

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: February 22, 2021: 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Center

Ed Munch, BOS Chairman/Historical Commission
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Chief of Police
Verne Leach, Selectman/ACO
Caleb Mitchell, Town Administrator
Ruth Calaycay, Library Director
Sharon Greule, Library Member
Aimee Henderson, Eversource Representative
Charles Burnham, Eversource Representative
Mick Collins, Eversource Project Manager
Jesse Pelkey, Finance Chairman
Darryl Darby, Finance Committee
Tonya Santaniello, Administrative Assistant

Item 1: **Call to order:** 6:00 P.M.

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

Item 3: **State Recording status:** Tonya Santaniello recording; Live stream on Zoom Meeting.

Item 4: **Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:** Lead by Selectman Munch

Item 5: **Review and Approve Meeting Minutes for 2/8/2021:** Leach asked if the BOS would like to put the 2/8/2021 meeting minutes on hold for a week due to the amount. Munch said they will table it until next week.

Item 6: **Review and approve Meeting Minutes for Joint BOS/Finance Committee Meeting 1/7/2021:** Munch made motion to accept the joint meeting minutes for the BOS/Finance Committee on 1/7/2021, Leach seconds. All agree. **Vote 3-0.** Will be forwarded to the Finance Committee to approve.

Item 7: **Presentation and Discussion of proposed Berkshire to Montague Upgrade Project by Aimee Henderson of Eversource:** Aimee Henderson stated she has Charles Burnham on the Zoom Meeting as well and he is from their construction group and he will be giving the presentation and answering questions. Charles Burnham said he has power point slides but can share them after the meeting because he is not allowed to have Zoom on their computers. Charles stated he wanted to go through a high-level discussion of some work they have coming up in Peru for 2021 and 2022. Discussed that it was transmission work that will take place in the transmission right of way corridor which is in the NW corner of Peru. It is the large transmission structures that are in that corridor. Within the corridor there are two lines of structures, one is called the 312 which is a 345 KV line and has 'H' frame structures, and the southern portion of that line is the 1242-1231 lines which are two 115 KV lines. In 2021, likely this summer pending all permits they will be going in and replacing the 10 existing structures in Peru on the 312 line. The conductors and the wires will stay the same but they are going to switch out the wood structures with steel structures so they will look like a weathered steel rusted look. They will likely be going to the local conservation commission for some permitting before that happens. The other project is a larger project in terms of the state, which will extend from Hinsdale all the way to Montague but for Peru's purposes it is within that right of way corridor in the southern portion of the line. They will be switching out 9 structures in addition to adding a new conductor and new OPGW which is a shield wire that goes on top of the structure. It will be like the 312 work only there will be new wires as well as the new structures. These structures look more like lattice towers and will be replaced with weathered steel poles, again, this work is not slated to start until early 2022 but in terms of permitting along with local and state approval they must start now. Discussed some survey work being done now on the line, having people walk the line and examining the structures. Munch asked what the purpose of this

project is. Mr. Burnham stated it is essentially that the structures are on their last legs so to speak. Discussed that they do an examination of the structures yearly and they determined that these structures are nearing the end of useful life, so they have decided it is time to switch them out. A lot of it is reliability, these lines serve not only Peru but the region so there is concern over making sure they are able to keep the lights on. Cullett asked if access is gained through the substation in Hinsdale or from Peru Rd in Windsor. Mr. Burnham said they were going to look to stay within right of way when accessing, they are early in the process, so their goal is to stay in the right of way but if they need any off right away access, they will talk to the property owners. Project Manager, Mick Collins stated the current access they are looking for comes off from New Windsor Road by the Berkshire substation in Hinsdale and from Peru Rd, those are their two access points. Leach asked which roads they are talking about on the south side for project 2, Cullett said they are on the same side. Mick said it was all within the right of way. TA Mitchell asked a question representing the Conservation Committee, when will they anticipate applying for the permits. Mr. Burnham stated they should be seeing something within the next few months. Mick stated their goal for the Municipal type permits they need is from March to May for submission. Cullett asked if the heights of the structures are going to be roughly the same. Mr. Burnham said at this point they are still doing engineering on it, so he doesn't have that data at this time.

Item 8: Update to Departments:

Compactor: Leach speaking as Transfer Attendant said he talked to Justin on Saturday about putting the piece of metal in the compactor to keep the bears out. Leach said he described to Justin what he wanted, and that Justin said it was feasible. Leach said they are also waiting to do work on the shed.

Police Department: Cullett stated the only thing he has tonight to talk about is the Budget and items related to the budget which will be discussed when that line item comes up.

Town Administrator: TA Mitchell stated the lighting project was submitted to the Department of Energy Resources under the Green Community Program and it was supposedly submitted for review and then he got an email today about a contract that needs to be signed and as part of that he must do a project narrative, project cost, and what the energy savings will be. Discussed until they have a signed contract from the Dept. of Energy Resources no funding will be released from the grant the town was awarded when receiving the Green Community designation. Discussed email from Thomas Matuszko from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission about any interest in a shared conservation agent. TA Mitchell said he told him that he did not think the Town would have any interest. Typically, when small towns have Conservation Agents, they are part time without benefits, but Thomas asked that it be brought up to the BOS to see if they were interested. Munch stated the town has an active Conservation Commission so why would they need an agent. Discussed that this would not be a benefit to the town. Discussed Karen Tonelli receiving approval for the preliminary Revaluation of the properties and forwarding a copy to TA Mitchell. This will free the town up to eventually set the tax rate and release the second tax bills. TA Mitchell said there will be a discussion by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission regarding a group purchasing program the town is a member of Mitchell stated he would probably participate in the discussion. Discussed the Hazard Mitigation Plan kickoff meeting has been rescheduled to this Thursday and has been posted on the website. Discussed message relayed from the Health Agent, Ed Fahey, about an attorney from the Dept. of Agriculture wanted to be able to contact Town Council to talk about the Hog Weed. Mitchell explained to Ed Fahey that the BOS needs more details about who is going to pay the cost of the removal because we already got a legal opinion and that the Hog weed is within the right of way and therefore the legal opinion was based on that and stated they need no authorization from property owners. Munch stated when it gets to the point where someone decides, he wants to see it in writing. Cullett stated that he mentioned to Nanette Mone, Board of Health Chair, that if they need some questions answered to put them in writing and they will forward them on to Town Council. Munch asked TA Mitchell for an update on the medallions. TA Mitchell stated he resent the original email to Joel Bard for the legal opinion. Munch said this needs to be followed up on, so they know what the procedure is for selling them since they were purchased by the town. This needs to be a priority for the next meeting.

***Addition to Police Department:** Chief Cullett discussed at the last meeting Justin had asked for some letters to be sent out reminding folks of the Town Bylaw regarding plowing of snow on the public way, he had about another 6-10 addresses this past week so Chief Cullett sent out another batch of letters. There were a few others that were handled in person during the storms because it was easier to do it that way.

Transfer Station: Leach speaking as Transfer Attendant stated that Rick is unable to make the meeting with Northern Berkshire Solid Waste so he will be going in as an alternate. The meeting is to set the budget which will be going up \$115.00 estimated from last year.

Item 9: **Discussion of Library Funding:** TA Mitchell stated they submitted a final budget. Ruth asked if the BOS had any questions. Munch said they have not gotten to the Library Funding yet because budget discussions is Item #10 on the agenda. Cullett asked if the requested amount was the same as what was discussed last meeting. Ruth said yes. Ruth said they are going to get one more quote for a bookkeeper that might come in over the next few days, but they do not know if that will change anything.

Item 10: **Discussion of Fiscal Year 2022 Budget:** Munch stated they will start with the Library since they are on the line. Leach said he sees no issues with the Library Budget, this is what we discussed last meeting. Cullett said what TA Mitchell needs to do is attach the breakdown that Sharon and Ruth provided from the last meeting and how they arrived at these numbers and make sure Finance has a copy of it. Discussed how the Library Budget would be handled moving forward and a Memorandum of Understanding that will need to be reviewed by the trustees and the BOS and agreed upon and executed prior to the next Fiscal Year. Leach requested TA Mitchell follow up with Bryan Mazur regarding drawing up the memorandum. Ruth stated they were going to supply the BOS with a draft in the next couple of weeks from a volunteer attorney who offered to do help them come up with something. Cullett said if they are having something done pro bono, we can use that at a starting point and send the draft to Town Council. Discussion on sending to Finance as the BOS approves them, Munch would like to fill them all in and attend the joint meeting and say these are the recommendations that BOS agreed to. Discussed the following department budgets; Town Clerk which included a filing cabinet for restored books, which will be listed on the free cash list and not part of the budget. The budget is level funded; ACO still has not received his form to fill out, Mitchell will finalize budget forms and get them out this week; Accountant Budget requested a salary wage increase. BOS discussed possibly doing a cost-of-living increase across the board and will discuss with Finance. Cullett discussed the Tax Collector/Treasurer budget appears that she has level funded everything except for retirement assessment and Medicare town share; she is waiting for numbers for software support for both the Treasurer/Accountant as well as the Tax Collector computer support and health insurance. The Fire Department is completely level funded, **RULE OF NECESSITY** – Verne Leach and Ed Munch want to invoke the Rule of Necessity because both are on the Fire Department. Cullett stated they will hold off on the Salary part of their budget request. Discussed Cost of Living raises, merit-based raises and that this year may be the worst year to do any raises at all due to the school bill, more research is needed. Discussed the only modification for the Assessor's budget was the salary, everything else is level funded including tax map maintenance, annual computer support and the utility appraisal was requested to be added again because the state is looking for it to be done regularly. Discussed the Police Dept. Budget, Cullett recused himself as Select Board member and speak as the Police Chief. Chief Cullett discussed that the proposed budget amount overall is a little less than 1% increase, this comes from the police expense line item. There is equipment that outdates all at the same time this year and will need to be replaced such as AED pads, OC Spray, and a few others. The other item in budget is to shift from one account to another. Discussed proposal of shifting some from police wages to the Chief's salary and increasing the number of hours in the Police Chief position. Discussed hrs. are 25 per week and he is averaging over 30 hrs. a week. Discussed agreement to work up to 30 and take the extra hrs. in comp time. Discussed proposal from 25 to 30 hrs. a week and reasons for the proposal. Discussed the IMC software as a one-time expense, Leach said he sees that as a potential free cash item. This has been discussed in the past and was not put on the warrant last year in error. Chief Cullett is currently trying to work on a grant from the State 911 division to fund it but he is not sure if he will be successful. Cullett discussed requesting an accounting of what the Dept. has generated in revenue through cruiser and administrative fees doing details. Munch stated they already voted and agreed in the past and it was just an oversight when left off the warrant. Leach asked when they want to discuss the Selectman expense, Cullett said we can do it right now. Discussed Building Maintenance, in the coming year the installation of the sign, other projects that will probably need to be done along the way, might be a point they may use this account to small upgrades such as the mini split system. Discussed the Town Building Maintenance and what has been used as of the end of January and the possibility of cutting it back to save money. Discussed Town Hall Cleaning. Bruce Cullett speaking as the Police Chief again discussed the Police Reform bill and that there could be significant requirements for the Dept. which

will be an unfunded mandate from the state where they could require a boat load of additional online training for PT police officers. Discussed School budget and number of students.

Item 11: **COVID-19 Updates:** Darryl Darby stated that he thinks the trends are going down. Discussed the vaccine and age groups now able to get it. He stated that he thinks in mid-April or early May we should be in good shape. Cullett said he placed an order for nitrile gloves for police, fire and highway departments. Discussed masks still available for anyone who needs them.

Item 12: **Public Input:** No public logged in to Zoom meeting. Darryl Darby asked Chief Cullett how the extra hours as the Police Chief would affect him in the eyes of the MPTC, would he be considered a FT officer and need to go back to the academy. Cullett stated he still would not be considered full time; 30 hours is still under that threshold.

Item 13: **Review and Approve Accounts payable, Treasury Warrants, Payroll Warrants:** Accounts payable, Treasury Warrants, and Payroll Warrants reviewed and approved.

Item 14: **Adjourn:** Munch made motion to adjourn the 2/22/2021 BOS Meeting. Leach seconds. All agree **Vote 3-0. The 2/22/2021 BOS Meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.**

Articles used:

3/1/2021 BOS Meeting Agenda
2/8/2021 BOS Meeting Minutes
2/22/2021 BOS Meeting Minutes
Email for Lighting Project/Contract
Email from Berkshire Regional Planning for Shared Conservation Agent
Library Budget Request
Town Clerk Budget Request
Accountant Budget Request
Tax Collector/Treasurer Budget Request
Fire Dept. Budget Request
Assessor Budget Request
Police Dept. Budget Request
Accounts payable, Treasury Warrants, Payroll Warrants


Respectfully Submitted

Tonya Santaniello, Administrative Assistant

Ed Munch, Chairman



Verne Leach, Selectman



Bruce Cullett, Selectman



Date Approved: 3/1/2021