during the class hours. In light of her dedication to the exercise classes and her work for the COA, in addition to her position as Ballot Box Constable, J. Huebner made a motion to approve a key for B. Keyes. Tricia Drugmand seconded and the motion passed unanimously. This will be considered a second COA key. Chief Breen is to give B. Keyes the

paperwork to sign. J. Huebner signed B. Keyes' requests for use of the Auditorium for exercise and balance class.

J. Huebner told the Board that he will add an important sentence to the first paragraph of the key sign-off protocol sheet. The sentence will require that key holders not loan their key to anyone. J. Huebner made a motion to accept the protocol as amended. M. Case seconded and the motion was agreed upon unanimously. Chief Breen is to give J. Hostetter the names of the 20 people who have already signed for their keys so that they can be asked to update their agreements.

- 9. Administrative Assistants:** J. Hostetter reported to the Board that most of the departmental Annual Reports had been submitted to her. She gave the Board a list of those still needed. Ed Bond told the Board that he had already given his report on maintenance to the Finance Committee.

J. Hostetter asked the Board if the Town would consider giving the school the 2 desk-top computers which the Assessors wish to dispose of. M. Case explained that this would be difficult because the school would have to go through a complicated process to acquire the equipment and then make it the property of the school. J. Huebner said that if no one at Town Hall expresses interest in the computers we should take them to the transfer station and offer them to residents. J. Hostetter told the Board that she wishes to purchase one of the old file cabinets stored in the auditorium for \$20.00. We have not had any other bids for the files yet. She will get the equipment evaluation forms on the file cabinets from Jeff Sawtelle and from Jon Les on the desk-top computers. J. Huebner said that there is a drafting table offered by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). J. Hostetter began transcribing the oldest cemetery records today.

10. Wired West: S. Nelson requested that the Board members sign a letter from the Town to Jay Ash, Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) expressing Washington's support for a regional broadband solution to our need for high-speed internet and that our town officials have regular and substantive input onto policy making and decisions by MBI and EOHED regarding deployment of broadband. J. Huebner made a motion to sign and send the letter. M. Case seconded and the motion passed unanimously. M. Case told the Board that he attended a holiday party where he mentioned to Peter Larkin, Chair of the MBI board, that Washington wants broadband.

S. Nelson thanked the Board for their commitment to regional broadband. He invited them to attend a Wired West public forum for town officials to be held at John F. Kennedy Middle School, 100 Bridge Rd. in Florence, Mass. on Saturday, January 28 starting at 9:30am. The purpose of the meeting is to give the towns a voice in just what our regional plan is to be. T. Drugmand expressed her intention to join S. Nelson and K. Lew in attending the forum.

S. Nelson mentioned that our Town pole survey is 88% complete. He and K. Lew will review the Pole Survey report when we receive it for accuracy and also to get a good idea of what our "make ready" costs will be. At a recent Wired West delegates meeting it was decided that the cost of maintaining a depreciation reserve would be spread over time and shared by all users.

11. Conflict of Interest Training: Huebner reported that the 2017 state Ethics Commission Conflict of Interest Training is available now online and all should take the training.

12. Syncarpha Solar: J. Huebner made a motion for the Town to sign up for Syncarpha Solar services. This would allow (not require) any resident to choose Syncarpha over Eversource for their electric power and pay a rate 10% below Eversource. S. Nelson reported that he had been looking closely

at Syncarpha's business model and discovered that there are escalator clauses involved that could increase subscriber's costs. Upon learning this, J. Huebner withdrew his motion and said he will examine the contract.

13. Brief Items: Chief Breen will try to re-connect with Mr. Shapira about a possible veterans' memorial now that the holidays are over; The Board had no interest in attending a seminar on town control of legalized marijuana enterprises within our borders; The MMA will hold their annual business meeting in Boston on January 21; The Town received a check in the amount of \$358.49 from Becket for student transportation; J. Huebner completed the annual Town Census Boundary Survey; J. Huebner will be working with BRPC on a DLTA grant for shared services for towns; T. Drugmand to review contract for Transfer Station; She will also review the Conte Wildlife Refuge impact on Washington as it is in the final review stage; M. Case told the Board that on April 27 the Selectmen's Association will have their annual dinner at the Skyline Country Club in Lanesborough with Adam Hinds and Mike Connepic as speakers.

14. J Huebner made a motion to adjourn at 8:45pm. M. Case seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Accepted: _____ Date: _____

Accepted: _____

Accepted: _____

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Nelson