

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen at Washington Town Hall

April 3, 2017

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner and M. Case.
2. After leading the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of March 27, 2017. M. Case seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
3. **Broadband/Wired West:** At the Select Board's request S. Nelson, Washington's Delegate to Wired West, invited representatives from Westfield Gas & Electric to meet with the Board and discuss their capability to provide our broadband design and engineering requirements. He introduced Aaron Bean, Operations Manager and John Leary, IT Supervisor.

Aaron Bean told the Board that WG& E is a utility. They have been generating electricity for 117 years. They are classified a municipal light plant, as are Washington and all WiredWest member towns. WG&E has been providing high speed internet service to businesses for 9 years. John Leary added that WG&E is currently providing broadband services to 700 Westfield homes. They have received a 15 million dollar bond to complete the build out of the city's fiber network. They are also currently working with Otis on that town's broadband project and expect shortly to begin work with Ashfield. WG&E is their own internet service provider (ISP). They are a local western Mass company and consider Washington an extension of their neighborhood. They have many contacts in the industry and can provide numerous references.

WG&E would design our network using their engineering firm. They will bid out our design using an online bid process. J. Huebner asked about their capacity. J. Leary replied that they can design up to 200 miles per week. It would take them only a couple of weeks to complete Washington's design

work. Procurement will take longer. They can string one mile of fiber per day. They will work with Eversource to resolve any problems with our pole survey . Aaron Bean estimated that make-ready will take 6 months to complete. John Leary added that they will work in the background during make-ready and could finish our fiber network in 18 months.

K. Lew said MBI estimated that the cost of designing our network would be \$141,000. As our allocation from the state's appropriation is \$220,000 we will be covered. Aaron Bean told the Board that WG&E's proposals to WiredWest towns are a la cart. We can change and customize the work they do to suit our needs. They will do a design and engineering proposal for us. Eversource has only one person in charge of make ready for western Mass. WG&E works closely with Eversource and will help to settle any issues that may arise. They would also like to be our ISP and our network service operator. They do not collect and share customer information. J. Huebner asked where WiredWest fits in. J. Leary responded that they are not tied to WiredWest. They only want to do the job correctly. They will work with whomever we want.

S. Nelson told the Board that he and K. Lew attended the MBI private sector partners meeting at which WG&E was asked to present their capabilities. Several cable companies also presented at this meeting. K. Lew and S. Nelson were impressed with WG&E 's presentation. It was clear, simple and direct. They are local and have track records with Otis and the city of Westfield. John Leary recommended we speak with Otis about their experience working with WG&E. The Select Board thanked Westfield Gas & Electric for their presentation.

S. Nelson said that the state is ready to release last mile grants to the towns. \$20,000,000 is the amount available from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development for towns which want to build their own networks. The state has decided to distribute the funds through its MassWorks office. We have to complete a simple grant application. K. Lew

and S. Nelson will prepare our application. Once submitted, we should have our funds in 2 weeks. The Town will receive state money before we have to spend our own.

4. **Highway Department:** J. Huebner thanked T. Johnson and the Highway Department for doing a great job clearing away the snow and ice before the last COA dinner. COA Director Steve DeLoye was very appreciative of the effort.

We have received our Ch. 90 funds from MassDOT. There will be a new procedure starting in July 2017.

T. Johnson told the Board that there have been no developments on the Washington Mountain Road (WMR). Baltazar will have to come back to finish the drainage work. M. Case reported that he continues to see large numbers of very heavy trucks using the road. He asked if anything can be done about this. T. Johnson is keeping track of the deterioration of the road caused by the trucks. The road was to have been built to withstand this heavy traffic, but clearly there are problems. J. Huebner replied that he did not think we would be able to control the type of vehicles using the road, but observed that we are scheduled to sign off on the job in June. Maybe we won't sign off at that time.

Lillian Fox addressed the Board on the subject of her well. Her water still has a high salt level. She had contacted Baltazar some time ago about this problem. They denied having anything to do with it. She believes their excavation near her home fouled the well. The well is hand dug. No one wants to be held responsible for this situation. Jim Huebner said that he will call Kyle, our Baltazar contact, about Lillian's well. Lillian asked that he keep her informed about his conversations with Baltazar.

Ed Bond asked when Baltazar is going to come back and fix the Town Commons granite posts and chain as they had promised.

5. **Summit Hill Road Access:** Linda Levernoch asked the Board what is being done about the deplorable condition of the roads DOT has designated as our access to Summit Hill Road during the re-construction of the bridge. She emphasized the safe passage of school buses and children. J. Huebner told her that he has spoken with the contractor and told them that the bridge won't be closed until the roads are fixed. The contractor assured him that work will be done to provide safe passage for the school buses and all local traffic. He also contacted CBRSD to inform them about the road and ask them to get this information out to families. L. Levernoch asked that we inform the contractor that no equipment is to be parked on her land. She fears that her well would be damaged if that happened. No one from the contractor has contacted her. J. Huebner said that the contracting company is Tully. He will contact them on her behalf. T. Johnson added that he has spoken with the Hinsdale highway crew about the road's condition.

6. **Board of Health:** V. Cormier told the Board that she had spoken with Eyal Shapira about the need for his summer camp to be in compliance with all Mass permitting requirements. He informed her that he was making arrangements to move his camp from Pugzee's Farm to Becket. V. Cormier informed him that would make no difference in the law. He would still have to be in compliance. J. Huebner told her to turn the case over to our Health Agent.

7. **Finance Committee:** There will be a Budget meeting on April 24th. Sean Connors told the Board that we have received a check for \$14,000 from Pittsfield for stumpage. We received the FY 2018 budget from CBRSD.

8. **Tax Collector:** Our new Collector, Melissa Martinetto, reported to the Board that Peggy DiSantis, the experienced Collector from Lee, met with her earlier that evening. Ms. DiSantis familiarized herself with Washington's collection challenges and will get back to the Board to let us know if she can be of assistance. The Board told M. Martinetto that the Town is prepared to

pay for Ms. DiSantis's assistance in training her and in helping us clear up the backlog of collecting work. We would appreciate having Ms. DiSantis here for a couple of hours each Monday . We have the funds for a couple of months' collection training as well as for assistance for the Treasurer. M. Martinetto told the Board that she is trying to make plans to attend a Collector's seminar at the end of April.

9. **Administrative Assistants:** J. Hostetter told the Board that the Hilltown Veterinary Clinic asked for permission to hold a dog training course in Town Hall Auditorium on Sunday, April 9. They have submitted an application to do so. M. Case said that they must guarantee that the Auditorium is thoroughly cleaned up and sanitized at the end of the training program. J. Huebner made a motion that we permit this use of the Auditorium providing a guarantee is made that the Auditorium will be left immaculate. M. Case seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

10. **Horizon Consulting Services (HCS)/P. Clark:** J. Huebner told P. Clark that the Select Board has grave concerns over two issues regarding his work for the Town. The first concerns his qualifications to receive DOT funding. We learned on September 19, 2016 that he was not qualified and this negatively affected finances on both Cross Place Road and on Blotz Road. He told the Board that he had filed for qualification and on several occasions assured the Board that it had been granted. A check of DOT's records has revealed that he is only qualified for Hydraulics and Hydrology and Hazardous Waste Investigation/Remediation. His work for the Town needs to be qualified under Bridge and Roadway. His representation of qualification was misleading.

The second of the Board's concerns was with P. Clark's work on the Middlefield Road bridge. Discussion focused on his statements about the status of the bridge abutments. At last week's Select Board meeting he told the Board that he never said the abutments were useable in their current condition.

J. Huebner said that he had researched this issue in the Select Board minutes and found that the Board had on 3/38/16 authorized up to \$8000 for Horizon to thoroughly inspect the abutments. On 6/20/16 P. Clark reported to the Board that he "... had written a letter report based on his research into and testing of the existing abutments. His conclusion was that they will bear the required load and will not have to be replaced. He said that we can make a case for this conclusion and that DOT will have to accept it." On 7/11/16 he stated to the Board that he would inform DOT that we will be using the existing abutments for Middlefield Road bridge. The minutes of 11/14/16 state that " The abutments on Middlefield Road are sound. We can't go ahead with repairs until P. Clark receives his certification."

Based on the above contradictory statements about the abutments and the fact that four months later he is still not certified to do the work, J. Huebner told P. Clark that the Board has lost confidence in his representations. He asked him to cease all work for the Town except that related to the FEMA Grant for Eden Glen. P. Clark was also asked to provide copies of all assessments and designs that the Town has paid for relating to the Middlefield Road bridge.

J. Huebner had put the above concerns in a letter addressed to Phil Clark at Horizon Consulting Services. He made a motion to approve the letter. M. Case seconded and the letter was approved unanimously and signed by the two Selectmen.

- 11. Wahconah Feasibility Vote:** J. Huebner reported that the Town has posted signage, distributed brochures and published a Tracks article about the vote this Saturday to move ahead or not to move ahead with a consultants' study on just what needs to be done to bring the school building up to current excellent standards and what that will cost. Select Board member M. Case sits on the School Building Committee. He said that the seven

towns in our regional school district will all vote Saturday on whether to authorize the study which will cost the district up to \$850,000 with Mass. School Building Administration (MSBA) paying the rest. Each Town in the District will pay for a percentage of the study based on their number of students. We have just 23 students at Wahconah and so our cost would be just a few percent.

12. Brief Items: Dept. of Transitional Assistance wants to help rural residents. Information will be given to Steve Deloye.; Office on Disability has grants available to towns which meet certain criteria. Information will be given to T. Johnson to see if paving the back parking lot at Town Hall would qualify.

13. Adjournment: J. Heubner made a motion to adjourn at 8:45pm. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Accepted: _____ Date: _____

Accepted: _____

Accepted: _____

Respectfully submitted,
Jan Nelson