Town of West Brookfield-Board of Selectmen

Minutes of Meeting - Regular Session – December 22, 2015

LOCATION: Lower Level Conference Meeting Room – Town Hall  TIME: 6:30PM
PRESENT: Diane Vayda & John Tivnan – Selectmen, Johanna Swain – Executive Secretary and members of the press & cable tv.

Call To Order: 6:30PM - The meeting was called to order by Diane at 6:30 pm

Senator Anne M. Gobi presented Marie Arsenault, Town Accountant, with a retirement plaque. The Board congratulated Ms. Arsenault on her retirement.

Accept Minutes:
John motioned to accept the Minutes of November 19, 2015 (Executive Session). Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

David Brown, Steve and Louise Garwood – Plowing of Rodman Road:
Mr. Brown and Mr. & Mrs. Garwood asked the Board to consider having the Town continue to plow their road. They stated that the way had been plowed for the past 60 years. The further stated that the Town used to pave the way. Highway Superintendent Daley wrote the Board stating that the road would be plowed with an F450 and a 9' plow/2.5 yard sander weighing approximately 15,500 lbs. “...I do not recommend we plow over the bridge. If we have plowed over the bridge in the past it was without my authorization.” After some discussion, the Board agreed to speak with the Highway Superintendent again before rendering a decision.

Advisory Committee & QRMHS District Officials:
(Christine Long – Secretary to Advisory Committee, L. Loughlin, R. Gobi, T. Lang, B. Blouzze and B. Hibbard – Advisory Committee Members, Colleen Mucha – Principal WBES, Dr. Brett Kustigian – Superintendent QRMHS, Camie Lamica – Business Manager QRMHS and C. Fountian – School Committee Member)
Dr. Kustigian presented a brief slide presentation relating to the School District and its budget. Mr. Hibbard stated that there is no question that the school system is good but the Town simply cannot afford it. The School District will need to tighten its belt. Mr. Blouzze stated that the School District needs to think “outside of the box” when it comes to special education, regionalization and school choice. Dr. Kustigian stated that they are trying to educate people with user friendly information that the Chapter 70 formula is broken. State money simply is not available. He further stated that the Town and School District need to “weather the storm” with the hopes that the legislators repair the formula. Ms. Loughlin stated that both entities need sustainability. She stated that both entities need to put their best package forward and unfortunately this is going to mean cuts for both. Diane stated that everyone needs to work together and that she agrees with the sentiments of Ms. Loughlin. John stated that the Ability To Pay formula is weighed incorrectly. Dr. Kustigian stated that his elderly parents who reside in Town were asking him if he was going to be raising their taxes. He is supportive of installing a Senior Tax Write Off/Work Off Program. T. Lang stated that the Town should encourage more business in Town to elevate the income of the Town. Diane asked how often the school budget group was meeting. Dr. Kustigian stated that they are currently meeting once a month; but will meet more frequently as the numbers are released from the State. He stated that he would keep the Town “in the loop”. Ms. Loughlin asked what the next step should be. Programs and staffing will need to be cut. John stated that this was true for both entities. Diane stated that each entity needs to have transparency. Mr. Gobi asked the School District to look into potential transportation savings; stating that the busses did not appear full to him. Ms. Lamica stated that the parameters for the bussing contracts would be addressed along with the insertion of a fuel escalation clause.

The Board stated that they would support a $400,000 override but would need to have a strategy regarding the division of funds prior to the ATM and Election.

The Board stated that they were considering inserting an article to adopt a local meals tax. This would create a new recurring revenue stream for the Town.

The Board stated that they were considering placing an article on the upcoming ATM for a Senior Tax Write Off/Work Off Program to assist elderly residence with inflation in their taxes.

Wickaboag Sportsmen’s Club – Special Use Permit:
John motioned to approve a Special Use Permit for January 24, 2016 for the Wickaboag Sportsmen’s Club. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Director Council On Aging:
The Board noted that the COA Director’s job vacancy had been posted and is due into the Board by December 31, 2015.
Town Accountant Job Transition:
The Board agreed to post the Town Accountant vacancy for seven (7) business days in an effort to comply with the Town’s bylaws.

Potential Fire Grant Application(s):
The Board asked the Executive Secretary to obtain the award date and the timeline for providing matching funds.

At the request of the Fire Chief, John motioned to accept the donation of an ARGO 750 HDI w/75-5 CHAT Drop In with Foam from SOLTAGE as a voluntary gift to the Town, not in exchange for any promise or undertaking by the Town. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Smokestack Lightning, Inc. — Complementary Site Inspection:
John motioned to allow Smokestack Lightning, Inc. to perform a complementary site inspection of the lightning rods on the Town Hall. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Petrini & Associates, PC – Town Counsel Services:
The Board agreed to wait until all three Selectmen were present to make a decision on counsel.

Officer Bonnayer — Application for Professional Coursework:
John motioned to approve Officer Bonnayer's request for professional coursework (Correctional Policy/Practice); as submitted. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Historical Commission – Town Hall Maintenance Plan:
The Board reviewed correspondence from the Historical Commission relating to the upkeep and maintenance of the Town Hall. The Board agreed to send a letter to the Historical Commission acknowledging their outline of items to be accomplished.

John motioned to adjourn at approximately 8:00pm. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted:

Chairman

Vice Chairman

Clerk