

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
OCTOBER 20, 2014
SLADE BUILDING**

Members present: Michael Stauder, Chair
Daniel Galante, Vice Chair
Raeanne Siegel
David Simmerer

Member absent: Jeffrey Williams, Clerk

Staff present: Anita Scheipers, Town Administrator; Elaine Peterson, Town Secretary

Others present: Marshall Crane, Debra Crane, Harald Scheid, George Bourgault, William Murray, Vincent Ritchie

Meeting called to order at 6:33 p.m.

No one was present for Open Session.

Abandoned Housing Initiative (AHI)

William Murray of Places Associates, Inc. reported on the abandoned housing initiative. The AGO office stated that 70- 80% of the abandoned residential projects never go to court; but the towns' experiences are that around 50% never go to court.

In cases of abandonment, interested municipalities share the addresses of abandoned residential properties with the Attorney General Office (AGO). The AGO investigates and contacts the owner to reach an agreement under which the owner will complete the necessary repairs. . In general, it's seven to ten business days from the time the AGO notifies the owner to complete the repairs. If there is a rental property or multi-unit property involved, or the property is currently occupied, the AGO will not go forward due to the complications involved with dealing with such conditions. Mr. Murray noted one wouldn't want to condemn a piece of property if one was going to use the abandoned housing initiative.

If these negotiations fail, State Sanitary Code contains a provision which can be used to cure code violations. The court will appoint a receiver to bring the property back up to code. Receivers do not work for the town or the AGO but are agents of the appointing court. A lien would be placed on the property for all costs incurred during the project. At the conclusion of the receivership, the owner may reimburse the receiver for costs and clear the lien. If that is not possible the receiver can foreclose on the lien and the property is sold at auction to the highest bidder. The owner is always given the opportunity to step in and take responsibility for the property at any time during the receivership. A question remains on who pays the legal/court costs. Ms. Scheipers will contact the AGO about the AHI program for more information and report back to the Board.

Study of Town Owned Properties Suitable for Commercial Scale Solar Development

Planning Board member Ritchie reported he asked Mr. Murray of Places Associates, Inc. for an estimate to perform a study on the potential for commercial solar development on town owned properties. The Planning Board does not have the funding in their budget. He asked the Board if they could fund the \$800.00 required for task one to get an inventory of town owned properties eligible for this type of project?

Motion: D. Galante

2nd: R. Siegel

To authorize task one with \$800 payment from the Selectboard Expense account

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Peterson reported effective October 23, 2014, off-premises retail alcoholic beverage licenses will be permitted to sell alcoholic beverages beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays. A change of hours application has been received by Hubbardston Market and Mr. Mike's. The Selectboard must approve and forward a Form 43 to ABCC with the additional Sunday hours of sale for each licensee affected.

Change of Hours for Retail Package Stores

Motion: D. Galante

2nd:D. Simmerer

To approve change of hours for Mr. Mike's and Hubbardston Market from Noon to 10:00 a.m. and sign ABCC Form 43

Vote: All in Favor

Cultural Council Appointment

Ms. Peterson presented an appointment to Cultural Council request from Marge Alexander. She is a new resident and would like to become more active within the town.

Motion: D. Galante

2nd: R. Siegel

To appoint Marge Alexander to the Cultural Council with term to expire June 30, 2016

Vote: All in Favor

Minutes of October 6, 2014

Motion: D. Galante

2nd: R. Siegel

To approve minutes of October 6, 2014 as presented

Vote: All in Favor

School Committee Member Vacancy

Ms. Peterson reported that an additional seat on the QRSD/Hubbardston School Committee is now available due to the new regional school agreement. Once applicants come forward, both the Selectboard and the current Hubbardston school committee members will need to mutually elect someone to fill the vacancy until the next annual town election.

Tax Classification Hearing

Mr. Stauder read the hearing notice aloud.

"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, October 20, 2014 in the Slade Building, 7A Main Street, 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."

Harald Scheid and George Bourgault of Regional Resource Group, Inc. introduced themselves to the Board. Mr. Scheid stated the purpose of the meeting is whether to adopt a single or both single and commercial tax rate. He stated a dual tax rate doesn't really make sense in a small town like this. Almost 94% of the tax rate belongs in the residential class. He presented a chart of tax rate options. Mr. Bourgault stated this year the residential property values are about the same as last year due to median sale prices with a few exceptions. Condominiums' values have gone up slightly. Personal property has increased due to the two solar farms and some new home construction. New growth revenue is around \$122,000 this year. Mr. Scheid stated they are looking to raise \$6,131,751 in tax revenue this year. Mr. Scheid recommended adopting a residential factor of 1.

Motion: D. Galante

To adopt a residential factor of 1.0

2nd: R. Siegel

Vote: All in Favor

Mr. Scheid needs to discuss the LA-5 form with Town Accountant before presenting to Board. He will return to the next Board meeting in November for signatures. Mr. Bourgault and Mr. Scheid exited the meeting.

Mortgage Subordination Request

Marshall and Deb Crane presented to explain their request for the mortgage subordination. Ms. Scheipers stated the Cranes no longer met the income eligibility requirement for the subordination policy but the Board does have the ability to waive this. Ms. Crane explained she had worked a lot of overtime in the spring and there is no longer any overtime available. Mr. Galante asked if this would be the last time they would be doing this. Mr. and Mrs. Crane stated yes, this would be the last time and this loan would be to pay off credit card debt, medical bills and another loan. Discussion about equity in the home ensued. The home equity rate is fixed and the loan is for seven years.

Motion: D. Galante

To approve the Cranes' subordination request and authorize the Town Administrator to sign on behalf of the Board

2nd: R. Siegel

Vote: All in Favor

The Cranes thanked the Board and exited the meeting.

Town Administrator Report- see attached

Ms. Scheipers reported DCR and DCAM have agreed to pay for the appraisal of the town owned Natty Pond Road parcel.

Ms. Scheipers presented a fiscal year 2016 budget schedule. She reminded the Board they need to present a budget policy statement according to the town charter by December 1st. It will be placed on the November 17 meeting agenda.

Ms. Scheipers stated we are facing a \$25,000 deficit in this year's Veterans Agent budget due to new veterans moving in town. The town gets reimbursed 75% by the federal government a year later for the payments but that amount is required to be placed into the general fund. There are some accounts that we may be able to get transfers from into the veterans account at special town meeting. Ms. Scheipers will ask Veteran's Agent Buso to come into a future Board meeting to explain the funding process.

Ms. Scheipers reported the basement will be getting the spray on insulation and a plastic vapor barrier needs to be laid down again after the mold remediation was done this summer. The attic insulation will be the standard R-19 batting as the ceiling is suspended and cannot accommodate a lot of weight.

Ms. Scheipers reported MassDOT has informed the Police Department that they will be installing a one way traffic light on the Burnshirt Road Bridge and will need an officer for the traffic detail. The state will delay paving until after the bridge is repaired.

Ms. Scheipers reported we are advertising for a new Land Use Clerk due the resignation of Deb Bryant. She has taken a full-time position in Barre with a private business.

Ms. Scheipers stated she is not recommending combining the Treasurer and Tax Collector positions at this time. She is recommending Kori Stuart be appointed as Tax Collector. Kristen Noel will remain as Treasurer.

Motion: D. Galante

2nd: D. Simmerer

To waive the appeal period of the appointment of Kori Stuart as Tax Collector

Vote: All in Favor

Ms. Scheipers reported the wage authorization for Michael Amann is a six month contractual increase.

Motion: D. Galante

2nd: D. Simmerer

To waive the appeal period of the wage authorization of Officer Michael Amann

Vote: All in Favor

Old Business:

Selectboard Goals

Ms. Scheipers stated she had sent letters out to the other Quabbin school district communities asking them if they wanted to join Hubbardston request to Quabbin administration to develop the five year budget plans. She has heard back from Oakham and they would like to participate with Hubbardston. The other towns' Boards have not met yet to review the proposal.

One of the other goals was to develop social networking opportunities for the town. There will be a discussion at the staff meeting tomorrow about this.

Pinecrest Property Acquisition- Ms. Scheipers reported the town would have to pay the annual fees to Pinecrest Property Owners Association (PPOA) for any property the town acquires. PPOA stated they would not waive the fees for the town. The town would be mandated to pay the fee that is indicated on the deed. Right now it is around \$68.00 per year per parcel and any potential future assessments placed against the property. The Board agreed to not proceed forward to acquire the properties. Ms. Scheipers will inform the two Pinecrest property owners concerned that the town will not be accepting their offers.

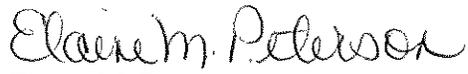
Long Range Facilities Planning Committee (LRFPC) - Building Needs Study-

The Town was awarded a \$7000 grant from MIIA for a peer review of the 2012 study. This will be to update the 2012 report. The committee also needs some extra time to complete their report. The results would be in early January 2015.

Motion: D. Galante
To adjourn the meeting at 7:52 pm

2nd:D. Simmerer
Vote: All in Favor

Respectfully submitted,



Elaine M. Peterson
Town Secretary

Approved: November 3, 2014

To: Hubbardston Board of Selectmen

From: Anita Scheipers, Town Administrator

Date: October 20, 2014

Re: Bi-weekly Town Administrator Report

The following is a summary of key issues handled during the past weeks:

- 1. Status of DCR Land Swap:** DCR and DCAM have been informed of the Board's decision that completing the appraisal of the Town-owned parcel off of Natty Pond Drive was the most appropriate next step, and they have agreed to for the cost of this appraisal. I will keep the Board apprised of this process as it moves along.
- 2. Contract for the Police Chief:** In response to the Board's announcement at the last meeting that the current contract with Chief Perron was intended to be the last contract, I respectfully ask the Board to schedule an executive session, for our November 3, 2014 meeting, to discuss this in more detail.
- 3. Cemetery Trust Funds:** Atty. Brian Riley has provided additional feedback that we may be able to avoid having to negotiate new cemetery trust documents with the Division of Public Charities or to seek approval by the Worcester Probate Court. According to Atty. Riley, for those trust funds which have been in existence for 20+ years, and with balances of less than \$75,000, may be able to be "re-developed" through an easier administrative process with the AG's office. We are researching the existing funds and will provide this information to Atty. Riley so as to develop an actual plan to approach the replacement of these funds. As soon as a draft plan is prepared, I will bring this back to you and to the Cemetery Commission for joint discussion.
- 4. FY16 Budget Schedule:** Attached is the proposed schedule for preparing the FY16 budget. This schedule assumes we hold the annual town meeting on Tuesday, June 2, 2015.
- 5. Modification to Existing Pilot Agreements:** DOR now has a new requirement that we tax and bill the solar farm equipment as personal property, but our current PILOT agreements are based on a system different from the conventional property tax system. We must, therefore, amend our PILOT agreements. The values of revenues to be received will remain the same; it is the method that will change. Harald Scheid, of RRG, has proposed the attached amendment be used with the two existing PILOTs. This draft is being reviewed by town counsel, and any edits will be incorporated into the final version. If the Board agrees to this change in each PILOT, we will move ahead and work with the two developers to get these amendments finalized and ready for signature by the Town.
- 5. Seaboard Solar:** According to the Planning Board, Seaboard has still not completed all work necessary to be in full compliance with their special permit conditions. No action is required on their PILOT agreement as this time. When we have received confirmation from the Planning Board that they are in full compliance, the above referenced PILOT language will be incorporated in the PILOT document.
- 6. Veterans Agent FY15 Budget:** Per the attached memo from V.A. Phil Buso, given the current number of cases, his FY15 budget is predicted to be underfunded by \$25,000. The Town Accountant and I have met to review options for covering this deficit, and we feel confident it can be handled as follows: a) use of the \$15,000 Maturing Debt Account that was carried over from FY14 and now is not needed due to the Town share of the HCS playground being paid by the CPA funds, and b) use a portion of the projected \$30,000 balance we anticipate being left over from the specialized audit account funded by the stabilization fund at the 2014 annual town meeting. Both of these require votes of transfer which can be done at the special town meeting to be held just prior to the 2015 annual town meeting.
- 7. Slade Building Insulation:** In our first bid solicitation, we received no bids for the insulation project. After making minor modifications to the bid specifications, we are re-bidding and fully expect to receive a bid from at least one known vendor. Bids are due on Oct 22nd.
- 8. Land Use Clerk Resignation:** Current Clerk Deb Bryant has submitted her resignation from the position of Land Use Clerk; which supports the Building Office and the Planning Board. She has found a full time private sector job in her home community. We regret her leaving, but must now advertise for this position. I am working with Larry Brandt and Vin Ritchie on this transition.

Anita Scheipers

From: Phil Buso <pbuso@gardner-ma.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 30, 2014 8:56 AM
To: Treasurer; Town Accountant; Town Administrator; Town Secretary
Subject: FY 2015 BUDGET

I just took another application yesterday on a Vet who is entitled to \$576.00 per month starting as of October. That's another \$5,184.00 for the remainder of FY 15. This brings our monthly expenditures to \$3,893.45. At the end of October there will be \$6,155.17 remaining in the Veterans Benefits budget and \$2,261.74 at the end of November. For December the Veterans Benefits will be short by \$1,631.73 in making it obligations. If nothing changes between Dec and June, the Veterans Benefits budget for FY 2015 will need another \$25,000.00 to finish out the FY and that amount includes the flags for Veterans Graves. Don't feel along, I for see additional funds needed for Gardner and Ashburnham. They say the economy has turned around. I would like to know where.

Phillip D. Buso
Veterans' Agent

=