

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES JANUARY 27, 2014
APPROVED**

Present: Peter S. Cunningham, Chairman; Josh Degen, Vice Chairman; Anna Eliot, Clerk; John G. Petropoulos

Absent: Stuart M. Schulman

Also Present: Mark W. Haddad, Town Manager; Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Mr. Cunningham called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Cunningham said that a few of the Selectmen had attended the MMA meeting the previous Friday. He said that he attended a seminar on OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits). Mr. Petropoulos said that he attended a seminar on tech and data. Mr. Degen said that he attended a meeting on the Governor's Budget.

Mr. Cunningham said that he had an opportunity to stop and talk to Barney Blood who informed him that he was going to re-build. Mr. Blood was extremely gracious for all the support the family had received. Mr. Petropoulos said there was a group around town who was coordinating assistance for the 20 employees displaced by the fire. An event was planned for February 27th at Gibbet Hill. More information would be available soon.

FIRE CHIEF SEARCH

Mr. Haddad said that no advertising had been done for the Fire Chief search. He thanked everyone for attending and said that they wanted to hear from members of the Fire Department.

Mr. William VanSchalkwyk of 288 Lost Lake Drive said that he attended the last meeting and hoped that the plan was still to keep the search process open and transparent. He asked how the search would work. Mr. Cunningham said that the search committee would be looking to see if an applicant fulfills the requirements. He said that the group would screen resumes sent in and narrow down the interested candidates and hold interviews. Mr. Haddad said that they planned to advertise in areas fire chiefs would look. He said that initials screening and interview process would be private but the finalists would become a public process. He said that an assessment center was successful during the search for a police chief and would be done with a fire chief. It gives the public a glance at the day in the life of a fire chief.

Mr. Tony Hawgood of West Main Street asked if they would be looking more at qualifications or attributes. Mr. Haddad said probably more toward attributes. It would be important for instance to see how a candidate would manage a call and/or full-time department. Mr. Hawgood asked if the job description was recent. Mr. Haddad said that it was done when the Bennett Study was done. Mr. Hawgood asked how many department members they were looking to have serve on the search committee. Mr. Haddad said that he was still working out the details but he would be happy to have a couple.

Ms. Connie Sartini asked if they were thinking about doing a nationwide search or limiting it to Massachusetts and New England. Mr. Haddad said that he was thinking about a Massachusetts and New England search adding he didn't think a countrywide search would benefit them. Chief Bosselait said that an applicant who has worked in Massachusetts would be familiar with the rules.

Mr. Tyler Schute asked how the Board would evaluate education adding that experience was a huge part but education and training was greater. Mr. Cunningham said that courses and continuing education were important in order to stay current.

Ms. Susan Daly of 23 West Main Street said that the department has had a lot of changes and it would be important to have someone who could manage a changing organization. She added that communication was huge. Mr. Cunningham said that many other communities were going through the same changes. He asked how the department saw themselves meeting and voting to appoint a representative or 2 to sit in on the search committee. Mr. Mike Culley said that he would appreciate having 2 members on the search committee and would even like to see some sort of a nomination process. He thought it could be done in a timely manner. He asked what kind of time commitment there would be. Mr. Cunningham said that it would be a substantial time commitment involving several meetings, screenings, and interviews. Mr. Culley asked if there was a timeframe in mind. Mr. Haddad said that he would like to get the posting out in February with resumes due at the end of March. Interviews would then be held in April and May with a candidate ready to go on July 1.

Mr. VanSchalkwyk said that they tended to follow the chain of command adding that the officers would get together to send out a message to the department. He thought they could convene a meeting within a matter of days. Mr. Degen said that the search committee needed to be in place and questions needed to be in order well in advance of the application deadline so that resumes didn't sit too long. Ms. Eliot said that people on the search committee would need to be at every meeting. Mr. Haddad said that the first meeting of the search committee would set the interview schedule.

Ms. Kathy Lincoln asked if there was an opportunity for the department to comment outside of this meeting. Mr. Cunningham said that they valued the call department and their input. Ms. Heather Helmsley said she wanted to make sure the EMT's were equally represented. Mr. Brad Kane said that there were different needs for call and full-time firefighters adding that he would like to see the department choose the representatives to sit on the search committee. He also felt it was important to have a chief that has experience balances a full-time and call department. Mr. Petropoulos agreed that it was best to let the department choose their representatives.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that because TLT had abandoned the Fire Station construction job, and the Town had been managing the site for a month now, the Town would be terminating their contract with TLT. He said that the project was only 3 weeks behind scheduled but still anticipated a mid-May completion with occupancy sometime in July. He added that he had been in constant contact with the bonding company. Ms. Eliot said that because they saw this coming they could step in right away. Mr. Haddad said that in August they had sensed a problem as subs weren't being paid by TLT. Mr. Haddad said that even though some TLT checks had bounced, taxpayer money was not lost. Mr. Degen said that the Town had hired it's on consultant to serve as the Clerk of the Works and couldn't be happier with them.
2. Mr. Haddad said that he would like re-advertise the Prescott School RFP the following week and asked the Board to vote to allow him to re-issue it.
Ms. Eliot moved to authorize the Town Manager to re-issue the RFP on the Prescott School. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
3. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had received a request from the Fire Chief asking for assistance in buying back some of his Call Firefighter time with Middlesex County to add to his retirement. The cost was approximately \$5,200. He said that he thought it was a reasonable request and asked the Board to consider approving the request.
Mr. Degen moved to fund the requested retirement expenditure which was not to exceed \$5,200. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
4. Mr. Haddad said that the Water Commissioners at their meeting on Tuesday, January 21 voted unanimously against the treatment of Baddacook Pond to control invasive weeds. Mr. Haddad said that he spoke with Town Counsel who said that the Water Commissioners vote was final. Mr. Haddad said that they would be issuing their final decision at their meeting the next night. Mr. Cunningham asked what the appeal course was. Mr. Haddad said that Town Counsel said their decision was final. Mr. Luening said that Baddacook was the largest

natural pond at 35 acres with the majority of it infested by weeds. He said that he understood there was a concern for well contamination but was looking for the Water Commissioners to reconsider.

5. Mr. Haddad said that proposals for the Center Fire Station were due on Thursday, January 23rd. He said that after a lot of initial responses, they had only received one proposal from Steve Webber. Mr. Webber cited in his proposal that he had no definitive plans other than to get the building back on the tax role. He said that he attached a copy of Mr. Webber's letter in the Board's packet adding that they could discuss this further at a future meeting. Mr. Degen said that he was beyond disappointed that they had not received more proposals. He said that he was hoping this would kick start Station Ave. He said that he would like to see the RFP go back out. Mr. Petropoulos asked if they had received feedback from other attendees. Mr. Haddad said they had not. Ms. Eliot said she shared the same thoughts. Mr. Haddad said that he didn't want to sit on another vacant building. Ms. Eliot said that there was not mention of parking in the RFP adding that parking was a limitation. Mr. Degen said that there would be potential parking at the end of Station Ave once GELD took down their building. Mr. Petropoulos said he wasn't sure when the building was planned to come down but thought it was worth looking into.
6. Mr. Haddad said that the Finance Committee would be meeting with the Board on Saturday at 9:00am to start the budget review. He asked if the Board would like for him to do anything based on the School Committee meeting the previous week. Mr. Cunningham said that it didn't sound encouraging. Mr. Degen said that the Chairman of the Finance Committee and himself had a conversation where they thought it would be a good idea to send a letter to the School Committee requesting information like what happened. Mr. Cunningham said that the forensic audit would be important and hopefully provide more information.

FIRE DEPARTMENT STAFFING ISSUE

Mr. Degen said that the group has had 3 meetings to date to determine what staffing levels were before the directive was given to the Fire and Police departments and where they ought to be. Mr. Degen said that they specifically looked at the Fire Department and the staffing levels since 2008-2009. Mr. Degen said that the brush fire and Blood Farm fire had impacted the budget as well as scheduled vacations and time for firefighters to appear in court. Mr. Degen said that there would be a \$35,000 wage overage if the directive remained in place and a \$55-60,000 wage overage without the directive. Mr. Degen said that they had determined it would be best to ask the Town Manager to sit with the Fire and Police Chiefs to reevaluate staffing levels and comeback with any issues. He added that the Town Manager should also go back to the unions to discuss protocol concessions. Mr. Cunningham agreed adding that it was best to let the professionals handle this. Mr. Haddad said that if the Board was comfortable, he would arrange to meet with the Chief's and report back to the Board within the next week or so. Ms. Eliot agreed with having the Town Manager meet with the Chiefs. Mr. Haddad said that they would have budgetary shortfalls no matter what but would work with the Chief to come up with ways to address this. Mr. Degen said that as CFO, Mr. Haddad had fiduciary responsibility to stay on budget and control it. He asked that the Board be informed before action is taken when it came to certain departments. Mr. Degen added that the whole thing had been blown up in the press and no one had been intentionally put in harm's way by the Town Manager. Mr. Cunningham added that the overtime issue was being addressed in the FY15 budget. Mr. Petropoulos said he was approached by the Fire Department to clear up numbers relative to the call on December 23rd and read the following statement:

As part of the presentation that I made to the 1/13/14 Selectmen's meeting I specified Firefighter and EMS response times, and estimated delays resulting from cuts to Full Time Firefighter staffing, including a delay of 26 minutes on 12/25/13. It has come to my attention that this could be taken to imply that it took 26 minutes for both the full time and call members to respond to the initial call. In fact, two engines (one with call fire fighters) were on scene within 5 minutes. The public safety issue rests in the fact that, had the full time staff been at expected levels, an ambulance would have arrived in tandem with the first engine. Instead because of under staffing, a second call for an ambulance had to be made from the scene. The ambulance arrived on scene within 8 minutes of the second call. The 26 minute response was the time that it took from the initial alarm, for the ambulance to arrive on scene.

Mr. Cunningham said that it was a complicated issue and conversations needed to happen between the professionals and that there were better ways to address these situations.

MINUTES

Mr. Petropoulos moved to approve the Special Meeting minutes of December 16, 2013. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session minutes of December 23, 2013. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the Regular Session minutes of January 6, 2014. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Degen moved to approve Part 1 of the Executive Session meeting minutes of December 16, 2013 and not release. Ms. Eliot seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Eliot moved to approve Part 2 of the Executive Session meeting minutes of December 16, 2013 and release them. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

LIASION REPORTS

Ms. Eliot said that the Planning Board was reviewing the zoning bylaw and anyone interested should attend.

Ms. Eliot said that Groton Reads would be reading the book the Art Forger. She asked Mr. Haddad is the Library Director was coming in to speak about the book. Mr. Haddad said that he would invite Vanessa in.

Mr. Degen moved to enter in Executive Session and not return to Open Session. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. Degen-aye; Petropoulos-aye; Eliot-aye; Cunningham-aye

Approved: _____

Anna Eliot, Clerk

Date Approved: 2/24/14

respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant