

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: February 21, 2023 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Peru Town Hall Meeting Room

Vern Leach, Chairman BOS/ACO  
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Police Chief  
Terry Walker, Administrative Assistant  
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent  
Jesse Pelkey, Fire Chief

Public Attendees: Dale Weeks, Denise Shaw, Charlene Steele, Coralie Pelkey, Michael Nugai, Robin Wadsworth, Tina Barrington, Matt Martinez, Bonny Ditomasso, Steven Wall, Norman Dodge, Brian Dewkett, Heather Brooks, Craig Brooks, Brian Casey, Carlton Brooks, Danny Cawthren, Kevin Wall, Sam Haupt, Kimberly Wetherell

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

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

**Item 3: State Recording status:** Selectman Leach for personal reasons under Exemption E, Robin Wadsworth, Kimberly Wetherell

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

**Item 5: Review and Approve BOS Meeting Minutes for 2/13/2023:**

Selectman Leach motion to approve 02/13/2023 minutes pending changes, Selectman Cullett second, 2-0,

**Item 6: Updates of Departments:**

Highway Superintendent Russell mentioned the State Project Agreement for Route 143. The Board of Selectmen will receive the contract, review and the agreement will then be signed.

Fire Chief Pelkey received two quotes for the heating system at the fire house, but they didn't bid prevailing wage. The office area is still without heat and Chief Pelkey stated that the furnace needs to be replaced which will cost between \$11,000-\$13,000. Selectman Cullett mentioned that Fire Chief Pelkey should use space heaters with the doors open to prevent anything from freezing up. Selectman Leach asked Fire Chief Pelkey if this is the same furnace that the town just spent \$4,300.00 to fix. Fire Chief Pelkey said yes and none of the parts can be reused. Selectman Cullett asked Fire Chief Pelkey if there had been any recommendations to replace the furnace rather than try to fix it. Fire Chief Pelkey believes the furnace was fried due to a power outage. Although there aren't any damages to other electronics at the fire house and the TV is ok. Selectman Cullett asked Fire Chief Pelkey to get written estimates and Selectman Leach mentioned that they will find funding for the heating system.

Highway Superintendent Russell made Fire Chief Pelkey aware that his were not compliant. Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned that he bought 10 new cones that are compliant. Fire Chief asked the Selectboard if they received email mentioning that the fire engine will not start.

Robin Wadsworth asked the Board of Selectmen if they had been made aware of her emails to TA Welch and the Tax Collector with an abatement issue. The Selectmen said they were not aware Robin Wadsworth had an issue and had not seen the emails. Robin then hand delivered a letter to the Selectboard from Tatro Construction Company regrading

Personal Property tax bills for FY21 and FY22. On April 11, 2022 a valuation appeal from Tatro Construction, Co. was heard by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Appellate Tax Board. The decision by the Appellate Tax Board was in favor of Tatro Construction, Co. in the amount of \$1,007.37. Robin Wadsworth stated that she emailed the Town Administrator and Tax Collector, she feels that they ignored her emails and did not respond to her. On September 20, 2022, Robin Wadsworth reached out to the Appellate Tax Board and on September 23, 2022, the Board of Assessors was ordered to refund the tax abatement plus interest. On October 20, 2022, Tatro Construction, Co. did not receive the total interest from the refunds. Robin feels that at 8% interest \$1.20 is not the correct amount of interest. Again, Robin Wadsworth emailed the Tax Collector and Town Administrator and states that her email was ignored. Robin Wadsworth states that since her January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 email has also been ignored she plans to go to small claims court for \$180.00 for interest she is owed and she feels the town will be liable for all attorney and court fees. Robin Wadsworth suggests that Town Counsel be made aware of this issue. The Board of Selectmen assured Robin Wadsworth that they would investigate this issue.

**Item 7: Discussion and possible vote on CMRK Inc. Memorandum of Understanding for Clothing and Textile bin:**

CMRK made a site visit at the Transfer Station for the placement of the Clothing and Textile bin. Once the agreement is signed, they will deliver the Clothing and Textile Bin hopefully by March 7<sup>th</sup>. The other company has agreed to remove their bin. Selectman Cullett gave Highway Superintendent Russell authority to sign the contract. Selectman Leach recused himself. Superintendent Russell will take care of the contract tomorrow.

**Item 8: Discussion and possible vote on options regarding Peru Fire Engine:**

Fire Chief Pelkey has been trying to get brakes repaired on the fire engine but has not been successful. Chief Pelkey is now trying to get a conversion kit. Chief Pelkey did get a verbal quote of \$25,000-\$ 30,000 from Merinder Conversion Company from Las Vegas and is waiting for a written quote. Highway Superintendent Russell mentioned that the with new rotors, brake pads and rebuilding the calipers would be around \$6,000 and get the fire engine back on the road. Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned he is going back to what his mechanic said and no one wants to repair the brakes. Selectman Cullett said that at the Selectboard meeting on Feb.9<sup>th</sup> and at the Finance Committee Meeting on Feb.13<sup>th</sup> was the first time Chief Pelkey mentioned anything about the truck not holding when parking brake is on. Selectman Cullett also stated that Chief Pelkey said the fire truck was in good shape other than the parking brake issue. Fire Chief Pelkey said one option is to sell the old fire engine and purchase a new or used one. Selectman Cullett mentioned that discarding a perfectly good fire engine and not fixing the parking brake makes no sense. Selectman Leach stated that the town paid \$75,000 for the fire truck two years ago and he feels it is well worth \$5,000 to fix the brakes on the fire engine. Brian Dewkett, former Fire Chief, stated that the truck is phenomenal and not replacing the brakes and purchasing a new truck is disheartening to him as a taxpayer. Dewkett states that the truck is in great shape except for the parking brake issue.

Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned the Board of Selectmen took the truck off the road and the state knows that it is not inspected. Selectman Leach asked Fire Chief Pelkey why the Selectmen weren't notified in November when the truck failed inspection rather than wait until February. Chief Pelkey stated that he has been trying to get the parking brake fixed since November. Selectman Cullett feels fixing a fire engine that the town purchased 2 years ago is the correct thing to do.

Brian Dewkett asked what is the primary purpose of the command vehicle that the town purchased in August. Chief Pelkey mentioned that the purpose of the command vehicle was primary response and administrative training. Selectman Leach said he thought the command vehicle was going to be used for calls. Fire Chief Pelkey mentioned that one issue about repairing the fire engine is that no one wants to work on it and they don't have prices for repairs. Mike Nugai-Pittsfield, MA mentioned that there are used surplus trucks that are available without any issues. Selectman Leach reiterated that they purchased the truck two years ago and this is news to the Board that the truck is not starting. Selectman Cullett said that last week Chief Pelkey stated that this is a good solid truck. Fire Chief Pelkey said 2002 parts are hard to find and the company, American LaFrance, is out of business. Fire Chief Pelkey then felt that it was up to the townspeople at the meeting to voice their opinions. Selectman Cullett asked Fire Chief Pelkey if he wanted to scrap the fire engine and deem surplus for a value of \$25,000. Mike Nugai mentioned that once a company goes out of business the value on the trucks breaks down and any truck over 20 years old is not NFPA certified. So, a 20 year old truck's

value is under \$30,000. Selectman Leach asked Fire Chief Pelkey how many calls in town last year. Chief pelkey said he doesn't know exactly but maybe 8 or 10 and 2 mutual calls to Dalton. Heather Brooks felt the Board of Selectmen should take a step back and listen to the town. Dale Weeks asked Mike Nugai about a conversion and modifying brakes. Mike Nugai stated that modifying brakes could bring out a liability and it is hard to find a person to do the conversion. Although no one is saying it can't be done- it is finding someone to do the conversion. Brain Dewkett stated that talking about purchasing a new fire truck is not the place or the time. He said this needs to go to town meeting. Charlie Wood had to leave the meeting. He thanked everyone and he suggested fixing the brakes and go to town meeting for new truck. Coralee Pelkey asked to see power point presentation. Coralee suggested buying a new truck that could be used as a pumper, rescue truck and fire engine on every call. Coralee Pekley is proposing one vehicle that can do all three things.

Selectman Cullett had not been informed about the presentation. Selectman Cullett read the article in the Berkshire Eagle and the agenda item for tonight was to discuss repairing vehicle not a presentation about purchasing a new truck. The meeting tonight was to talk about the parking brake issue and not scrap the fire engine. Selectman Cullett reiterated that the fire engine fits the needs of the town, it has low milage, low hours and Chief Pelkey said it is a fantastic truck. Selectman Leach suggested using the Command Vehicle instead of the rescue truck. Selectman Cullett is not ready scrap the fire engine until the rotors, pads and calipers have been replaced.

Fire Chief gave a power point presentation:

#### SHOULD WE BUY USED OR NEW? Used

- PROS
- Cheaper for Townspeople
- Less Electronics
  
- CONS
- Age and longevity of the Vehicle
- Unrecorded or misrepresented mechanical issues
- Possible unverified maintenance Schedule
- No Warranties
- Unknown where prices will be when ready to replace again
- Difficulty of getting parts

#### SHOULD WE BUY USED OR NEW? New

- PROS
- Truck will last 30 or more years.
- Training is included in the price and is provided by professionals.
- 5-year transmission and engine warranty
- 12-year paint and 15-year aluminum body warranty
- 1 year electrical and 1 year bumper to bumper.
- No worrying about inflation for 30 years
- Knowing how the truck is maintained from day one.
  
- CONS
- Price Tag for up to ten years
- More electronics

**Selectman Cullett asked for a price break down:**

**PRICE BREAKDOWN OF USED VEHICLES**

- 2005 PIERCE CONTENDER, 76,000 MILES, \$120,000
- 2007 E-One Rescue Pumper, 100,000 miles, \$115,000
- 2009 Kenworth, 12,000 miles, \$195,000
- 2001 Pierce, 9,000 miles, \$110,000 plus repairs

**NEW VEHICLE OPTIONS**

- 2023 HME Custom, 1,325 miles, \$630,000
- 2023 E-ONE, 0 miles, \$725,000

All Fire Department members researched new and used vehicles and Fire Chief believes the funding to purchase a new or used fire engine can be taken from the Stabilization Fund. Selectman Leach needs hard number to repair brakes on existing fire engine. Highway Superintendent was asked to get hard numbers for the repairs. Highway Superintendent Russell stated he is not getting involved but believes the brakes can be fixed. Both Selectman Leach and Selectmen Cullett agreed to fix fire engine with the parking brake issue.

Coralee Pelkey is in favor of a Special Town Meeting and needs to know the procedure. Coralee mentioned that volunteers work on equipment and volunteer to keep everyone safe. She felt we need to go to Special Town Meeting. Selectman Cullett stated that the fire engine was purchased 2 years ago and Chief Pelkey agreed that it is an excellent vehicle. Selectman Cullett reiterated that the plan is to get the brakes fixed and Superintendent Russell said the brakes are readily available. Coralee asked Selectman Cullett what if we can't get parts. Selectman Cullett was confident the parts are available. Heather Brooks asked the Selectmen to put a dollar amount on the life of a fire fighter. She then asked why they are just temporarily putting a Band-Aid on the problem. Selectman Cullett stated that this is not a Band-Aid but are looking for a proper fix to get the vehicle back in service. Mike Nugai asked Fire Chief Pelkey what his response time was and Pelkey reported that his response time is 10 minutes sometimes a little under 10 minutes. Mike Nugai felt that was excellent response time. Coralee Pelkey wanted to know the procedure to hold a Special Town Meeting. Robin Wadsworth explained that it would make more sense to go to Annual Town meeting. Heather Brooks asked what the dollar amount is to fix the engine. Selectmen Cullett said they are fixing the brakes first. Fire Chief Pelkey asked how the brakes could be tested if the engine didn't start. Mike Nugai asked the Selectmen why they are putting money into brakes if the motor has an issue. Coralee Pelkey asked how many people want a Special Town Meeting. Mike Nugai also mentioned when a new truck or used truck would be available. Nanette Mone sent an email because she couldn't attend the meeting. Nanette would like to see a new truck purchased for the fire department rather than buy used or chase for parts.

**Item 9: Discussion and possible vote on date for Annual Town Meeting:** Selectman Leach mentioned that in the past the Annual Town Meeting had been moved to May and that did not work. Some discussion from the audience stating that the Annual Town Meeting was not attended very well because of June graduations and because it is held on Saturday evening. Selectman Cullett mentioned that a few years ago Annual Town Meeting was held in May then switched back to June. Highway Superintendent Russell mentioned that there is a by-law stating the Annual Town Meeting will be held on a Saturday in June and this would need to be a by-law change. Selectman Leach motion to hold the Annual Town Meeting on June 3, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., Selectman Cullett second, 2-0

**Item 10: Discussion and possible vote on date for Annual Town Election:** Selectman Leach motion to hold Annual Town Meeting on June 10, 2023, Selectman Cullett second, 2-0.

**Item 11: Discussion of FY24 Budget:** N/A

**Item 12: Public Input:** None

**Item 13: Review and Approve Accounts Payable, Treasury Warrants and Payroll Warrant:** V18-2023, V11-2023, 23-17P  
Selectman Leach motion to recess at 8:17 p.m. Selectman Cullett second, 2-0, Selectman Leach motion to reopen meeting at 8:19 p.m., Selectmen Cullett, present, Selectman Leach present.

**Item 14: Adjourn:** Selectman Leach motion to adjourn the 02/21/2023 BOS Meeting, Selectman Cullett second, Vote 2-0. The 02/21/2023 BOS Meeting adjourned at 8:43 P.M.

**Articles used:**

Minutes- 02/13/2023

Warrants – V18-2023, V11-2023, 23-17P

CMRK, Memorandum of understanding

Fire Department packet on fire engines

Tatro Construction emails issue with refund from Assessors/ Letter from Mass appellate tax board

BOS 2/21/2023 attendance sheet

Respectfully Submitted,

*Terry Walker*

*Administrative Assistant*

Verne Leach, Chairman

Doug Haskins, Selectman

Bruce Cullett, Selectman

Date Approved: 2/27/2023

RECEIVED  
FEB 28 2023  
*Kim Leach*  
TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF PERU