



TOWN HALL | 3 EAST MAIN ROAD | PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD MINUTES | February 10, 2020 6:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

Present:

Verne Leach, Chairman
Ed Munch, Selectman/Historical Commission
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Police Sergeant
Caleb Mitchell, Town Administrator
Karen Tonelli, Assistant Assessor
Brian Dewkett, Fire Chief
Jesse Pelkey, Finance Chairman
Irene Morrison, Administrative Assistant

Residents: Coralie Pelkey

Guest(s): Peg McDonough, BRPC Planner & Age Friendly Berkshires Coordinator

Item 1: **Call to order:** 6:00 p.m.

Item 2: **Roll Call:** Chairman Leach present, Selectman Munch present, Selectman Cullett present

Item 3: **State recording status:** Mr. Leach and Irene Morrison recording

Item 4: **Review and Approve Meeting Minutes for 2/3/20**

*Mr. Leach motions to approve the 2/3/20 BOS Meeting Minutes pending changes. Mr. Cullett seconds. All agree
VOTE 3-0

Item 5: **Report from Departments**

Fire – Brian Dewkett, Fire Chief

Chief Dewkett said the new truck is in service. They've been out doing driver training. He said they have pumped with it and it pumps phenomenally. The charger in the truck went a few weeks back. It was about \$1,000.00. He said it might have been caused by a power surge from the ice storm, but he's not positive. They lost the camera system inside the building at the same time. He said he would like to proactively look into a whole building surge protector for the Fire Station. He's been told there is a surge arrestor that goes inline on the panel, which absorbs the excess energy when it comes into the panel. He said the process of getting rid of the old engine can start anytime. It has been taken off the road, been drained and is sitting outside. They've taken everything off that they need. Mr. Cullett said we would have to designate it as surplus property if we're going to give it to another town or put it out to bid. Chief Dewkett said almost nobody in the fire services is interested in a 1985 open cab duplex. Mr. Cullett asked if there was anything on the old truck that might be worth something. Chief Dewkett said there's an on-board generator 7KW Onan Diesel. He said it doesn't always start. He thinks it has a fuel bleed-down problem. He said there's still a 2,000 gallon per minute Hale Pump that's pretty good. When Shakerly came to look at it, they said it needs about \$10,000.00 worth of work to get it into fire service ready. For a company that wants to make a water truck, it would probably make a pretty good water truck, but he doesn't know if there's really a market for it. There are about 27,000 miles on it. He said there were 2 optima batteries taken out of it and put inside. If anybody were interested in them, they could contact him.

Chief Dewkett said he doesn't understand the lack of care on the snow removal down there. "We had a little bit of snow today. We have a Highway Dept. It's a town building. I don't understand why the back yard isn't plowed. That's where we have to park, because there's not enough parking out front. I'm wondering why it wasn't taken care of." Mr. Cullett said if Supt. Russell were here, he would ask him. Chief Dewkett said he's tired of always having to deal with it. Mr. Cullett said he doesn't expect that he'd have to deal with it. He said the calls they get are not predictable. We could get a call any time of day or night.

Chief Dewkett said he submitted the paperwork that we discussed to get the reimbursement check for the deposit on the truck. He's wondering if that has come through. He submitted the paperwork back to DCR for that grant and didn't know if the BOS had seen a check come. It was for Forest Fire gear.

Town Administrator – Caleb Mitchell reporting

TA Mitchell said he contacted David Rhinemiller to come in for an interview on 2/24/20 for the Wiring Inspector Position.

TA Mitchell said he contacted the Veteran Service Office. He sent some information for a Veteran's Heritage Grant application for improvements to the Town Green. He was told it's a 50% grant for matching funds. Mr. Cullett said we're looking for improvements to the Honor Roll and some landscaping at the Town Green.

TA Mitchell indicates that we have received an official letter of Designation as a Green Community awarded to us. It's now official that we're a Green Community. He said the town has been awarded a grant of \$128,820.00. To receive this Grant Award, we will be required to submit a project supplication proposing how these funds will be spent. The deadline to submit this Grant Application is 2/28/20. Mr. Cullett said we haven't had time to design any energy efficiency projects or money to hire someone to do an energy audit to come up with a plan. He is wondering how specific they need us to be. TA Mitchell will contact Tom Matuszko at BRPC for help putting together this grant application.

(See letter from Department of Energy Resources)

Finance – Jesse Pelkey, Chairman reporting

Chairman Pelkey said there's an MMA Legislative Breakfast Meeting coming up with the State on 3/13/20 in Great Barrington that he's thinking about attending. It's about the 2021 budget regarding School Accounts, Spending Plans such as Chapter 90, local road projects, PFAS (Polyfluoroalkyl Substances), water infrastructure and things like that coming up. Mr. Leach asked that he let Supt. Russell know. Chairman Pelkey said he has the Police, Fire and Assessor budgets. He's hoping by the end of February to have a Finance Meeting. Mr. Munch asked Chairman Pelkey if he couldn't make it to the meeting, if there is a Co-Chair or someone to conduct the meetings.

Assistant Assessor – Karen Tonelli reporting

Assistant Assessor Tonelli joined the meeting to discuss utility pole re-evaluation (Eversource). The way we would value their personal property poles, wires, conduits is that they would file something every year called the Forma List. On that list they would tell us, here's our value and here's our new growth. It was always that you took those numbers and put them on the tax bill. If you were wrong, the DOR would say "You've got to fix it." Through a meeting she attended, she learned who the Utility Evaluation Expert was on a case in the highest court regarding a contested Forma List in Springfield. The experts name is Skip Sansoucy. She asked him to come into Montague 2 years ago and Montague got another \$12M in value or \$325,000.00. She said they paid him \$16,000.00. She said the expert re-eval would be to establish where we are, then we can talk again. If you look at the property bills for Eversource, they're one of our biggest bills. DOR says Assessors can't use just the book value. She said DOR is saying, "If you don't hire an expert, then you have to do it." She said she has no idea. They are making the companies report their information in a digital manner. There is no more filing the paper sheet.

Mr. Leach asked if Verizon & Spectrum would go under that. She said Verizon is different in that they are centrally valued by the DOR. What the expert would do, the DOR has always done for us for Verizon. Those values come in directly from the state. Spectrum is a brand-new system that will have to file a Forma List with her by 3/1/20, but they're

not a utility like Eversource or Berkshire Gas. Mr. Munch asked about the tower. She said the tower is tricky because they never provide her with information. "Every time they do new stuff, I get building permits, but I haven't seen anything lately. What they should be doing is telling me the income they're getting so I can run an I&E." She has it in the vicinity of \$400,000.00. Without them telling her what the value is, they've given up their ability to appeal. Mr. Munch asked if this expert could come in, because if he's doing the utilities, he's got to have an idea of tower values with all the equipment that's up there. He asked if there was a professional who could look at the tower. He said that's something we should look into, because if we're paying \$3,000.00 and getting \$100,000.00 back on it, that's \$1.00 off the tax rate. We don't have major things in town that we can tax except Danbee. "We're going to need every penny we can find in order to offset the school budget."

BOS – Mr. Cullett reporting

Mr. Cullett said Town Clerk Leach asked to have us sign this Warrant for the Presidential Primaries.

*Mr. Cullett motions to sign the Warrant for the Presidential Primary on Tuesday 3/3/20 from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.
Mr. Munch seconds. All agree **VOTE 3-0**

Mr. Leach has received a letter from CBRSD School Committee inviting the Peru BOS to a 7-Town Advisory Meeting on Tuesday, 2/25/20 at 6:00 P.M. at Nessacus. Subjects of meeting are FY21 Budget & Regional Agreement Updates
(*See letter from CBRSD*)

Item 6: Presentation of MASS DEP Pay as you Throw program by Linda Cernak, NBSWD Director

Linda Cernak, Director of NBSWD is unable to attend this meeting of 2/10/20

Item 7: Presentation of multi-year action plan and rural transit network by Peg McDonough, BRPC Planner

Peg McDonough, BRPC Planner & Age Friendly Berkshires Coordinator presented the BOS with information regarding a Pilot Program coordinated by BRPC concerning transportation in the rural areas for those living with disabilities, older adults, and for those who don't drive. Currently, the program is in the early stages where conversations with municipal leaders and residents are taking place to identify the transportation gaps and to explore what the needs are and identify possible solutions. Irene Morrison said Hilltown CDC has a Driver Program funded by a Grant that provides rides to Medical Appointments only. (*See BRPC Age Friendly Berkshires Transportation*)

Item 8: Discussion of 250th Anniversary Celebration

Mr. Cullett said he is working on obtaining an RFB (Request for bid) to send to sign companies so that we can get at least 3 bids. He is in hopes to have that out this week. TA Mitchell indicates he has the original contract and that Treasurer Wendling has filled out the financial information required to submit. Last week, the BOS voted to authorize Mr. Cullett as the authorized signatory. Town Clerk Leach has the application that we sent in for, which had the budget in it in which it could be cut & pasted.

Mr. Cullett asked how the Graphic Designer is coming along. Mr. Munch said the Historical Committee will be meeting Saturday where he will find that out. Mr. Cullett said before we have the sign made, we need to decide whether or not we want a new logo to put on the sign or if we want the town seal. Mr. Munch said we need to make it clear that we may have to take some money out of the fund that we put aside for the 250th to cover the LED sign that has been discussed. He said that maybe the bid will cover everything. He has tried explaining to people that there are other people working with us and we have to spend this money by June 30, 2020. It's all going toward something permanent. Mr. Cullett said we want to do some electrical improvements as well behind the Fire Station. Mr. Munch said, "It's not money that the town allocated. If we don't spend this money, we will lose this opportunity." Mr. Cullett said all these improvements are something that will be here for the next 20-30 years or longer. He said we have very tight constraints that we have to work with.

Item 9: **Discussion of Fiscal Year 2021 Budget**

TA Mitchell said thus far, we only have 3 budget requests back. Mr. Munch said it looks like the Fire Dept. is level funded. TA Mitchell said it looks like the Police Dept. is level funded also.

TA Mitchell said one of the concerns the Assessors have is when you transition from CSC CAMA software to the Patriot Software, they have to print the property cards out and that they may have to physically go out to all the properties to make sure the cards are correct. They basically have to see an exemption to have them do that. Mr. Cullett said the State has a lot to do with desktop review. However, the Assessors have to check the property cards against the old information to make sure everything has transferred properly. If they start seeing irregularities, they may have to go out. TA Mitchell said the Assistant Assessor added something onto her budget for an Assessor Utility Appraiser. She told TA Mitchell that when it comes to utilities, she doesn't have the expertise to appraise what the value is of the utilities. She knows someone that does this for numerous other towns. This would give us quite a bit of additional revenue. Mr. Munch asked the amount she would need to hire someone. TA Mitchell said she proposed \$3,000.00 to pay an expert in appraising the value. Mr. Munch asked if there is \$3,000.00 in the budget, is the town going to get the \$3,000.00 back. She said she couldn't be absolutely sure. Mr. Cullett said Spectrum System wasn't on our utility poles last year. He said there's some significant value there. It's a re-evaluation year that happens every 3 years.

Mr. Cullett asked if we got an answer last week where we were wondering about the Berkshire County Sheriff's Control and having never received an answer. TA Mitchell said he believes Anna put it in the packet tonight. He said it was overlooked. Mr. Cullett said, "So they're expecting us to hold the invoice for 4-5 months and pay it by July 1. We don't want this to happen this year unless we remember July 1 to put that invoice in."

Item 10: **Review and approve Accounts Payable, treasury warrants**

Item 14: **Adjourn**

*Mr. Leach motions to adjourn the 2/10/20 BOS Meeting. Mr. Cullett seconds. All agree. **VOTE 3-0**

BOS Meeting adjourned at 8:09 P.M.

Articles used:

2/10/20 BOS Meeting Agenda
2/3/20 BOS Meeting Minutes
Letter from CBRSD
BRPC Age Friendly Berkshires Transportation
Letter from Dept. of Energy Resources
Sign in sheet
Financial Report
Vendor Warrants
Payroll Warrant

Respectfully submitted

Irene J. Morrison-

Administrative Assistant

Verne Leach, Chairman _____

Ed Munch, Selectman _____

Bruce Cullett, Selectman _____

Approved: 2/18/20