

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
MINUTES NOVEMBER 14, 2016
APPROVED**

BOS Members Present: John G. Petropoulos, Chair; Joshua A. Degen, Vice Chair; Barry Pease, Clerk; Anna Eliot, Member; Peter S. Cunningham, Member

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

Mr. Petropoulos called the meeting to order at 5:32pm.

Mr. Degen moved to enter into Executive Session pursuant to MGL c.30A, §21, Clause 1 "To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges against, a public official, staff member or individual" citing the review of a complaint for inappropriate use of authority. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. Roll Call: Cunningham-aye; Degen-aye; Petropoulos-aye; Pease-aye; Eliot-abstained because of the process used here.

Mr. Cunningham moved to end the Executive Session at 6:33pm and take brief adjournment before their Regular Session at 7pm. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Roll Call: Degen-aye; Pease-aye; Cunningham-aye; Eliot-aye; Petropoulos-aye.

Mr. Petropoulos called the Regular Session meeting to order at 7:00pm and reviewed the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Haddad said that last fall, the Town was not successful in obtaining the MassWorks grant to begin the project. He said that this year, they worked very closely with the Town of Ayer, Southcoast Development, Representative Harrington, Senator Donoghue, Ms. Eliot, Mr. Orcutt, Mr. Delaney, and Ms. Bonavita worked hard on what Ms. Collette had built last year. He said that they received word that day that we received the grant for approximately \$2M. Mr. Haddad said that Secretary Ash was coming out on Friday at 3:30pm to make the award. Ms. Eliot thanked the Economic Development Committee for their work on this. Mr. Pease said that he thought there was good collaboration here and looked forward to seeing them break ground. Mr. Degen congratulated Mr. Haddad for his perseverance of this grant adding this had been on his front burner all along. Mr. Petropoulos also thanked Mr. Haddad for not giving up on this.

Mr. Degen said that from 10-2pm on Saturday, Williams Barn would be holding their Holiday Market and encouraged people to support the local farmers.

Ms. Eliot thanked Mr. Don Black for a well-attended Veteran's Day celebration last Saturday.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Jack Risdon said that he heard that the Fire Association wanted to donate the sportsmen club land to the seniors for more land adjacent to the senior center. He said that seniors could not get out onto Station Ave. and didn't think moving the center to the Prescott School was a good idea.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Haddad said that Ms. Berta Erickson had inquired about the possibility of the Woman's Club decorating the trees on Prescott Common. He said that Ms. Erickson had said she would raise the funds for the lights. Ms. Erickson said that she could not say enough about the light department and their willingness to provide electricity (needs to be set up) and the cords at no cost. She said that Rick Sargent was generously donating the lights if the Town could not afford it or he would split it with the Town. She said that 37 strands of lights were needed at a cost of \$555. Mr. Haddad said that with the Board's okay, he could try to find the money to split the cost of the lights. Ms. Erickson said that 2 large trees and 3 small bushes had been chosen. Mr. Pease said he would personally donate \$100. Mr. Prest said he would donate the balance of \$455. Mr. Degen said he was not going to vote on this and abstained completely. Mr. Petropoulos suggested waiting a week to take any action on this because it wasn't listed on the agenda and didn't want them to violate the open meeting law. Ms. Erickson said that time was of the essence.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they waive their normal procedure of not acting on an item not listed on their agenda and take action on this request. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. Mr. Petropoulos said that they had open meeting laws they should be following adding they should not act on items not listed on their agenda. He said he had no objection to this request but wanted to follow procedure.

Ms. Sartini said that the Groton Garden Club maintains the Prescott Common and suggested that they be consulted with about this also. She said they could possibly join and help with this. Mr. Pease asked who had authority over this. Mr. Haddad said that buildings and grounds were under his control but preferred to defer to the Board. Ms. Eliot thanked Ms. Erickson for presenting this wonderful idea.

The motion made by Mr. Cunningham, seconded by Mr. Pease carried 3-2 in favor with Cunningham, Eliot and Pease voting in favor and Petropoulos and Degen voting against.

Mr. Pease made a motion to approve placement of holiday lights on Prescott Common contingent on a discussion amongst the Garden Club and Woman's Club and then withdrew his motion.

Mr. Cunningham moved to grant permission to install holiday lights on Prescott Common after consultation with other interested parties. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. Mr. Petropoulos said he believed this vote was in violation of the Open Meeting Law and said he could not participate. The motion carried 3-1-0 in favor with Cunningham, Pease and Eliot in favor, Petropoulos against and Degen silent on the motion.

Mr. Cunningham extended a big thank you to Mr. Pease and Mr. Prest for their generous donation.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

1. Mr. Haddad said that they had received interest from four (4) people for three (3) vacancies and would be bringing the individuals in for interviews at their next meeting.

Mr. Degen moved to appoint Bud Robertson and Alison Manugian to the Audit Review Committee with a term to expire upon completion of review and completion with the chosen auditor. Mr. Pease seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Mr. Haddad said that the quarterly update showed that they were continuing to spend within their needs. He said that there was one additional pay period last year and the reason they were on target this year. Mr. Haddad thought they were in good shape financially. Mr. Pease said that the local meals tax was exceeding what he would had expected. Mr. Haddad said that salaries in the public safety departments were tracking pretty good right now. Mr. Petropoulos questioned motor vehicle excise. Ms. Dufresne said that she spoke to Mr. Hartnett who said they were going to be fine adding the big commitment had not gone out yet.
3. Mr. Haddad said that the Local Cultural Council was recommending that Cathy Delaney be appointed to the Local Cultural Council term to expire June 30, 2020 and asked the Board to consider making that appointment.

Mr. Degen made the motion. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Mr. Haddad said that the Board had the first draft of their Goals and Objectives. He said that he sent the Board an email the week before letting them know they had decided to consider 24 goals which he personally thought was a lot. He said if they had too many, there's the potential they won't do them well. He said he spoke to the Chair who shared the concern. Mr. Haddad said that he sent the Board their goals and asked them to rank them and recommended that they focus on the top 10. Mr. Degen suggested that they hone it down to the top 12-14, half of the original list. Mr. Pease pointed out that Ms. Eliot had not submitted her rankings. Ms. Eliot said that she would go along with the rankings the

other members had done. Mr. Cunningham said that he would like to include number 14. Mr. Pease said that it was a clear cut off after that and agreed with Mr. Cunningham. Mr. Petropoulos said he was good with numbers 1-14.

Mr. Prest said he was concerned there was nothing revenue related in these. He said he was concerned that the work of the Sustainable Budget Committee would be ignored. Mr. Pease said that he saw that fitting in within the strategic plan development adding he hoped the Economic Development Committee could help with that. Mr. Petropoulos said that the benchmark could include economic development or revenue stream. Mr. Degen agreed. Mr. Cunningham had no objection to including revenue in benchmark.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they adopt the top 14 goals for FY2017. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Mr. Haddad said that they were ready to close on Squannacook Hall and asked the Board to approve and sign the P&S. He said that the closing would be scheduled once the Board and Mr. Platt sign off on it.

Mr. Degen moved that they approve P&S for Squannacook Hall. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion.

Ms. Eliot asked about failure to provide title. Mr. Haddad said that Town Counsel signed off on that. Mr. Pease asked why this took so long. Mr. Haddad said that because of permitting with the Planning Board, church parking issues, and septic issues.

The motion carried unanimously.

6. Mr. Haddad said that the FY2018 budgets were due on Monday and the presentation schedule had been set. He said it was good to have members sit in on the deliberations if they were available to do so. Mr. Haddad said he was concerned about the guidance given to the Superintendent adding they would have to remain at a zero percent increase on the municipal side for a balanced budget without an override. He said that it was going to be difficult for him to submit a balanced budget because of the guidance from the schools. Mr. Robertson said that what they said would only work with zero on municipal side or override. Mr. Haddad said that they were projecting \$1M in new revenue next year adding they had received bad news on health insurance and pension last week.

Mr. Degen said that he had not heard back from the School Committee members he spoke to about quarterly meetings. He said it was imperative that they meet with this Board to talk about their budgets. He said that they needed to understand what the needs and wants were to understand what they were all facing. Mr. Petropoulos said that the School Committee had access to understanding this through Ms. Manugian who serves on the Sustainable Budget Committee. Mr. Cunningham agreed that they needed to continue meeting with them. Mr. Pease asked if they should request time on their agenda adding he didn't like beckoning other committees to sit with them.

Mr. Prest said he heard the teacher's union was the hardest union in the State adding that the municipal side was going to want what the teachers get. Mr. Degen said that they had to start somewhere. Mr. Petropoulos said he didn't want to discuss that here. Mr. Degen disagreed adding that employee salaries were the biggest expense. He said that guidance needed to come from the top down adding they had a representative this time around. He said that they needed to send guidance to Mr. Haddad and that guidance was that the teachers and other employees salary increases needed to remain with the levy limit. Mr. Robertson said that the School Committee understood the math behind the problem and understood that wages was the biggest issue. Mr. Petropoulos asked if the balanced budget needed to include the schools. Mr. Haddad said that it needed to include the assessment for the school department. He said that his budget was due Dec 31st but the schools were not sure until sometime in March. He said he was trying to keep communication open between the Town and Schools but because they were going to be in-between superintendents and

bargaining issues it was going to be hard to get ahead of it this year. Mr. Haddad said that he was responsible for balanced budget at 2.4%. Mr. Degen added 1.2% and zero also. Mr. Haddad said he was worried about pension and health insurance increases that were potentially going to be larger than anticipated.

7. Mr. Haddad said that he obtained an opinion from Town Counsel on Regional School Department leasing space from a third party in a Town owned building. Mr. Haddad said that the Regional Agreement would need to be amended because it's still a town owned building. He said that this could change the proposal made by the Friends of Prescott adding that they believed they could charge rent. Mr. Degen said that the Regional Agreement Committee was meeting the following Tuesday to ratify the agreement that had been approved by DESE's legal counsel. He said that ratification required a unanimous vote of the Committee. He said that if they wanted to bring this forward, it would have to be approved by the Committee and brought back to DESE. The School Committee had final say after that. Mr. Pease agreed with Mr. Degen adding that he encouraged them to ask Mr. Degen to bring this forward as the BOS designee but was not hopeful the Committee would reopen the agreement.

Mr. Cunningham moved that they direct their representative to the Regional Agreement Committee, Mr. Degen, to approach the Committee for new wording in the agreement that allows for rent to be charged. Mr. Petropoulos seconded the motion.

Mr. Degen said that he would need proposed language to bring forward. Mr. Pease said he needed to abstain as the Finance Committee's representative. Mr. Petropoulos said that Mr. Pease would be voting as a member of the Board of Selectmen.

The motion carried 4-0-1 with Mr. Pease abstaining.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Eliot said that they had the opportunity to work collaboratively with the applicant for Indian Hill on the intersection at 119 and Old Ayer Road. Mr. Degen said he asked for it to be an agenda item. Mr. Haddad said it would be on their next meeting agenda.

Mr. Petropoulos said that when there was a lot going on about Syrian refugees a year ago, he thought about what their town could do to get involved in those discussions. He said that they were not the kind of community that got exposed to things that maybe going on throughout the country that because of the makeup but wanted to them as a Board to think about what they could do to make Groton continue to look inviting to all. He asked the Board to allow him to work with Mr. Haddad on what they could do to provide a good and safer environment. Mr. Degen said that the Town had an Interfaith Council which was a great outreach. Mr. Cunningham said that they needed to rely the message that hate crimes were not tolerated in town and won't be tolerated. Ms. Eliot said that there was a refugee center in Lowell that had dealt with a lot of Iraqi refugees as an example.

Mr. Pease moved to authorize Mr. Petropoulos to run a vision forward and bring forward potential action items for further discussion. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

LIAISON REPORTS

Mr. Cunningham said that the first kickoff meeting of Town Meeting Senior Center Review Committee occurred adding it was a productive meeting.

Mr. Pease said that it had a meeting that day with IT adding he would provide an update at a future meeting.

MINUTES

Ms. Eliot moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 24, 2016. Mr. Degen seconded the motion. Mr. Degen had a change and moved to accept the minutes as amended. Mr. Cunningham seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:49pm.

Approved: _____
Barry Pease, Clerk

_____ respectfully submitted,
Dawn Dunbar, Executive Assistant

Date Approved: 12/5/16