

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES MARCH 30, 2015
APPROVED**

Present: Anna Eliot, Vice Chair; Stuart M. Schulman, Clerk; Peter S. Cunningham, Member; John G. Petropoulos, Member

Absent: Joshua A. Degen

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

Ms. Eliot called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. Eliot said that she wanted to recognize a few people that had passed away recently. She said Aldo Luca, former Town Treasurer, Bennett Black, former Fire Chief, Peter Moller, local carpenter and father to a current employee Hannah Moller, Irene Collette, Michelle Collette's mother-in-law, and resident Arthur Blackman. Mr. Cunningham said that all those individuals named touched the fabric of our community.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Delaney had been in search of a new Highway Mechanic. Mr. Delaney had been working with Ms. Doig on the search. Based on this search, Mr. Delaney was recommending that he appoint Rafael Martinez of Lowell, MA to the position of Highway Mechanic. He respectfully requested that the Board ratify the appointment. Mr. Delaney added that Mr. Martinez was coming to them from the LRTA where he was a mechanic.

Mr. Schulman moved to ratify the appointment of Rafael Martinez as a Mechanic in the Department of Public Works. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad reminded the Board that they were scheduled for a workshop on Thursday night at 5:30pm.
3. Mr. Haddad said that he was foregoing item #4 on his Town Manager's report at the request of the committee and would bring it back to a future meeting.
4. Mr. Haddad said that Article 19 in the Warrant addressed proposed line item transfers. He said that this year there were a lot less requests adding it was a testament to the department heads.

HANSCOM'S DESIGNATED FLIGHT TRAINING

Mr. David McCoy said that he had lived in Ayer for 20 years near the Groton town-line. He said that the issue was both in Groton and Ayer. He said that Groton and Ayer were the only two towns that have been advertised as places to conduct training. He said that pilots conducting the training were flying dangerously and were noisy in their flight training maneuvers. He said that he was present to ask the Board to sign a letter addressed to the Commonwealth asking them to assist in this matter. He said that it was a very complex issue and what they were doing was asking Mass Aeronautics to enforce the two regulations he believed they were violating.

Mr. Schulman said that he was not aware of any issues. He said that the letter that was proposed cited negligent operation and asked for some specifics to be provided. Mr. McCoy said that the pilots were negligent but not always. He said that he had documented videos along with a group set up many years ago to look into this training. He said that that group had since dissolved but he and his neighbors in 1998 started

another group named Stop the Noise. He said that East Coast Aero Club was the biggest violator. He said he had met with the FAA and they had done nothing to help them. Mr. McCoy said that he had even videoed them flying outside of Town Hall the day before. Mr. Schulman said that from his point of view, some of it appeared legal. Mr. McCoy said that it took them a long time to find out what was legal and what was not legal. He said he hoped Mass Aeronautics would enforce the regulations on their books.

Mr. Cunningham said that he felt uncomfortable signing a letter. He said that he lived in that vicinity and didn't see examples of where they had been flying below acceptable limits. Mr. McCoy said that the noise from the maneuvers was there adding that aircraft had even flown right about the roof of his home. He said it was a concentrated nuisance. Mr. Cunningham said that he wasn't sure if there was much they could do other than to ask that the possible violations be looked in to. Mr. McCoy said that he had constitutional rights to enjoy his home peacefully. He said that the flight schools were out of Nashua, Bedford and Norwood.

Mr. Petropoulos said it was obvious how much it bother Mr. McCoy adding he didn't think he could sign a letter about buzzing noises. He asked if Mr. McCoy could provide evidence of how they were flying below regulations. Mr. McCoy said that the plans fly through triangulations and through the tops of trees. He said that some flights take place at 2,500-3,000 feet adding that the noise was also a contributing factor. Mr. Greg Sheldon said that he lived off Old Dunstable Road. He said that he had observed helicopters doing grids but even though he found it annoying, he observed it and moved on.

Mr. Marshall Giguere said that the federal airspace began at 400 feet above ground level. He showed a map that depicted, in yellow, where congested airspace was adding that Groton was not in the yellow shaded area. He said that no one should fly below the regulated limits adding that 500 feet was the rules he and other pilots flew by but power outs were special circumstances. He said that stall outs were typically practiced at 3,500 feet to allow for more room. He said that most pilots he knew would not conduct themselves in this manner adding he couldn't speak for East Coast. Ms. Susan Wilcox from Martins Pond Road said that pilots often fly around and around their area of town also. She said they hear planes all the time adding it wouldn't hurt to have the Selectmen support this cause. Ms. Francoise Forbes said she was a member of the dissolved group Plan Sense. She said she lives on Baddacook Pond where during the summer not five minutes goes by without hearing a plane. She said it had eased up over the past few years but came back last year with the noisiest times being when they cut their engines. She said Groton was called the practice area and was popular because of the golf ball at MIT. She too thought it would be nice if others got behind this.

Mr. Schulman said that he listened to a few complaints about noise over the past few years including the gun range adding he would not object to signing a letter. He thought the chief argument was enforcement. Mr. Haddad said that he could clean up the letter and bring it back to the Board at a future meeting.

UPDATE – MUNICIPAL BUILDING COMMITTEE FOR PRESCOTT SCHOOL

Mr. Sheldon said that he was present to report on the work of the Committee. He said they began their work in January and with a Committee of ten (10) but had since reduced to seven (7). He said that they recommended maintaining with the current membership of seven (7). He said that the Committee meets every two weeks as a full Committee. He said they organized two (2) sub committees; one for research and analysis and the other for public engagement. He said that the Committee plans to produce a video at no cost to present to the Town along with a final report that they plan to provide later in the fall. He said that they were in the early stages of public outreach and would be holding an Open House on Saturday, May 2 from 9am-12pm. He said the Friends of Prescott had attended all meetings and volunteered to help. Mr. Haddad said that he too had been attending their meetings and thought they were a good, hard working group. Mr. Cunningham said he too was impressed by their work thus far and asked if any ideas had emerged yet. Mr. Sheldon said it was too early to

say adding they were keeping an open mind. Mr. Cunningham asked if they were able to find other town comparables. Mr. Sheldon said that the Coolidge School in Maynard was built in 1929 and was recently home to the school district offices. He said they were also looking at a building in Grafton, Concord and a couple in Lexington. Mr. Schulman said he was looking forward to what comes out of it. He asked if anything the past Committee did could be used. Mr. Sheldon said that he carried around the report that was put together by the last Committee.

WARRANT – PUBLIC HEARING

Mr. Schulman moved to continue the public hearing on the warrant. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Haddad said that the Finance Committee voted the majority of the budget with the exception of Public Safety because they were waiting on the School Resource Officer. Mr. Haddad asked the Board if they wanted to take a position on Article 3. Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Schulman and Ms. Eliot were in support. Mr. Petropoulos said that revenue growth had increased by 4.55%; municipal growth had increased by 4.57%; the GDRSD had increased by 3.48% and GDRSD debt had decreased by 5.3%. He said the overall budget with the schools had increased by 3.62%. Mr. Haddad said that the schools make up 55% of the budget. Mr. Petropoulos said that wages drive growth. Mr. Haddad added that benefits did also. Mr. Cunningham said that these three bylaw employees probably did not drive the growth. Mr. Petropoulos said that he took a stand that the budget could not grow faster than the revenue. Mr. Petropoulos said he would support this article.

Mr. Haddad said that some of the Board needed to take a position on Article 4. Ms. Eliot and Mr. Degen deferred to Town Meeting.

Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Eliot needed to take a position on Article 6. Ms. Eliot said she would support the article.

Mr. Haddad said that the Board needed to take a position on Article 8. He said that Finance Committee had taken a position on everything but Public Safety as they wanted more info on the School Resource Officer. He said there was one abstention on general government. Mr. Schulman said he looked to the Finance Committee. Mr. Cunningham said he would defer adding he was in support of the position.

Ms. Eliot and Mr. Petropoulos were in favor of the capital budget, Article 9.

Ms. Haddad said that a couple of Board members needed to take a position on Article 10. Mr. Haddad said the Finance Committee was unanimous in support of this. Mr. Petropoulos and Ms. Eliot were in favor of this article.

Mr. Haddad said he would be opening the bids for the Fire Protection on Thursday at 1pm and asked the Board to wait to take a position until the following week. He said that Finance Committee was 5-1 in favor of the article.

Mr. Haddad said Articles 12-15 were on the Four Corners Sewer Project. He said that he had a meeting with the residents that day to update them and met with the businesses the week before. He said that that Board has been asking for commitments in writing. He said that he was currently waiting to hear from Catalano, Mr. Wong was not formally taking a position, and New England Power was not in favor as they have no plans to develop at this time. He said that they also sent Shaw's the information they requested but had not heard back yet. Mr. Haddad said that he was also going to be applying for a State grant seeking funding for economic

development. He said the only contingency with applying is that the project would need to be shovel ready. Having the project shovel ready would be crucial in having the application looked at by the State. He said that there was no guarantee but thought it should go to Town Meeting for a vote. He said that Article 13 had been worded in that the Town would appropriate the entire amount of money but construction would be contingent on receipt of the grant; like what was done with Ledge Rock Fields. He added that they were not prohibited from applying in future years if they did not receive the grant this year.

Mr. Petropoulos asked if they had asked anyone if they objected. Mr. Haddad said that Mr. Wong would not put anything in writing. Mr. Petropoulos said that he was not in favor of taxpayers paying for engineering costs on something this is not guaranteed. He said that he was not qualified to say that this would spur economic development and didn't want to risk taxpayer money. Ms. Eliot said that she was very much in favor of this adding that they were driving businesses out of town. She said that Mr. Myette was leaving town and a medical office was being built on his property which was on sewer. She said she was at the High School the week before where teachers there told her they needed more businesses in Town to help lower the taxes. Ms. Eliot said that they had the obligation to fulfill the vision of the master plan which was voted on by the voters. Mr. Cunningham said that they were never going to get a definitive number on potential tax revenue until the end of the day. He said they took a leap of faith at RiverCourt by stepping up as a community to improve the infrastructure. Mr. Petropoulos agreed but added that they could find out. He also thought they could get the businesses to commit. Mr. Cunningham said that they could not get the numbers Mr. Petropoulos wanted for Town Meeting. He said it would be general revenue for the Town and would not increase the schools like residential development would.

Mr. Haddad asked the Board to support Article 15 which was to designate the Four Corners area as an Economic Opportunity Area to help the businesses with relief from the State. The Board was unanimously in support of this.

Mr. Haddad said Article 18 was for parking on Station Ave. He said they held an Executive Session that night to discuss working to partner with Mr. McElroy to purchase and repair the lot. He said Mr. McElroy would pay for everything and leasing it back to the Town. He wanted to take a moment to thank Mr. Webber for agreeing to work with the Town and Mr. McElroy. The Board was unanimous in its support of this.

Mr. Haddad said that Article 19 was line item transfers. He said that some of the transfers included additional money for mechanic inspectors' salaries, sealer of weights and measures fees, legal expenses, etc. Mr. Haddad said that he was proposing \$32,000 be transferred from Country Club wages to expenses due to shifting of employees. He said that the improvements at the Country Club were being made to things such as the locker rooms adding he wanted to give the new GM/Head Professional everything he needed to succeed. Mr. Haddad said that leasing out the function hall also freed up some expenses. He said another request under the line item transfers was for \$20,000 for new pool chairs at the club. Mr. Haddad said that they would still have healthy free cash after Town Meeting.

Mr. Haddad said that Article 20 was related to the snow and ice deficit. He said that they budgeted \$200,000 for deficit spending but were well over \$300,000 now. He said that the Assessors' had released \$175,000 in overlay reserve that he would like to appropriate toward snow and ice. Mr. Haddad said overlay reserve money allowed for abatements and the senior work program. He said that if they don't use it, it just sits in the account until it is released. The Board was unanimous in its support.

The Board was unanimous in its support of Articles 21, 22 and 23. Ms. Eliot supported Article 26. The Board was unanimous in its support of Article 29. Mr. Haddad said that the CPC had recommended that all projects

go to Town Meeting. The Finance Committee was in support of all but the Conservation Commission's request. Mr. Petropoulos said that they needed to start talking about at what point they had purchased enough land.

The Board was unanimous in its support of project A; project B they deferred until Town Meeting; project C, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Schulman and Ms. Eliot disclosed that they were all members of the parish. Mr. Schulman said he had filed paperwork with the Town Clerk adding he had no financial interest in it. Mr. Cunningham said that the Board wrote a letter in support of this last year.

Mr. James Moisson, chair of the buildings and grounds at the Old Meetinghouse said that their request for \$200,000 was very important to the restoration of the meetinghouse. He said this was the oldest piece in the Town. He said that they had risen over \$50,000 privately to put towards this project. Ms. June Johnson said that this was the church of the Town. She said the Town gathered in the Church to make agreements. She said a land court documents in 1986 declared the common area as owned by the Town but the building would be in the name of the church. If the church were not to be used, the ownership would revert back to the Town. Mr. Cunningham said that church and state were once one adding that the supports in the building were crucial and needed to be repaired. Mr. Petropoulos asked what would buffer against cost overruns. Mr. Moisson said that they had hired professionals that could see things they could not and would deal with things as they arise. The Board was unanimous in its support of this.

The Board was unanimous in its support of projects D, E, F and G. The Board was also unanimous in its support of Article 31, and 32, the Planning Board's zoning articles. The Board was also unanimous in its support of Article 33, a Citizen's Petition for rezoning.

Mr. Schulman moved to adjourn at 9:13pm. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Approved: _____

Stuart Schulman, Clerk

respectfully *submitted*,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 6/9/15