

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MINUTES  
February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016  
Slade Building**

**Members present:** Daniel Galante, Chair  
Raeanne Siegel, Vice Chair  
Michael Stauder, Clerk  
Patrick Girouard  
Jeffrey Williams

**Members absent:**

**Staff present:** Anita Schiepers, Town Administrator; Jeannette Elsevier, Town Secretary, Kristen Noel, Collector/Treasurer

**Others present:** Planning Board, Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission/  
Board of Health, Finance Committee

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by D. Galante.

**Open Session:** Members of the Planning Board – Thomas Robinson introduced Thomas Bratko, MaryAnn DiPinto and Kendall Daly and stated that the Planning Board had concerns regarding communication issues between the boards. Most notably in regards to the Brown gravel project whereas the Planning Board believes that they are not being included in discussions or meetings. Mr. Robinson recommends a group e-mail being established to include Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Committee etc. Dan Galante, Chair, also recommended FinCom and the Building Inspector. Mr. Robinson stated that any correspondence or information regarding the gravel project be circulated via e-mail to the created group e-mail. Mr. Galante agreed with the recommendation and added that the Board of Selectmen is very eager to receive that input and have been waiting in legal review as to who will ultimately be responsible. Mr. Robinson requested an update on the current status. Mr. Galante stated that the Board of Selectmen hasn't taken any actions as a response from the legal department is still pending. Ms. Scheipers, Town Administrator, stated that legal has been asking for information here and there and that she will be e-mailing information in the near future. Mr. Robinson suggested that it would be helpful to share the information, being sent, with the Planning Board, perhaps they could even add or include additional information, going through proper channels.

**Joint Appointment with Cemetery Committe**

**Board of Health Report**

Tom Larson, Board of Health Chairman and Hayden Duggan, Board of Health Member, reviewed and presented a report in regards to the Country Hen's Avian Influenza Emergency Plan. Mr. Duggan stated that based on his review, and the guidelines the state attempted to set up, he would not recommend the states plan for the Country Hen. Mr. Larson and Mr. Duggan would recommend on-site incineration and/or the safe transportation of infected birds to the Wheelabrator in Shrewsbury for incineration.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Williams**

**To support the Board of Health's recommendation and Country Hen's recommendation for incineration amending that it is conditional pending additional information.**

**Vote: All in Favor**

### **Treasurer/Collector Update**

Kristen Noel, Treasurer/Collector provided an update on changes made over the past two months the first being the integration of the Softright Program. Ms. Noel reviewed the collection module process, compared to how payments were previously processed. This enables the tax payer to pay their bill, which is posted while they wait, and they receive a printed receipt along with their payment stub. At the end of the day, reports are printed, balances are validated to make sure they reconcile and it all balances out. Ms. Noel stated that it is easy to use and the process goes from the collector, to the treasurer, to the accountant making it seamless. Expanding the software to the collection office has now created a financial office allowing for expanded hours on Monday whereas the hours were 2:00 pm to 8:00 pm and now being 9:00 am to 8:00 pm. Ms. Noel also stated that additional efficiencies were established with a lockbox for payment submittal. This allows Fidelity to process the payment for immediate posting and send an electronic file to the collector/treasurer office.

Ms. Noel provided an overview of the current quarterly billing cycle for real estate taxes that are sent out in three mailings. A mailing is sent out for the preliminary tax billing for August and November (two stubs are included) and then an actual tax billing is mailed and due for February and then another tax billing is mailed and due for May. Ms. Noel recommends changing this practice to a two mailing process, one mailing in July for August and November and one mailing in December for February and May resulting in a cost saving of \$1500.00 (in just envelopes to start) and it also reduces confusion to the tax payer. Notifying residents of this change will be completed via Facebook, e-mail alert to Website subscribers, Cable Access Channel, a brightly colored insert will be included with the June billing.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**To approve a new mailing cycle for the real estate tax bills**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Girouard**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Ms. Noel advised the board that the collector's office has been bombarded, notably at income tax time, with people requesting copies of bills. Unfortunately, the timing of the requests tends to correspond with real estate collections and excise tax collections which can be overwhelming. The cost of reprinting tax bills, numerous excise bills for one person (in some instances) and mailing them has become cumbersome. After contacting other neighboring towns (to verify their reprinting policies) Ms. Noel and Audrey Brooks, Assistant Collector are proposing fees of \$1.00 per copy for anyone requesting a bill copy and picking it up and/or faxing it and a \$2.00 fee if a copy is put in the mail. The alternative would be an e-mail request and a pdf would be e-mailed and there would be no fee or charge for it to be sent electronically. These fees are in line with what other towns in the area are charging for the same type of requests. A form to request a reprinted bill for taxpayers to download will be available on the tax collectors website page.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**To approve the new fee structure for tax copies but no fees for electronic delivery and no fees for verbal delivery**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Girouard**

**Vote: All in Favor**

Ms. Noel provided an overview of the tax title process, sending letters and performing due diligence the office has collected \$50,000 out of approximately \$250,000. Ms. Noel stated that most of the monies collected were on newer accounts as it is key to work with and correspond with those accounts that want to resolve the liens right away. The next step would be to refer to our tax title attorney who in turn will send out a series of letters stating that this is the last chance to resolve this or it will go into foreclosure. For fiscal 2017 a revolving fund is going to be set up for fees and service charges collected on the tax title accounts with the intent that it becomes self-sustaining over a period of time.

Ms. Noel stated that she and Anita Scheipers, Town Administrator have been discussing, due to the soaring costs of health care coverage, and what a lot of other communities are starting to do. The current health care coverage is 65% town contribution and 35% employee contribution and the concept of a monetary benefit for an opt out (ie: joining the spouses plan) would actually be a cost saving practice. Ms. Scheipers provided a draft document but wanted the board to recommend a percentage to offer to the employees. Ms. Scheipers stated that most communities offer a 25% opt out to employees that take advantage of doing this. Ms. Scheipers reviewed the cost and the benefits in providing this option.

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**To approve the health insurance opt out program @ 25%**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Girouard**

**Vote: All in Favor**

### **Appointments**

#### **MMPO – Regional Representative**

Ms. Scheipers reviewed the request from the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization for a regional representative from the board and/or a representative designated by the board. This person would go to the sub-regional meeting to vote with the other communities as to who will be the candidate to represent this region. Mr. Stauder volunteered to attend the meeting as the MMPO representative.

**Motion: P. Girouard**

**To approve Michael Stauder to attend the regional meeting as the MMPO representative**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Williams**

**Vote: All in Favor**

**Motion: M. Stauder**

**To approve the appointment of Albert Afonso to the ZBA**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Williams**

**Vote: All in Favor**

#### **FY2017 Draft Budget Review**

Ms. Scheipers commented that the draft budget would be reviewed based on a few assumptions as she is still waiting for the local aid numbers, the final school assessment number and the final, if any, deficit spending on the FY16 snow and ice account. Ms. Scheipers stated that per the charter she is obligated to move ahead with a draft budget in a timely manner and was presenting it as it currently stands to date. Ms. Scheipers said that though there is a formal budget hearing in March, she hopes to have all the accurate numbers, she was still obligated to review the budgets. The Finance Committee was present to provide information on a vote that they took in regards to the stipends for town officials. Ms. Scheipers provided an overview of the stipends and how they are distributed to members of committees and/or board members.

### **Appointments**

#### **FY2016 Snow and Ice Budget – Vote to Deficit Spend**

#### **Town Administrator Report – See attached**

#### **2016 Country Hen Scholarship**

#### **DCR Lot**

#### **Committee Updates**

Ms. Scheipers stated that a series of updates were to be provided:

- Town Center Committee - Mr. Galante re-capped the last committee meeting regarding a survey that was going to be sent out. The survey is for feedback from people on Main Street and the general public. Mr. Galante said that the first outreach was through the current broadcasted meeting. Later in the week a link to the google survey would appear on the electronic message board, the Town Facebook, Town Website and sent to subscriber e-mails, Principal McComb is e-mailing it to their subscriber list, hard copies will be available in the town offices etc.

Mr. Galante also stated that the committee also voted to attend the Board of Selectmen meeting to request funding for a schematic design of Main Street. The request is part of the budget that was discussed earlier in this meeting. Mr. Galante stated that in 2014 Milone and McBroom had provided a cost estimate for a schematic design of the reconstruction of Main Street. The cost was \$15,000 and Milone and McBroom were asked if that schematic was still valid, they said it was however they would recommend requesting \$20,000 due to some engineering logistics. The Town Center Committee voted unanimously to request this amount in the budget.

- Healdville Road Bridge – Ms. Scheipers provided an update on the meeting that she and Tim Kilhart, DPW Director, at the end of January with the MassDot District 3 project managers. This was to find out the decision that was made to in regards to assisting us with rebuilding the Healdville Road Bridge. It had been over a year since they agreed to assist with the bridge but they had not been forthcoming with what assistance they would provide. Ms. Scheipers was informed that they decided to help us and would purchase and install a timber bridge to replace the bridge on Healdville Road. Components for the bridge should be delivered to the town around March 21<sup>st</sup>. The town is then responsible for the demolition of the bridge, additional guard rails, and paving over the bridge. MassDot will be sending out an engineer to oversee the demolition work when it begins. Not only will the bridge finally re-open in the spring/summer but having MassDot assist with the project has saved \$220,000 of Chapter 90 funds.
- Building Committee – Mr. Galante stated that the committee has been consistently meeting on Friday mornings and had recently agreed and voted on the size of the proposed Senior Center. Mr. Galante said that the committee scaled down the size of the Senior Center, from 6500 square feet to 5,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet, they still want to provide a functional facility. Mr. Galante stated that the committees charge is to get to 100% design and then develop a program which includes the safety regulations and other scopes of work.
- QRSD Taskforce – Ms. Scheipers provided an overview of the community compact grant that the state has developed. Ms. Scheipers stated that the Board of Selectmen had agreed to sign up to work on a five year financial forecast for the town, economic development and the development of additional regionalization opportunities. Ms. Scheipers said that the QRSD came across an issue in terms of working collaboratively amongst all five towns regarding the budget and budget projections. Hubbardston agreed to modify their compact grant application and take out the regionalization and instead put in this educational component. All four towns have agreed to it and the fifth has contacted the project manager to state they will be submitting their formal paperwork. According to Ms. Scheipers the QRSD has received verbal approval for the grant.

**Policy Reviews**

**Motion: M. Stauder  
To approve the 2015 annual report as presented**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Williams  
Vote: All in Favor**

Mr. Stauder recommended the 2015 Annual Report be dedicated to Claudia Provencal and the Senior Building Committee

**Motion: M. Stauder  
To dedicate the 2015 Annual Report to Claudia and the Senior Center Building Committee**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: P. Girouard  
Vote: All in Favor**

**Subordination Request**

**Motion: M. Stauder  
To approve a donation box at the Town Offices for the local Girl Scout Food Drive**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: R. Siegel  
Vote: All in Favor  
Vote: All in Favor**

**Meeting Minutes Approved**

**Motion: M. Stauder  
To approve minutes of November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: J. Williams  
Vote: All in Favor**

**Motion: M. Stauder  
To enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL C30A, s. 21, Exemption 2 to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel, and Exemption 3 to discuss strategy with respect to union collective bargaining and litigation and to adjourn not returning to open meeting.**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: R. Siegel**

**Roll Call Vote:Mr. Galante –yes, Mr. Stauder– yes, Mr. Girourad- yes & Mr. Williams- yes**

**\*\*\*\*\*Executive Session Minutes are Separate\*\*\*\*\***

Respectfully submitted,

Jeannette Elsevier  
Approved: