

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
Slade Building
November 22, 2010**

Members present: Matthew Castriotta, Chair
Michael Stauder, Vice Chair
Ernest Newcomb, Clerk

Staff present: Debra Roussel, Town Administrator; Cyndy Doane, Tax Collector; Lyn Gauthier, Highway Superintendent; Police Chief Dennis Perron

Others present: Walter Ducharme, Tom Howlett, Barbara Collins, Ray LaJoie Jr., Paul Hale, Park Commissioners Sanda Barry and Chris Norcross, Finance Committee Chair Ed Blanchard, William Murray, Assessors Kurt Leslie & John Prentiss, Harald Scheid, George Bourgault, and Norma Frost of Regional Resource Group, Inc.

Meeting commenced at 6:01 pm

Open Agenda Items

The Board discussed Mr. LaJoie's Class II Auto Dealer lapsed license with him. Mr. LaJoie stated he would be cleaning up the front part of the property located at 107 Gardner Road, by the end of this and beginning of next month. Mr. LaJoie stated when he was ready for inspection he would contact the Building Commissioner for sign off. Mr. LaJoie and Ms. Collins exited the meeting.

Sanda Barry and Chris Norcross, Park Commissioners, appeared to request to replace the diseased evergreen tree that was removed from the Town Common a few years ago. They have been in contact Town Common Committee members, Charles Clark and Mr. Newcomb, and will be meeting with Ms. Whitney and Ms. Hubbard soon as the committee does not meet regularly. Discussion of access to electricity ensued. Mr. Castriotta stated if there is not a consensus within the Park Commission and Town Common Committee to return to this Board for a decision. Mr. Castriotta thanked the Park Commissioners.

Paul Hale and William Murray, members of the Senior Center Design Committee, reported after conducting interviews, the committee has selected an architectural firm; Catlin Associates, Inc. The committee is requesting the Chair sign a letter addressed to Shelly Hatch at MRPC informing her of the selection and the Board's authorization to proceed.

Motion: E. Newcomb

2nd: M. Stauder

To authorize the Chair to sign the letter to MRPC notifying them of selection of Catlin Associates, Inc. in anticipation of award of the Community Development Block Grant **Vote: All in Favor**

Mr. Hale requested a copy of the letter be sent to Westminster.

On a different matter, Mr. Hale asked the Board if they had considered a previous request to establish an ad hoc committee to research municipal land for future projects. Mr. Castriotta stated the Board would take the request under advisement. Mr. Hale thanked the Board and exited the meeting. Mr. Stauder pointed out the previous discussion on putting out a RFP for municipal facilities. Ms. Roussel stated she would need more specifications before advertising for a proposal.

Warrant #12

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To approve Warrant # 12 in the amount of \$941, 935.07

Vote: All in Favor

Winter Operations Plan 2010-2011

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To approve the Winter Operations plan as submitted **Vote: Mr. Castriotta- yes, Mr. Stauder –yes**

Mr. Newcomb- abstained

Charter Communications

Ms. Roussel reported Charter Communications would like to send future communications and funds via electronic delivery rather than registered letter. She presented an ACH/EFT and Email address information request form for the Chair's signature.

Motion: E. Newcomb

2nd: M. Castriotta

To authorize the Chair to sign Charter Communications' request to send payments and communications electronically

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Roussel reported Ms. Peterson has requested to amend the November 8th minutes regarding the amount for plowing Streeter Road from \$2,000.00 to \$1,200.00.

Motion: E. Newcomb

2nd: M. Stauder

To amend November 8, 2010 minutes regarding the amount for plowing Streeter Road plowing to read \$1,200.00

Vote: All in Favor

Minutes Approved:

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To approve the minutes of October 25, 2010 as written

Vote: All in Favor

Motion: E. Newcomb

2nd: M. Castriotta

To approve the minutes of September 13, and November 8, 2010 as written and amended

Vote: All in Favor

Agreements

Ms. Roussel presented the contracts with National Grid related to the Small Business Energy Efficiency Program for the upgrading of lighting in the Highway Department, Fire Department, Clark Library and Slade Building, as voted by Town Meeting.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: E. Newcomb

To approve the National Grid agreements and authorize the Chair to sign on the behalf of the Board

Vote: All in Favor

Highway Superintendent Gauthier entered the meeting.

Ms. Roussel presented the agreement with Virtual Town Hall, Inc. for website migration services.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: E. Newcomb

To authorize the Chair to sign the agreement on behalf of the Board with Virtual Town Hall, Inc.

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Roussel presented an agreement with Cintas Uniform Company for uniform services for the Highway Department.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To authorize and sign the agreement with Cintas Uniform Company

Vote: Mr. Stauder-yes, Mr. Castriotta- yes, Mr. Newcomb-abstained

Ms. Roussel presented a grant award letter of \$2,000.00 for the Community Emergency Response Team and standard contract submitted by Emergency Management Director Dennis O'Donnell. Mr. O'Donnell has stated \$920.00 will come from the FFY2007 and \$1,080.00 from FFY 2008 federal grants to Massachusetts. The grant opportunity is structured as a reimbursable grant, which means the Town must spend the funding first. All future grants from MEMA will be of the reimbursement type. The grant will fund new vests and equipment for CERT. Mr. O'Donnell is requesting the Town Accountant establish a negative income account to handle funding. Expenditures will be made against an approved list issued by MEMA.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: E. Newcomb

To authorize the Chair to sign the MEMA contract on behalf of the Board

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Roussel reported the Board needs to designate a member to serve on the Emergency Planning Committee. Mr. Castriotta volunteered to serve.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd:E. Newcomb

To appoint Matt Castriotta to Emergency Planning Committee with a term to expire June 30, 2011

Vote: All in Favor

Wage Authorization

Mr. Gauthier is recommending the Board authorize hiring Norman Webb as a winter seasonal driver.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To approve hiring Norman Webb as winter seasonal driver at the rate of \$15.00 per hour

Vote: Mr. Stauder-yes, Mr. Castriotta- yes, Mr. Newcomb-abstained

Mr. Castriotta asked about the emergency phone notification list for employees. Ms. Roussel stated Ms. Peterson will be updating and sending to pertinent staff.

Discussion ensued on plowing and sanding for the town and school parking lots, sidewalks and walkways entering the buildings and what needs to be addressed during a storm. Ms. Roussel stated her understanding was that sidewalks now need to be plowed during a storm rather than after a storm. She added that during a department head meeting the Fire Chief stated their truck will not be able to plow the town office parking lot. Mr. Gauthier stated his main focus during a storm is to keep the 87 miles of roads open with just 7 or 8 workers. He added he would need to use the Highway Department truck more diligently than before on the town and school parking lots, unless he obtained permission to hire someone for the job. Ms. Roussel stated the town has no facility person to maintain these areas and if a member of Police or Fire Departments is busy with service calls, who will plow, snow blow or shovel the driveway and walkways? A suggestion was made to create a job description for these duties. Ms. Roussel will bring a job description to the next meeting.

Resignation

Ms. Roussel presented a resignation from the Cultural Council from Stephanie (Harden) Davolos from dated November 15, 2010.

Motion: E. Newcomb

2nd:M. Castriotta

To accept the resignation of Stephanie Davolos with regret

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Roussel reported the Board has received a letter from the property owner of Map 12w, parcel 276, located in the Pinecrest subdivision, stating he no longer wants to pay taxes on his lot, "that is unbuildable, unsellable and can't be given away." Mr. Ducharme stated the 10,000 square foot lot is classified as buildable and is not grandfathered. This is the reason for being valued at \$40,000.00 by the Board of Assessors

Mr. Ducharme stated the owner needs to contact the Building Commissioner with the lot information and have a written determination on whether the lot is buildable or not and present to the Assessors. Ms. Roussel will draft a letter to the property owner for the next meeting. Mr. Bourgault stated there were many lots previously deemed buildable and the Assessors can't change taxation data unless the Building Commissioner determines otherwise. Mr. Newcomb stated the Town may be interested in it for drainage. Ms. Roussel will check with the Highway Superintendent to see if the lot has any value to the Town and proceed accordingly.

Tax Classification Public Hearing

Mr. Castriotta read the following "The Board of Selectmen, acting under the provisions of Chapter 369 of the Acts of 1982, will hold a public hearing at 7:00 PM on Monday, November 22, 2010 in the Slade Building for the purpose of determining percentages of the local tax levy to be borne by each class of property: residential, commercial, industrial, open space, and personal. Interested taxpayers will be allowed the opportunity to present their views orally or in writing at said hearing.

Ms. Roussel introduced the staff from Regional Resource Group, Inc. and acknowledged the Assessors. Mr. Sheid reported the Assessors had asked him to speak on their behalf this evening. He stated though the classification hearing was scheduled for tonight, technically the BOA is supposed to have values certified prior to the hearing. He stated the Board of Selectmen could vote tonight but the Assessors may be asking for a reaffirmation of their decision at a future meeting.

Mr. Sheid stated this hearing has one purpose which is to either adopt a single tax rate or alternatively shift the tax burden onto the commercial owner to yield a reduction on the residential side. According to a chart that he presented showing distribution of assessment base, the tax rate for commercial property, approximately 7% of the base, would have to be raised by 12% in order for a reduction to the residential rate by 1%. This does not make sense for Hubbardston. The Board of Assessors has voted to recommend the Selectboard adopt a single tax rate. Ms. Roussel asked if the Town had any excess levy capacity. Mr. Sheid stated the Town does; the excess levy capacity is the difference between the maximum allowable tax rate and what the town needs to raise to operate. He believed it was around \$400.00.

Motion: E. Newcomb

To establish a single tax rate with no exemptions for Fiscal Year 2011

2nd: M. Stauder

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Roussel asked Mr. Sheid if the Board of Assessors has to wait for Department of Revenue (DOR) approval to perform the extract of actuals to the Tax Collector and Point. He stated there is some preprocessing that can be done of those billing files. Ms. Roussel requested if Ms. Doane had uncollectable and tax title reports. Ms. Doane stated she could provide those to the Assessors tomorrow. Ms. Roussel stated Town Accountant and Treasurer have completed their online reports that are affiliated with the tax recap but had not submitted because they are generally reviewed by the Assessors before they do so. Would the Assessors be looking at them? Mr. Sheid stated the next step is to get new growth certified and at that point the DOR would submit recap.

Mr. Castriotta asked Mr. Prentiss and Mr. Leslie if they were satisfied with the services provided by Regional Resource Group, Inc. Mr. Prentiss stated the Board of Assessors was happy with the arrangement. Mr. Sheid exited the meeting to print the LA 5 form.

On a personnel issue, Ms. Roussel reported that some individuals have taken time off from work and requested not to be paid even though they had sick time benefits available. She stated Town Counsel has advised this should not be allowed as a practice unless it is an excused absence by the department head. It also states it must be approved by the Board of Selectmen.

Motion: M. Stauder

To support the vote of the Board of Assessors granting medical leave for the Assessors' Clerk

2nd: E. Newcomb

Vote: All in Favor

The Board of Assessors exited the meeting.

Police Chief Perron presented to request the Board appoint Michael McGrath as a part-time police officer. Officer McGrath already has had a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Police Officer physical examination and is full-time certified. He will replace Sean McNamara, who resigned on November 8, 2010.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: E. Newcomb

To hire Michael McGrath as a part-time officer with an hourly rate of \$15.00 per hour pending completion of psychological examination

Vote: All in Favor

Chief Perron reported a traffic stop in town this past weekend resulted in an arrest due to around \$8,000 in various illegal drugs being found in the vehicle.

The Board had requested to review **department heads' monthly reports** to see if there was enough information on them. Mr. Castriotta requested the Chief review his monthly report with the Board. Chief Perron stated initially when he started in Hubbardston, calls for service included informational request calls; basically anytime the department answered the telephone. Presently calls for service to the community are now counted only when the department responds to a call.

Community Policing Events has been cut due to community policing monies, around \$11,000.00, being discontinued.

Chief Perron reported the department will be conducting a community toy drive for the holidays for residents in need. Mr. Stauder asked how regional dispatch is going. Chief Perron replied a new regional dispatch manager has been hired and this manager has been very receptive to the Chief's concerns. He stated Barre is considering regionalizing with Rutland also. If that happens the costs for Hubbardston would decrease. Chief Perron reported a new door intercom system has been installed at the police department entry and residents can communicate via intercom with an officer. He has not received any residents' complaints regarding access to the department. Ms. Roussel stated all department reports will be placed on the website. Mr. Newcomb requested adding times when Police assist the ambulance to the report. Chief Perron stated it was already included in the call for service section but could break it down. Chief Perron exited the meeting.

Ms. Roussel reported Building Department Clerk Carol Burke had passed away. There are no services scheduled at this time.

Mr. Sheid reentered the meeting and reported \$429.00 was the excess levy capacity. The Board thanked Mr. Sheid as he exited the meeting.

Solar Farm Update

Ms. Roussel reported the Pitcherville Road property owners have informed her that they are negotiating with Solar Power Corporation out of California. The property owners could not come to terms with Ansar as Ansar has sold its interest to Mitsui Corporation. She reported that she has forwarded them a copy of the town's new solar bylaw approved by town meeting and copied the Building Department and Planning Board.

Ms. Roussel reported the Town has been awarded the loss control grant of \$3438.00 for purchase of a security system for the Slade Building. The Town did not get approval for the Highway Garage. It includes installation of three cameras for the Slade Building exterior and motion detectors in additions for windows and doors wires. Chris Norcross has volunteered to install the password coded doorknobs.

Peg Access

Ms. Roussel reported on a meeting with Ms. Peterson, Barre Cable Advisory member Rick Paula and a representative from AV Access of Concord, NH, regarding equipment for upgrading the bulletin board channel and recording of board meetings. There is an option of taping live or recording for later broadcast with applicable costs. A stationary camera could be mounted in the meeting room for recording. Procurement is required for anything over \$5,000.00. Mr. Castriotta asked if the Board was interested in proceeding forward. They concurred.

Closed Hours

Ms. Roussel reported staff is constantly answering the door on Mondays when offices are supposedly closed to the public as people knock to gain access. She stated Ms. Peterson prefers keeping the office closed as it is uninterrupted time for getting her work completed. Ms. Roussel suggested opening the Slade building at 2 PM in conjunction with the other offices in Town Hall. Ms. Roussel stated she believed it important to be open and available to residents.

Ms. Roussel reported she had received a complaint today regarding a late excise tax payment. The resident paid the bill after the demand was issued and paid the \$30 demand fee several days after the due date. As a result, notice was not forwarded to the Deputy Assessor and the resident was flagged at the Registry of Motor Vehicles for nonpayment. As a result he was forced to pay \$5.00 to produce a copy of the processed check and wanted to be reimbursed the \$5.00. Ms. Roussel was able to calm the resident explaining the Town has no mechanism to pay it back. She assured the resident she would speak to the Tax Collector to ensure the error would not be repeated.

Open Enrollment for Health Insurance

Three options for health insurance coverage and renewal are being offered to town employees and are coordinated by the Treasurer. The deadline for open enrollment is next week. Ms. Roussel was concerned about the cost of a third option and contacted QRSD as health insurance is provided through the school district for town employees. The district contacted their insurance broker who advised the Town is only obligated to carry one plan. The Board determined not to withdraw any of the options as employees have already been notified of them and school district employees are offered all three as well.

Compensation Time

Ms. Roussel reported there was a question brought forth by the Police Union regarding compensatory time. If an officer works a shift involving a pay differential and accept the compensatory time or time off in lieu of pay, they are in fact losing the differential they would have gained. Ms. Roussel spoke to Chief Perron regarding this and she and Chief are suggesting paying the differential at the time that it is worked. She asked how the Board would like to proceed. Mr. Castriotta stated he believed the intent was to give the entire amount.

Motion: M. Stauder

2nd: M. Castriotta

To pay the differential pay per hour if granted the compensatory time

Vote: Mr. Castriotta- yes, Mr. Stauder- yes, Mr. Newcomb- abstained

Personnel Policy Questions

Ms. Roussel reported there is nothing in the personnel policy regarding holiday pay for an employee who does not have paid sick time and does not work the day before the holiday. Does the employee get paid for the holiday? The Board stated the employee should not get paid in this instance as they were out during the week of the holiday.

Ms. Roussel reported Christmas and New Year's Day both fall on a Saturday this year. There is only one staff person who will be working on the Friday before. All other staff will be getting the preceding Thursday off as they do not normally work on Friday, according to the personnel policy.

Mr. Howlett reported the Library is rearranging their areas and another bench will be available for the Slade Building. Is the Board interested in the bench for this room? The Board agreed to take the bench.

Mr. Stauder informed the Board he would not be attending the December 6th meeting as he will be on vacation.

**Motion: M. Stauder
To adjourn the meeting at 8:01 pm**

**2nd: E. Newcomb
Vote: All in Favor**

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Peterson
Town Secretary

Approved: December 20, 2010