

SELECT BOARD MINUTES | March 9, 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
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent
Jesse Pelkey, Finance Committee Chairman
Irene Morrison, Administrative Assistant

Residents: Darryl Darby

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 3/2//20**

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

Item 5: **Report from Departments**

Finance – Jesse Pelkey, Chairman reporting

Finance Chairman Pelkey informed the BOS that the Finance Committee has a meeting scheduled for this Thursday at 6:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Meeting Room. He said he's been working with Accountant Osborne to re-do the budget sheets for FY21.

Highway – Justin Russell, Superintendent reporting

Supt. Russell said he has reached out to LeBeau Landscaping, Gary Daniels and JRD Mowing for mowing bids. He and the BOS decided that the date for opening of the bids will be 3/23/20. Supt. Russell indicates that they took the bed off the F250 last week. He borrowed a sand blaster from the town of Middlefield and got the back half of the frame sandblasted. He will prime and paint it and replace a wheel bearing.

Supt. Russell discussed the yellow flashing lights at the top of the hill and has gotten a quote. He said there's these speed radar signs. He talked to Hinsdale about the ones on Robinson Rd. and Longview Ave. He said it gets people's attention a lot more, prompting them to slow down going through town. He said this is just one company that does a lot of electronic signs such as solar stop signs that flash. He said these that are on the quote are about \$2,500.00 each. We would mount the square post for them, then they would come and install the actual sign. He reached out to David Stokes at Mass DOT and found that the signs are Chapter 90 reimbursable if we want to go this way to put a safety upgrade at the top of the hill. The current lights are outdated. He said with these if we wanted to go with Chapter 90 to pay for them, it would be about \$5,000.00 for the 2 signs. They are solar operated so there would be no electric bill for them. Mr. Cullett said he'd like to consider upgrading the yellow flashing lights by converting them to LED, then putting one of the newest lights where the

speed zone changes down near the Fire Station and a bit past Minister's Rd. Mr. Leach said he feels that the yellow lights are important. Mr. Munch said, "If this is something that the town is responsible for, we should include that in our Green Community. If we put LED's in there, we'll save money."

BOS – Mr. Cullett reporting

Mr. Cullett distributed a copy of the Fire Engine bid sheet and has asked Town Clerk Leach to put it on the town website. He set the due date for 4/20/20. (*See Fire Engine Bid Sheet*)

Mr. Munch discussed contacting the Board of Health to come up with a plan for the Town of Peru for the Corona Virus. Mr. Leach said he has talked with Emergency Management, alerting them to be ready in case something happens. Further discussions about the Corona Virus and the actions to be taken in the Town of Peru will follow.

Town Administrator – Caleb Mitchell, TA reporting

TA Mitchell said the Governor has released his preliminary budget for Chapter 90 which is the standard budget of \$200 million. He said he knows the bill is in the legislature right now. They're trying to get that increased to \$300 million. He said the only way the small towns will get any money is to get an increase in the Chapter 90 funds.

TA Mitchell said he contacted Charles Levesque about making a presentation on the wood heat. He will give his presentation on 3/23/20 at 6:30 P.M. He will be bringing all the hardware and do a power point presentation.

TA Mitchell said we would be having a pre-construction meeting for the Solar Array this Thursday between 12 noon and 1:00 P.M. Mr. Leach told him to contact someone from the Planning Board to let them know about this meeting on Thursday. TA Mitchell said he will contact Sam Haupt.

TA Mitchell said the bid is on the Combuys sight for the public transportation. The bid opening will be on 3/23/20. He said he will be putting out a bid proposal for IT Services. He has the name of another company that Hinsdale uses and likes. He said the problem is trying to get a bid proposal that encompasses everything.

TA Mitchell has contacted Guardian Energy and has tentatively scheduled them for 4/3/20 for a visit. They will be going through the Town Garage and Town Hall looking at all the things that were discussed when Laura Garrity was here and see if they can help us to put our proposal together.

TA Mitchell said that he and Supt. Russell are thinking about arranging a visit with Hawley to see their modern wood heating system.

TA Mitchell gave the BOS a handout of the update on the new Wahconah High School. Mr. Cullett said they'll be breaking ground on 4/12/20. (*See Wahconah High School handout*)

Item 6: Interview Jessica Gancarz for Council on Aging Director

Jessica has been a long-time resident of Peru. Although she has not worked with the elderly in the past, she has expressed interest in the position. Her availability to plan events for the COA, would be on the weekends. She said that works better for a lot of people. She shared some ideas of things she is thinking of such as a bingo night. She has run both the Youth and High School Cheer groups and has coordinated Community Service Programs. She has done fund-raisers to obtain uniforms for the girls in the group. In high school, there was never a Booster Club, so she started one. For the past 2 years, she has brought the girls up to Nationals. Mr. Munch informed Jessica that she may have to apply for Grants, in which she could work with TA Mitchell to get started in filing for a Grant. TA Mitchell asked her if she feels she has the time to be able to do this. She said that she sets goals for herself, and if she wants something, she usually achieves it. TA Mitchell said traditionally, the COA Director has focused primarily on social activities. He said that some elders don't have transportation to get to the doctors or go to the market for groceries, and that grant monies could be used to provide that service. She said in the beginning, it's going to be a learning process for her, and she'll have to learn as she goes. She said she knows the position will be what she makes of it. In the past, when she has volunteered for certain things, she feels she

has given 100%, as that's part of her nature. Mr. Cullett said the COA Director would be to connect folks that need services with those services. He told Jessica that over time she'll get to know what services are available for people and will be able to direct or connect those people to those services. Irene Morrison told Jessica that she would be doing a lot of outreach and making herself known to people in the town.

*Mr. Leach motions to appoint Jessica Gancarz for the COA Director position. Mr. Munch seconds. All agree.

VOTE 3-0

Jessica will come back and get sworn in by Town Clerk Leach and will be given the related keys at that time.

Item 7: **Discussion and possible Vote to appoint Town of Peru Wiring Inspector**

Mr. Leach said that we had 2 excellent candidates that were interviewed.

*Mr. Cullett motions to appoint Peter Yetman as Town of Peru Wiring Inspector. Mr. Leach seconds. All agree.

VOTE 3-0

Item 8: **Discussion and possible Vote to approve Transfer Station Fee Program**

TA Mitchell reports that Linda Cernik from NBSWD said it would be better to do the fee with the 52 bags and put a limit on the size of the bags which would be 33-gallon bags. DEP and NBSWD will award the town with a larger grant if we enforce more recycling. Supt. Russell said we have to reduce the amount of waste and increase the amount of recycling and need to ask people to crush their plastic jugs to make more room in the recycling bin. Mr. Munch suggests \$50.00 for the permit with 52 bags. The second 50 bags would be \$25.00. Anything beyond that would be \$1.00 per bag. Speaking as Transfer Attendant, Mr. Leach said that would create more paperwork trying to figure out if that's your first or second 50 etcetera. Mr. Cullett suggests doing the initial 52 bags, then everything beyond that is \$1.00 per bag with a minimum of 5. Mr. Leach suggests going with the punch cards after the first 52 bags. Mr. Leach requests that a letter be made and signed by the Selectmen who approve this so that he can put it down at the Transfer Station.

*Mr. Cullett motions to set the permit fee at \$50.00 with 52 bag stickers after which it will be \$1.00 per bag with a minimum of 5 to be purchased at one time with a 33-gallon bag as maximum per sticker. Mr. Munch seconds. All agree. Mr. Leach recuses as Selectman. **VOTE 2-0**

Item 9: **Discussion and possible Vote to appoint Gladys Wheeler to Cemetery Commission**

*Mr. Cullett motions to appoint Gladys Wheeler to the Cemetery Commission. Mr. Leach seconds. All agree. **VOTE 3-0**

Item 10: **Discussion and Vote to appoint Edward Fahey as the Board of Health Agent**

*Mr. Cullett motions to appoint Edward Fahey as the Board of Health Agent. Mr. Leach seconds. All agree. **VOTE 3-0**

Item 11: **Discussion and Vote to approve Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Implementation Grant
Totaling a \$20,000.00 Contract**

TA Mitchell said this is a formality now that we have the Grant. We need to approve the Contract with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He said the Grant Approval has to be Notarized and signed. Most of the funding is going for gravel on Curtin Road and signage on Rt. 143, with one at Curtin Extension, and one at the parking area leading into the Peru State Forest. Supt. Russell will call Kristopher Massini, Forester of Peru State Forest to find out who he could contact to see if DCR will provide signs for us.

Mr. Leach motions to approve the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Grant for \$20,000.00. Mr. Cullett seconds. Mr. Munch recuses as he is a Representative of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership. **Vote 2-0**

Item 12: **Discussion of Propane Vendor**

Mr. Cullett said someone from our current vendor called Supt. Russell and threatened to shut the service off for non-payment. He said it's an error on their part, and there is no need for that. Our Accountant was mailing the payments to the address printed on the invoices and somehow it didn't get applied to our account, so they gave her a different address to mail checks to. Mr. Cullett would like to reach out to other vendors and get prices for swapping out these tanks owned by the current vendor.

Item 13: **Discussion of 250th Anniversary Celebration**

This item will be discussed at the next BOS Meeting of 3/23/20

Item 14: **Discussion of Fiscal Year 2021 Budget**

Mr. Munch indicates the BOS have talked about an undisclosed figure to offset the tax because of the increase we'll get from the State budget. We'll be getting \$50,000.00 from the Solar. TA Mitchell said Treasurer Wendling and Assistant Accountant Gruele are doing the books for the previous Fiscal Year. They did complete looking at all their receipts and trying to reconcile all the funds. Mr. Munch brought up a discussion that the BOS have talked about recently is putting some money toward an Architect or Engineering Firm for the Town Hall. Mr. Cullett said he'd like to nail down what should be set aside and thinks it will be in the neighborhood of \$20,000.00. He said a code assessment of the entire building would have to be done and for them to let us know what's going to be triggered at what point. If we look at renovating this space, at what point to we have to bring everything up to code.

The F350 or F250 was the other item that should be on the wish list. He feels the BOS should present it to Finance as the recommended options. Mr. Leach said what he'd like to do this year is under each Article, say whether the BOS approves this, or the Finance Committee. Mr. Cullett said anything that goes on the Town Meeting Warrant is approved by us, but not by the Finance Committee.

TA Mitchell said from the Town Auditors Report, one of the major recommendations in the report is to balance the books monthly, and we haven't been doing that. This year we're trying to balance books for our Free Cash for our previous Fiscal Year, and the current Fiscal Year we're in now. As soon as the new budget is approved for FY21, the Accountant and the Treasurer need to start working on reconciliation of the books almost immediately as soon as the new budget is in place.

Mr. Leach said there was one other thing in the Audit that he would like to entertain, and that is to take the library bills off the town, give them their money, whether it be quarterly or yearly. Rather than paying the Accountant and the Treasurer to do their work for them.

Item 15: **Discussion and possible Vote to appoint the Council on Aging Director**

*Mr. Leach motions to appoint Jessica Gancarz as Council on Aging Director. Mr. Munch seconds. All agree. **VOTE 3-0**

Item 16: **Review and Approve Accounts Payable, Treasury Warrants, Payroll Warrant**

Item 17: **Adjourn**

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

BOS Meeting adjourned at 8:29 P.M.

Articles used:

3/9/20 BOS Meeting Agenda
3/2/20 BOS Meeting Minutes
Sign in sheet
Wahconah High School handout
Appointment paper for Peter Yetman as Wiring Inspector
Appointment paper for Gladys Wheeler on Cemetery Commission
Appointment paper for Edward Fahey as Board of Health Agent
Resume of Jessica Gancarz
Fire Engine Bid Sheet
Financial Report
Vendor Warrants
Payroll Warrants

Respectfully submitted

Irene J. Morrison

Administrative Assistant

Verne Leach, Chairman _____

Ed Munch, Selectman _____

Bruce Cullett, Selectman _____

Approved: _____