

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**  
**Town Community Room 3 EAST MAIN RD**  
**Monday, September 27, 2021 @ 6:00 PM**

Call to order

1. Roll Call
2. State recording status
3. Pledge Alliance to the Flag
4. Review and Approve BOS Meeting Minutes for 8-16-2021, & 8-23-2021, & 9-7-2021
5. Update of Departments.
6. Discussion and Possible vote to appoint Jesse Pelkey as Town of Peru Fire Chief.
7. Discussion of property auction
8. Discussion of Spending remaining funds through the Covid Cares Act
9. Discussion of 250<sup>th</sup> Town of Peru Anniversary updates
10. Discussion of Zoom Accounts
11. Discussion of Pierce Road property
12. Discussion of job description for Town Administrator
13. Public Input
14. Review and Approve accounts payable, Treasury Warrant
15. Adjourn

The list of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Board which may be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

Official posting: Peru Town website: [www.townofperuma.com](http://www.townofperuma.com) ; Additional Postings at Town Hall Bulletin Board, & Town Hall office.

Posted by Caleb Mitchell, Town Administrator on \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: September 27, 2021: 6:00 P.M.**

Peru Community Center

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman/ACO  
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Police Chief  
Doug Haskins, Selectmen  
Caleb Mitchell, Town Administrator  
Jesse Pelkey, Fire Chief  
Kimberly Wetherell, South Rd.  
Heather Brooks, 15 South Rd. Ext.  
Brian Waldron, South Rd.  
Charlene Steele, 25 South Rd.  
Coralie Pelkey, North Rd.  
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent

**Item 1. Call to Order** at 6:00pm by Chairman Leach

**Item 1: Roll Call:** Selectmen Leach Present, Selectmen Cullett Present, Selectmen Haskins Present

**Item 2: State Recording Status:** Caleb Mitchell, Town Administrator Selectman Leach.

**Item 3: Pledge of Allegiance,** Led by Selectman Leach

**Item 4: Review and approve minutes:** Review and approve minutes for August 16th. Discussion about Boston Cane Policy being included as a document used in the meeting. Motion made by Selectman Cullett to accept minutes pending changes. Second by Selectman Leach. 3-0 in favor.

TA Mitchell provided a set of minutes previously approved in a meeting pending changes but had never been signed by the Selectboard. Each member signed the minutes.

Tabled minutes for 8/23/21 and 9/7/21

**Item 5: Update from Departments:**

Fire Chief Pelkey informed the BOS that in the past week Massfiretrucks.com performed photo shoots of all the equipment. Shakerly was notified to come up and repair valves on two trucks. Chief Pelkey stated that he spoke with ProComm about placing a repeater near the Town Hall. Chief Pelkey spoke about training available at Jiminy Peak that he is interested in and some of the invoices he has submitted. Chief Pelkey spoke of a new firefighter from Otis that recently relocated into Peru. SCBA compressor will be serviced in two weeks.

Selectman Cullett informed the BOS that Renatus was able to get the new LED sign operational. Renatus recommends that it runs on its own CPU on our network and it will be able to be remototed into to modify the sign. An estimate was provided by Renatus for the CPU to run the sign. Selectman Cullett discussed the quote from the cleaning contractor to remove the mold in the basement and storage areas and

provided it to the rest of the Board. Selectman Cullett also presented a draft of a reply to correspondence received from William Tatro.

Police Dept. business: Chief Cullett stated that he was accepted into MPTC's Bridge Academy today. Completion of this requirement is due to the Massachusetts Police Reform Legislation. The actual training is provided by the State for no cost, however, travel, HRD physical, physical aptitude test, and other expenses involved with the training are not covered by the state. This is the first year of the Bridge Academy and covers officers with last names A-H. Chief Cullett stated that he is the only officer affected by this requirement during this fiscal year. Officer Boyne has received a permanent exemption due to his 34 years of full time experience. Chief Cullett has applied for a cruiser hardship for the EVOC portion of the training.

TA Mitchell provided an updated copy of the Town of Peru Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and asked the BOS to review it and have the Chair of the Selectboard sign it. A certificate related to the bond for the new WRHS project was discussed by TA Mitchell and he asked BOS to review it prior to the Treasurer signing off on it. BOS reviewed the bond document and there were no objections to having the Treasurer sign off. TA Mitchell informed BOS about correspondence he sent to Representative Mark's office about release of bond to finish Broadband Project after having no success reaching out to Governor's Office. TA Mitchell discussed finalizing spending of the Cares Act which is item 8 on Agenda.

**Item 6: Discussion and possible vote to appoint Jesse Pelkey as Fire Chief:** Selectman Leach recuses and asks Selectman Cullett to lead the discussion. Selectman Cullett stated that he had some follow up questions for Acting Chief Pelkey that are related to the interview from a few weeks ago. Selectman Cullett explained that some of the questions may be sensitive in nature and because Acting Chief Pelkey is a current employee of the Town of Peru he can be afforded the opportunity of an executive session to go through the questions in accordance with the open meeting law. Selectman Cullett explained that it is Acting Chief Pelkey's decision whether or not to go into executive session, but stated that if he chose an executive session it would need to be in accordance with OML where it is spelled out on the agenda and we provide required notice etc. to him as an employee. Acting Chief Pelkey stated that he wished to remain in open session.

Selectman Cullett stated that there were a few answers Acting Chief Pelkey provided in his interview that really stuck with him and that he needed to ask some follow up questions. Selectman Cullett stated that he was troubled by Acting Chief Pelkey's answers regarding social media postings, specifically social media postings that would be considered derogatory toward other Town Departments or officials and posts that would be considered prejudiced toward minorities or ethnic groups. Selectman Cullett paraphrased an answer provided by Acting Chief Pelkey during his interview which indicated that since accepting positions in Town Government (Finance Committee) and Command positions within the Peru Fire Department that he has not posted anything like that in a few years, but he used to do it to blow off steam. Acting Chief Pelkey stated that he thinks differently now and has changed over the years and does believe that elected officials should be held to a higher standard. Selectman Cullett stated that he has reviewed the social media posts made presumably by Acting Chief Pelkey from the last several years during the time that he was an elected member of the Finance Committee and an officer in the Fire Department. Selectman Cullett noted a number of derogatory social media posts directed toward other Town Departments and Town Officials. Acting Chief Pelkey agreed that he made some social media posts like that. Selectman Cullett stated the most troubling post he reviewed was a Facebook post made in June 2021 about the Juneteenth Holiday which read "with the latest addition of the new

holiday tomorrow I think I can safely say there are more holidays for all other races than us white american people". Selectman Cullett stated that it was disturbing that Acting Chief Pelkey felt that way, but more disturbing that he felt it was appropriate to make that kind of social media post while serving our Town as an elected official and an officer in our Fire Department. Selectman Cullett stated that the lack of judgment was unsettling. Selectman Cullett noted that the social media post was removed a short time later after someone had commented that it should be taken down. Acting Chief Pelkey stated that he regretted posting that. Selectman Cullett asked him if his views had changed between making that social media post in June and his interview in September? Acting Chief Pelkey replied that they had changed because he had been doing research.

Selectman Cullett stated he felt very strongly that he had to bring these issues forward because a Fire Chief has to be held to a higher standard and must demonstrate good character. Acting Fire Chief Pelkey stated that he was sorry and was changing his way of thinking and attempting to learn more about things.

Acting Chief Pelkey apologized for the things he posted on social media.

Selectman Haskins stated that he was previously unaware of any of the posts made by Acting Chief Pelkey on social media so he can't make a judgment on that.

Audience member Heather Brooks, 15 South Road Extension asked why Chairman Leach is recusing himself from the discussion. Chairman Leach informed Ms. Brooks that the State Ethics Commission requires that he abstain from anything related to the Fire Department for six months following his departure from the Fire Department.

Selectman Cullett stated that it is an uncomfortable situation that he is in and reminded Acting Chief Pelkey that nothing in the interview process was intended to be personal. The hiring process is something that he had been fighting for since July, and the Selectboard would not have been doing their jobs if the process had not taken place.

Selectman Cullett made motion to appoint Jesse Pelkey as Fire Chief, Selectman Haskins seconds. 2-0 Chairman Leach recuses.

Question from Brian Waldron, 6 South Road asked how long the appointment was. Selectman Cullett said the appointment is through the end of the fiscal year (June 2022) and that the Fire Chief position has been an annual appointment, however, that may be modified in June to a longer appointment due to the importance of the position.

**Item #7: Discussion of auction of town owned properties:** TA Mitchell said he has not received any additional information from the Treasurer. Chairman Leach said to ask the Treasurer/Tax Collector when she brings payroll down. TA Mitchell also stated that he needed to gather property value information from the Assessors.

Kimberly Wetherell, South Road said that it has been two weeks and you still don't have the values yet from the Assessors. TA Mitchell said that he hadn't asked for the information yet. Kimberly Wetherell states that these properties should have come up for auction a long time ago. Chairman Leach stated that three of the properties just became eligible for auction. Selectman Haskins provides a list of

properties to Kim Wetherell. Chairman Leach states that this will be revisited when the Treasurer/Tax Collector comes downstairs.

Once Tax Collector/Treasurer Wendling joined the meeting the BOS returned to Item #7. Kim Wetherell asked for amounts of back taxes and legal fees for each property that is coming up for auction. The Tax Collector discussed advantages of a live auction vs. bid/silent auction for the properties and the similarities between the two. Tax Collector would like to review the legal requirements for advertising the properties to be auctioned off and to see if we can approach abutters first for the properties.

**Item #8: Discussion of remaining funds from CARES Act:** TA referenced email from Town Accountant and associated guidelines. TA states that we received approximately \$39,000. A discussion ensued about the rules that were changed by Governor Baker effective June 15, 2021 and authorized expenditures.

**Item #9 Discussion of 250th updates:** Coralie Pelkey said most recent meeting was canceled. Atlas Fireworks will be coming out to look at location for Fireworks. Next 250th meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

**Item #10: Discussion of Zoom account:** Use of Zoom account has diminished since in person meetings have resumed. Town account is approximately \$400 / year. Consensus was to close Zoom account as it can be re-opened at any time.

**Item #11: Discussion of Pierce Road Property:** KP Law was looking for direction on whether the Town wanted them to pursue cleaning up title for property. Selectman Cullett stated that the Pierce Road property became part of the overlay for the solar bylaw and the only reason we initially needed KP Law to look into cleaning up the title for the property was when we were going to sell it to the state. Because the property is now tied to our solar by law there is no need to continue the legal work.

**Item #12: Description of Job Description for Town Administrator:** a prior legal ad for the Town Administrator was discussed. Selectman Cullett mentioned that he believes there is an additional job description that was developed along the way that should be our starting point. The Town Administrator position was discussed in terms of hours, benefits, and compensation. It was agreed to discuss the position further. Kim Wetherell asked if the current 18 hour Town Administrator position included time on other boards. Selectman Cullett stated that any voluntary membership on a Board was separate from the paid TA position.

**Item #13: Public Input:** Brian Waldron, South Road states that he has lived in Peru for 35 years and believes too much road salt is being used on the roads and he says it is hurting the environment. Waldron says that he is sure sand is cheaper than salt and wonders why we use so much salt. Selectman Cullett agrees that sand is cheaper than salt per ton, however, it is like comparing apples to oranges and each product has it's own purpose. Selectman Cullett states that Highway Supt. Russell could speak to this better than he can but not all winter storms are the same and temperature, amount of sunshine, and type of precipitation all play a role in proper treatment of the roads.

Charlene Steele, 25 South Road, she agrees that road salt is impacting her well.

Coralie Pelkey, North Road, asked about getting some items removed from Community Center room for Mountain Market.

**Item #14: Payroll warrant/Accounts payable warrant: none**

Agenda items for the next meeting were discussed. All items tabled during this meeting were included as well as items Tax Collector was looking into. Use of road salt is a discussion item for next meeting's agenda.

Selectman agreed to order CPU from Renatus for LED sign and to go ahead with cleaning of visible mold from basement.

Motion to adjourn made by Chairman Leach at 7:47 pm seconded by Selectman Cullett. 3-0

**Articles used:**

BOS Meeting Minutes 8/16/21

List of Parcels coming up for Auction

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

Respectfully Submitted,

Verne Leach, Chairman



Doug Haskins, Selectman



Bruce Cullett, Selectman



Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVED  
JUL 18 2022  
Kim Leach  
TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF PERU