

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: February 27, 2023 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Peru Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman/ACO  
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Police Chief  
Doug Haskins, Selectman/Fin Com  
Terry Walker, Administrative Assistant  
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent  
Jesse Pelkey, Fire Chief  
Paul Hickling, Finance Committee Chairman  
Sharon Gruele-Library Trustee  
Ruth Calaycay-Library Director

Public Attendees: Dale Weeks, Heather Brooks, Logan Brooks, Brian Dewkett

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

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

**Item 3: State Recording status:** Selectman Leach for personal reasons under Exemption E

**Item 4: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:** Led by Selectman Leach

**Item 5: Review and Approve BOS Meeting Minutes for 02/21/2023.**

Selectman Leach motion to approve 02/21/2023 minutes, Selectman Cullett second, 2-0

**Item 6: Updates of Departments:**

Highway Superintendent Russell discussed crack sealing to preserve several roads. The estimate is \$33,000 and the crack sealing will be completed in early June 2023 and will take 3-4 days to complete the project. The crack sealing project will be funded by Chapter 90 and this does not have to go out to bid. Selectman Cullett mentioned that this is a good idea, and to save the roadways. The three Selectmen were in favor with 3 yes votes.  
Some discussion regarding bringing Strong Road up to par with the intention of the owner building a house on that road. Selectman Leach asked Highway Superintendent Russell to bring a estimate to the board to upgrade the road.

Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned that he may have a fire engine available from Stow Academy which would be a loaner at no cost to the town. Chief Pelkey also mentioned that Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's cost for permit eyes was not more expensive than other companies.

Chief Pelkey emailed the changes from the approved Board of Selectmen's minutes from the January 3, 2023 meeting and wants his changes attached to the minutes.

Paul Hickling, Finance Committee Chairman, mentioned that he has the following budget requests for FY24.

- Town Clerk
- Police Department
- Animal Control Officer

Police Chief Cullett: No updates at this time

**Item 7: Annual meeting with Peru Library on FY24 budget:** The Budget request submitted by Ruth Calaycay for the Peru Library for FY24 was \$19,265.00 with an increase of \$372.00 from FY23. Sharon Greule mentioned that she has not received monthly expenditure reports from the Accountant. Sharon has kept a spread sheet as she believes the Library has used 55% of the budget. The budget is basically level funded except for insurance being increased and the minimum wage increase. Also, the State Aid has been increased from \$3,962.00 to \$4,386.00.

The Library Report is as follows:

- The Library received a \$5,200 grant from the Mass Board of Library Commissioners for initial set-up of a new Local History area and displays in time for Peru's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2022.
- A second grant was awarded for \$4,803 from the Association of Rural and Small Libraries. This grant was used to purchase children's books and supplies.
- Summer hours extended for the summer and will add 4 hours a week for six months. The additional salary will be paid from State Aid.
- The Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Peru and Board of Trustees of the Peru Library was discussed. The Library is not receiving monthly reports and they agreed to quarterly reports. The Board of Selectmen agreed to amend the MOU to quarterly reports.

**Overview of Strategic Plan for Library**

- Replacing outdated computer room equipment
- Outreach and accessibility
- Programming
- Future plans for the Library building

Possibility of building a new town hall including the library and community center in the next 5 years was discussed.

Ruth and Sharon were in hopes the existing building would last another 10 years.

**Item 8: Discussion and possible vote on Municipal Pavement Program Agreement for Peru:** Highway Superintendent Russell discussed the paving agreement for Route 143, and he would like to make changes to scope of the work for Route 143. Once the agreement is changed to meet the needs of Peru, the Board of Selectmen will sign the agreement. Palmer Paving has the state contract for the project. Selectman Leach placed on hold.

**Item 9: Discussion and possible vote on estimates on Peru Fire House furnace:** Fire Chief Pelley presented quotes to the Board of Selectmen and Pittsfield Pipers was the lowest quote. Four quotes were received and 3 included prevailing wage.

St. Pierre had replaced the circuit board for \$1,300 and the inducer motor for \$3,000 attempting to fix the furnace. Brian Dewkett felt that putting all that money into the furnace was crazy and there should have been a point to draw the line if the furnace couldn't be fixed. Dewkett felt that the fire house could get by with a 1-stage furnace rather than a 2-stage furnace which would be half the cost. The companies will be asked to give a quote on a 1-stage furnace.

Selectmen Cullett mentioned that the Fire House should have good surge protectors and will need a ground for the radios. Further discussion was put on hold.

**Item 10: Discussion and possible vote on repair quotes for the Peru Fire Engine:** The Fire Truck was transported to Freightliner in Westfield, MA and the Selectmen are waiting on a quote. Selectman Leach mentioned that the Board of Selectmen, at tonight's meeting, will approve getting the brakes fixed on the firetruck. Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned that getting the brakes fixed is not a guarantee. Selectman Cullett mentioned that it is one step at a time to resolve this issue and will keep Chief Pelkey updated. Selectman Cullett felt that replacing rotors, calipers, pads and wheel seals may fix the problem. Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned that he has a loaner available, no investment to the town and we return the loaner to the state when we have our fire truck up and running. Also the town can keep the loaner as long as needed.



Selectman Leach instructed Chief Pelkey to wait on the loaner. Selectman Leach felt that the brakes on the Fire Truck may be fixed very soon, and the fire truck may be up and running next week. Heather Brooks felt that no one at this meeting had any knowledge of brakes on an emergency vehicle. Brian Dewkett stated that all trucks have the same brakes and are repairable. Dewkett stated that calipers, rotors, pads on emergency vehicles are the same as any other truck.

**Item 11: Discussion of FY24 Budget:**

Paul Hickling, Finance Committee Chairman, mentioned that the Finance Committee has met once and will be meeting on Wednesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>.

Some of the topics discussed by Finance Committee and Board of Selectman were as follows.

Final estimates for the work are needed for the Fire Department Vehicle

Discussion was to move forward with the police cruiser using ARPA funds. Selectman Leach mentioned that the Board of Selectmen voted to also move forward with the police cruiser using ARPA funds.

Paul mentioned that the majority of the discussion at the last Finance Committee meeting was related to the fire department.

Proposed DCR matching grant will be a separate line item. Selectman Cullett mentioned that a separate line item will work because the matching grant amounts could change yearly.

Fire Chief Pelkey will be going to Lee on Wednesday to get an EZ-pass.

Selectman Cullett will ask the Accountant for a Condition of Accounts to the end of February.

Selectman Cullett mentioned that the Cherry sheets estimates for state owned land and school aid has increased by approximately \$12,343.00.

Selectman Leach mentioned that the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee will be having joint meetings every other week until the budget is finalized for Annual Town Meeting.

Selectman Haskins mentioned that the Salt Shed Roof needs to be power washed. Highway Superintendent Russell was asked to look into a power washing company and possibly industrial coating for roof.

Highway Superintendent Russell mentioned that he will get quotes for plows.

- Animal Control level funded.
- Town Clerk level funded except Assistant Town Clerk Salary will be brought up to minimum wage which is \$15.00 per hour.
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission \$692.98
- Berkshire County Retirement \$58,841.00-Selectmen will speak to Town Treasurer regarding drastic increase
- Berkshire County Sheriffs from \$11,116.00 to \$11,448.89

The Board of Selectmen mentioned that the budget requests were due on February 24<sup>th</sup> and there several missing.

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**Item 12: Public Input:** Heather Brooks asked the Board of Selectmen if joint Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen's meetings were public. She mentioned she would like to attend meetings and get caught up on town affairs. The Board mentioned that all meetings were public. Selectman Leach mentioned that Heather could go to the website, check which agendas she would like to receive, and the agendas will be emailed to her. Selectman Haskins made Heather Brooks aware that there is a vacancy on the Finance Committee. Heather may consider filling the Finance Committee position.

**Item 13: Review and Approve Accounts Payable, Treasury Warrants and Payroll Warrant:** Selectboard signed credit card statement giving Town Treasurer permission to pay credit card electronically.

**Item 14: Adjourn:** Selectman Leach made motion to adjourn the 02/27/2023 BOS Meeting, Selectman Cullett second, Vote 3-0. The 02/27/2023 BOS Meeting adjourned at 7:42 P.M.

**Articles used:**

Minutes- 02/21/2023,  
Municipal paving agreement for Route 143  
Fire Department quotes for new furnace  
Cherry Sheet estimates  
Town Clerk FY24 Budget Sheet  
Berkshire County Retirement Notice  
Berkshire County Sheriff's FY24 Estimate  
Peru Library Budget FY24 presentation  
BRPC FY24 Assessment  
Police Department Budget  
Town Credit Card Statement Request  
Sign in sheet

Respectfully Submitted,

*Terry Walker*  
*Administrative Assistant*

Verne Leach, Chairman



Doug Haskins, Selectman



Bruce Cullett, Selectman

Date Approved: 3-6-23

RECEIVED  
MAR 07 2023  
*Kevin Leach*  
TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF PERU