

## Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen at Washington Town Hall

April 24, 2017

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Attending for the Board were J. Huebner, T. Drugmand and M. Case.
2. After leading the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes of April 10, 2017. M. Case seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
3. T. Drugmand stated for the record that she was tape recording the meeting.
4. **DCR:** J. Huebner informed the Board that the Department of Conservation and Recreation has requested they sign a waiver of a 120 day waiting period for the transfer of private property to the state. J. Huebner added that it is a land locked parcel of 165 acres on Watson Road that abuts October State Forest and would be added to it. D. Spencer commented that the town would lose some tax revenue. M. Case reminded the Board that the Town receives a payment in lieu of taxes from the recreational use of the property within the Town. There was a brief discussion on the location of the property. J. Huebner signed the waiver.
5. **Beach Road:** J. Huebner welcomed resident E. Shapira then addressed the concerns the Board received regarding the gate installed on Beach Road asking Mr. Shapira how far in the gate was installed. Mr. Shapira informed the Board that the gate is located 750 feet in. J. Huebner reported that he consulted Town Counsel and was told that it is Mr. Shapira's land and he has legal right to install a gate on his property.
6. **Use of the Auditorium:** J. Huebner informed the other Selectmen that during the two week off period the Town received an application to use the auditorium by the Hilltown Veterinary Service. In absence of a Board meeting he granted permission. a. J. Hostetter reported that the applicants chose to hold the event outdoors in the nice weather so the auditorium was not used this time. T. Drugmand asked J. Hostetter to make sure the next time the room is used that the applicants put the room back the

way it was found as the meeting chairs were stacked on the stage and J. Nelson had to ask for assistance in setting up the room. J. Hostetter said she would make sure the room is setup for the meeting in the future.

7. **Highway Department:** The Board reviewed and the Chapter 90 contract confirming that Highway Superintendent T. Johnson is listed as the signatory and contract manager. J. Huebner signed for the Board and asked T. Johnson to complete the contract manager section and get his authorization form notarized by the Town Clerk.
  
8. **Summit Hill Road:** Town residents John and Nicole Ferry, Peter and Beverly Stodden and Rob Jarvie asked the Board to address their concerns regarding the closure of the road's effect on multiple services.

Detour Road: T. Johnson informed the Board that he spoke to the Highway Superintendent in Hinsdale reporting that the dirt portion of the road will be graded this week and holes in the blacktop will be filled once the blacktop plant opens on May 1st. T. Johnson reminded the Board that the bridge replacement is pushed off to May 10<sup>th</sup> because CSX will not have a railroad flagman until then.

Mail delivery: 14 to 16 residents will have to travel 20 miles round- trip to pick up the mail at mailboxes if placed at the construction site. Placement of mailboxes at Buttermilk and Route 8 or at the Hinsdale Post Office would be preferable. K. Lew reported that he spoke to the Becket Post Office a couple weeks ago asking for a solution and that the Mail Carrier is not allowed to cross into Hinsdale to deliver mail.

School bus: N. Ferry asked the Board to resolve the addition of approximately an hour added to the detour bus route. There is another bus that would be a better fit or the bus company could send a van. The Town of Washington has to request this change. J. Huebner will contact the bus company to find out what is needed and will keep CBRSD informed.

Communication: The residents asked the Board if they should provide email addresses or phone numbers so that they can be informed of solutions to their

concerns. They haven't received a response to previously expressed concerns. It was decided the contractor would meet with the abutters during the DOT meetings when residents' concerns were first expressed. After discussion it was decided that Chief Breen would be charged with maintaining clear communications with residents as he had done during other construction projects.

Emergency Services: The Board asked Chief Breen to take care of contacting the Fire Department, Ambulance, State Police and keeping residents informed of any service changes.

Summary: The Board assured the residents that unless all of their concerns were addressed that the project would not be allowed to start.

9. **Washington Mountain Road (WMR):** The Board asked T. Johnson for an update on the meeting he attended with DOT to discuss open issues including areas of the road that are uneven, the washed out road edges, road exits and the Fox property well. T. Johnson said that DOT has a 12 item punch list that they are checking but they were not aware of all the issues. He provided them with his log book to review. K. Lew asked if the resident located at 2005 WMR made contact regarding the guardrail which is blocking both the view of and from the driveway, adding that the homeowner was almost hit by a truck traveling too fast around the corner. A hidden driveway sign was discussed. The Board asked T. Johnson to email Baltazar regarding that issue. K. Lew reported that C. Lew spoke to Baltazar regarding the West Branch Road apron and was told that Baltazar will narrow it down. The Town commons pillars are at the quarry and will be installed.

Vera Cormier presented a note and pictures documenting the changed drainage on her property from the loss of her retaining wall. The Town will install a drainage box when conditions permit. Vera also suggested extending a drainage pipe through her property. Tom Johnson will request this of DOT but the work would be outside the scope of the Baltazar contract.

10. **Upper Valley Road:** J. Huebner asked T. Johnson for an update on the beaver activity and water level at mile 138 on Upper Valley Road. T. Johnson reported that water is off the road but CSX has not cleaned out the deceivers.

11. **Middlefield Road Bridge Replacement.** Huebner thanked J. Nelson for getting out the RFP for design and engineering for the Middlefield Road Bridge replacement. P. Clark has submitted all the documentation for potential bidders to review.
12. **Frost Road:** T. Johnson reported that he received the hydraulic study for the culvert on upper Frost Road from P. Clark. He will contact the contractor regarding the size of pipe to use and different methods available. He also reported that the work done the White Wolf a few weeks ago is holding. K. Lew asked if the erosion at the top is a concern. T. Johnson replied it is not.
13. **Resident Concerns:** L. Fox asked if the Board was aware that there is water coming out of the center of Washington Mountain Road where the pipe goes underneath the road. T. Johnson reported that the water that is seeping slowly out of the road and also coming from under the road along the side was part of the discussion with DOT today. L. Fox added that the water previously went into the brook.

L. Fox told the Board that she was there today because she thought DOT would be at the meeting. She has an invoice to submit to them explaining that the presence of salt in her water is causing additional expense. She had work done on her furnace and the maintenance person suggested changing the water filter before the well tank again. Previously it needed to be changed twice a year. It has already been replaced once this year. L. Fox told the Board that she will copy the board on the letter and invoice sent to Balatzar and that she has been taking and keeping samples of her water.

Ed Bond asked the Selectmen to approve his repainting of the crosswalk on Frost Road from his house to his garden. J. Huebner made a motion to approve the crosswalk from Ed Bond's house across Frost Road and added that it should be done in the most efficient way possible. T. Drugmand seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

14. **Eden Glen:** J. Huebner reported that he asked P. Clark for date for the pre-construction meeting for Eden Glen, then went directly to J. H. Maxymillian Inc.

when he didn't get a reply. P. Clark asked that the Board not go directly to the contractor anymore.

15. **Horizon Consulting Services (HCS) P. Clark:** J. Huebner reported that although P. Clark represented to the Board in November 2016 that all of his work was done the town received two invoices from HCS totaling approximately eight thousand dollars of which 85% was for billable hours by principals at HCS. He asked P. Clark for an itemization of the 50 hours billed. P. Clark told him that the detail will be included on future invoices but he did not provide the itemization for the current bill. J. Huebner read into the record P. Clark's response to the Board's letter dated April 3, 2017.

J. Huebner sent all pertinent documents to Town counsel for review adding that he does not want to pay the invoices until the Board receives billing details. J. Huebner made a motion to withhold payments to HCS for the time being. T. Drugmand seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

S. Nelson asked for an update on the Cross Place Road construction site. T. Johnson stated that they need to wait for the under growth to start before it can be cleaned up.

16. **Police Department:** Chief Breen informed the Board that he has been checking on the Bucksteep Manor property per their request, reporting that there has been no activity. J. Huebner stated for the record that the issue with Bucksteep is that while it was a functioning business it was the town's biggest tax bill which was lost when it was designated a non-profit. The law provides that if a tax exempt property is not being used for the purpose of the tax exemption it becomes liable for taxes. The Board is following up on the usage issue.
17. **Broadband/Wired West–** J. Huebner asked if the town was ready for Westfield Gas & Electric's (WG&E's) contract. S. Nelson replied in the negative. Open issues include legal review, Becket's plans for its fiber network, and our construction costs.

18. **Town Hall Maintenance:** Ed Bond is working on a plan and firm estimate for a new roof at the Town Hall; difficulties include redesigning the drainage and incorporating solar panels; he has gotten LP Adams to do a truss design for free.

The Board asked the Highway Department to remove the crumbling brick flowerbox outside the main entrance.

E. Bond informed the Board that screens have been added to the windows in the auditorium.

19. **Parks Commission:** E. Bond informed the Board that the park cleanup day is scheduled for Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>.
20. J. Huebner motioned to approve the monthly Selectboard letter. M. Case seconded. J. Huebner asked M. Case to review for approval the task force bullet point. M. Case confirmed that the Education Task Force is not involved with the school building and has not made any recommendations. The second sentence was removed. J. Huebner moved for a vote on the motion as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

21. **Brief Items:**

The Board discussed the Selectmen's Dinner and the raffle gift, giving Chief Brien discretion on purchasing the donation.

J. Huebner reported that Brian from County Ambulance will be at next week's meeting.

22. **Budget and Annual Town Warrant:** The Board discussed budget items with Finance Committee members D. Spencer, K. Lew, D. Wiessbrod and M. Burke.

The following changes were made to the draft budget:

- The Board denied Chief Breen's request for an assistant and said that they would review the Town's police needs in June.
- The Board decided to freeze elected officials salaries.
- The Board asked that the amount for the Reserve Account be lowered by \$5000.

K. Lew provided an update on the changes made to the budget. The total to be raised from taxes is \$1,186,815.00. It is 98% of estimated levy with an excess capacity of \$17,608.00 and an estimated tax rate of \$14.42, which is an increase of \$ .38. This will result in an estimated increase in the average family home assessment of \$88.40.

J. Huebner asked T. Johnson to prepare details on purchasing new trucks for next week's budget meeting on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

23. **Tax Collector:** K. Lew reported on a conversation he had with the new Tax Collector earlier in the day and informed the Board that he was unsure if Mrs. Martinetto would continue in the job. E. Bond reported that in the Tax Collector's absence the Town Clerk took tax payments from residents tonight and issued them a receipt. G. Grogan informed the Board that he is in possession of \$71,000.00 in checks that he has held for two weeks waiting for the Tax Collector to fix a problem with the deposit. He was in Town Hall every day last week and did not see the Collector. The Collector's office mailbox is full of checks. J. Huebner will contact M. Martinetto and start searching for a replacement. K. Lew and G. Grogan will continue to work with DOR.

After discussion it was decided that there will be an article added to the ATM warrant to begin the process of changing the Tax Collector position from an elected position to appointment.

24. **Adjournment:** J. Huebner made a motion to adjourn at 9:16 pm. M. Case seconded and the vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Accepted: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Respectfully submitted by Jodi Hostetter  
And edited by the Board of Selectmen