

Meeting of the Washington Board of Selectmen at Washington Town Hall

March 19, 2018

1. J. Huebner called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Attending for the Board were R. Grillon, T. Drugmand and J. Huebner.
2. After leading the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance, J. Huebner made a motion to accept the minutes from 3/12/18 as written. R. Grillon seconded and the minutes were unanimously accepted as written.
3. **Building Maintenance Coordinator:** M. Thomas provided J. Huebner the keys to police chief's office door along with the paper containing the combination to office door and the safe. He reported that S. Connor got the keys from K. Breen. S. Conner asked him to accompany him into the police chief office to collect personal items. M. Thomas also reported that the police cruiser was moved to the Highway Garage.
4. **Police Chief:** The Board discussed what the immediate needs of the Police Department. There are pistol permit applications in various stages of the process that need addressing. Washington Mountain road is a speedway that needs policing. There was brief discussion on potential ticket revenue. Although the Board had asked Chief Breen not to conduct traffic stops and perform mainly administrative duties he did assisted the Board with special projects. There is value in having someone to respond to things that come up. S. Connors suggested creating a committee to determine the needs of the town and to outline guidelines. Attendants provided potential candidate information to the Board. J. Huebner will research an interim officer. J. Huebner also volunteered to write up something for the Tracks about Chief Victor Breen. J. and S. Nelson had an article about Victor Breen's many contributions to the town published in The Berkshire Eagle.
5. **Constables:** The town currently has another Constables in Shaun Lennon. The Board will discuss appointing others in the future.
6. **Election Officer:** An appointment will need to be made by the Annual Town Meeting on May 9th.

7. **School Bus Driver:** B. Phillips informed the Board that C. Breen had recently asked B. Phillips to fill his shift as vocational school bus driver. B. Phillips offered to fill the bus driver role and do both shifts permanently. The Board accepted and asked that he look for a backup driver. K. Lew volunteered to assist B. Phillips with negotiating Vocational Education Transportation costs with the Town of Becket when that time comes.

8. **Dog Officer/Inspector of Animals/Pound Keeper:** Tricia Drugmand volunteered to research candidates for these positions. There is an active kennel at the Town Garage. The Animal Inspector receives \$400.00 annually and the Dog Officer receives a \$400.00 plus has a \$200.00 expense account.

9. **Berkshire Public Health Alliance:** Health Agents J. Smith and C. Kaniecki and Assistant Attorney General Kara Cunha provided documentation regarding the receivership for abandoned properties Initiative. They reviewed the history of the program and highlighted the benefits and success stories from other towns that have adopted the program. If adopted it will assist the Board of Health with housing pertaining to abandoned properties and properties in disrepair. The assistance is free but must be adopted by a vote the Board of Selectmen. Currently there are 127 municipal participants with 449 active properties with 95 cases in active litigation. Receivership returned 408K to 600K in recovered back taxes in FY2017. The goal is get the property back into compliance. If the demand process is not successful a petition is filed in court requesting a receiver. A 3rd party to take over the property to bring the property back into condition. That appointed receiver uses their own funds or borrowed funds. The receiver property lien is ranked above the mortgage but not taxes owed to the town. There was a discussion about Woodies. C. Kaniecki stated the owner demonstrated that they will clear the area in spring. There is no code action in any property in town that would raise it to AG level. This would be a tool in the tool box. He made the introductions so that when the day comes the Town is ready to move forward. J. Huebner thanked group for meeting with the Board. Five years ago there was a survey of abandoned properties with in the Town. We do not have any properties in town right now. There was a discussion on Bucksteep

Manor/Family Unity. The property has not been occupied. The place has not been inspected in years. The Board of Health tried to inspect it but has been unsuccessful. An enforcement order was signed by the Board on March 12th to Family Unity. Documents could be filed with the court to seek access to the property to conduct an inspection. K. Lew will provide specific information to the AG to research the status of Family Unity's filing as a public charity. The Board and the Clerk of the Board of Health voted unanimously to adopt the program.

10. **Athenaeum:** J. Huebner read aloud the April 28, 2014 Selectmen meeting minutes and an email thread regarding a \$5,000.00 capital expenditure request from the Becket Athenaeum. The Board did not approve that request but did approve the requested \$200.00 donation increase. K. Lew reported that the amount requested this year is 16.7% on the total amount requested from both Washington and Becket. Director C. Defoe reported that 10% to 15% of the patrons come from Washington. There was a discussion on the benefits that Athenaeum provided. The Board did not have an objection to the \$2,000.00 capital expenditure requested this year.

11. **Highway:** J. Huebner gave T. Johnson Mass DOT bridge inspection reports for Lower Valley Road over depot brook, New Lenox Road over mill brook and Frost Road over depot brook. T. Johnson told the Board that he emailed today regarding Middlefield Bridge. The new small Plow truck is still being built. The quote for the upper Frost Road culvert plan was accepted. Stream crossing standards dinner, 29th of March. T. Drugmand and T. Johnson will go. T. Johnson gave a set of keys given to him by K. Breen to J. Huebner.

T. Drugmand asked that T. Johnson about the status of D. Fish's CDL license and requested that he get a copy of the court postponement documentation and any other court papers pertaining to D. Fish's active case and submit them to the Board by next Monday's Select Board meeting. It's been over a year that our highway employee has been without a CDL license and that may affect the Boards recommendations for COLA raises for the Highway Department.

12. **Beach Stickers:** The Town of Becket will charge Washington \$5.00 for each Beach Permits issued to the Town for dispensing. It was decided that town will pass on that charge to the residents.

13. **Fire Department/Ambulance Service:** K. Lew reported that the Finance Committee motioned to recommend keeping ambulance service with County Ambulance and there was a 4 to 1 vote to level funding of the Fire Department with M. Burke recommending an increase. There was a discussion on the \$5,000 charged by the Town of Becket for ambulance service having to cover for County Ambulance on a number of calls. The Selectmen will discuss the performance issues when Brian from County Ambulance attends the next meeting. There was also a discussion on the 50% requested increase for the Operation Cost of the Becket Fire Department. The Town should not pay 30% of the \$50,000 cost when our four year average is 17% of the totals calls. The Fire Chief is paid \$4,165. \$700.00 is paid to each for volunteer firefighters for a total of \$15,400.00. T. Drugmand agreed with Finance Committee recommendations and the Select Board will take it under review.

14. **Central Berkshire Regional School District:** CBRSD is seeking \$37,073 in Net Capital Assessment, \$19,899 in Net Transportation Assessment and \$628,891 in Net Operating Assessment for a total of \$685,863.

15. **Payroll:** The budget contains a 2% cost of living increase with the exception of the Selectmen. The Board to will review and suggest to Finance Committee any COLA increases including merit increases for the Highway Crew.

16. **Audit:** The Finance Committee suggested first conducting an outside review of our systems to prepare for an audit. K. Lew will put together some number after consulting with the Accounting Officer, Treasurer and Tax Collector.

17. **Transfer Station:** The compactor bin needs to be replaced. K. Lew is going to look at expenditures. He believes he can find the money needed to replace it in this current fiscal year.

18.PILOT Funds: There was a discussion on topics to discuss at the Legislative Breakfast with Senator Adams Hinde who is working with the eastern part of state legislators to restore some PILOT funds. How does the DOR set the amounts? Can the calculation potentially use individual town's tax rates, taking into consideration tax exempt or PILOT driven land. K. Lew has been talking with a legislative working group to come up with recommendations for the Legislature to revise the State Owned Land PILOT formulas.

19.Other Items: The marijuana Public Hearing by-law has been scheduled for April 10th. There is an interesting article in the Beacon regarding the intent of the law to opt in or opt out of social use establishments.

D. Grillon and J. Huebner and J. Paxton will attend the Selectmen Dinner on the 12th of April.

The Town received a congratulation letter from Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito for having completed best practices as part of the Community Compact Regionalization.

The Town received a letter from The Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development confirming that Washington is eligible for a portion of the grant providing Extra Mile Contingency funds for a portion of the actual and eligible cost for make ready that exceed budget estimates provided by MBI. Executive we can confirm that Washington is eligible for a portion of a 32 million in capital.

1. **Adjournment:** J. Huebner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:59pm. T. Drugmand seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Approved: _____

Approved: _____

Respectfully submitted, Jodi Hostetter