Town of West Brookfield-Board of Selectmen
Minutes of Meeting - Regular Session – February 14, 2017
LOCATION: Lower Level Conference Meeting Room, Town Hall – Town Hall TIME: 6:30PM
PRESENT: Sarah Allen, John Tivnan & Diane Vayda – Selectmen.

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

ACCEPT MINUTES:
John motioned to accept the Minutes of February 4, 2017 (Regular Session). Second Diane. Diane questioned why the Library Director advertisement did not require a Library Science Degree or something similar. John noted that the current Director emailed the Board stating that there are no library science Bachelor’s programs that are accredited by the American Library Association. The Board voted unanimously.

John motioned to accept the Minutes of February 4, 2017 (Executive Session). Diane second. The Board voted unanimously.

Town Manager Study Committee – Final Report:
(*Alix McNitt, Rob White, Jennifer Goodale & George Hibbard – Committee Members; Phil Landine and Tom Long – Advisory Committee Members)

Alix stated that the Committee was unhappy to hear that a Town Manager or Town Administrator (TA) would have no control over an elected official. Alix stated that the Committee felt as though a Town Manager’s post would be overkill for a town the size of West Brookfield. The Committee agreed that they would recommend a Town Administrator; a job title change and a job description change. The Committee recommended a TA to manage the town personnel on a day to day basis. The Committee recommended that two key positions be changed from elected to appointed; being Treasurer and Tax Collector. The Committee recommended that the BOS place articles on the upcoming election ballot and Annual Town Meeting warrant. The Committee also recommended combining these two positions; paying just one salary. The Committee recommended hiring an Assistant for the post. Alix stated that MGL allows those currently holding the elected posts to retain their positions until their respective terms expire; should these changes be approved by the voters. Rob stated that he liked being on the Committee. He stated that elected v. appointed has its challenges. He supported the appointed v. elected because elected individuals may not have the skill required to accomplish the job. Alix stated that she would like to use the Town Website to educate the voters. Sarah stated that the Town’s Website could not be used to sway an election vote. Sarah further stated that the West Brookfield FACEBOOK Page is not a Town managed site. Sarah stated that discussion could take place at the Town Meeting. Alix stated that the Committee believed that changing from elected to appointed would provide the ability for greater oversight. John stated that the current Tax Collector has a 90% collection rate. Rob stated that he was concerned about someone getting elected that does not have the required skill set. Jennifer stated that oversight of the day to day operations should realize savings. John stated that formulas have changes and that the Town’s cherry sheet money has been reduced. These changes are the “real culprit”. Alix stated that the auditors noted issues with overpayments, 2014 excise issues and that the Treasurer had hired an outside company to train her. Jennifer stated that the TA would be tasked with creating short and long term planning goals. She further stated that a top priority of the TA would be to replenish the Towns Stabilization Account. Rob noted the decline in stabilization was attributed to a multitude of reasons but that hiring someone with specialized skills should help with the finances. Diane asked that if the recommended shift from elected to appointed fails would hiring a TA be a “non issue”? Alix stated that it was discussed and it is in the report. Alix stated that all of these recommendations are inter-related. The Tax Collector and Treasurer are really the root of the problem. Diane stated that she believes that human resources is a big reason for a TA. Alix stated that the Town’s legal bills were extremely high and that a TA could keep these costs down. Diane stated that there are several other areas that can be utilized for legal advice; noting the law library. John stated that a TA could not mediate or arbitrate legal issues and that the BOS currently relies on legal when necessary. Rob stated that the BOS will fully realize the recommendation by changing elected to appointed. Alix asked to have the Town Managers Study Committee listed as co-sponsors of the elected v. appointed articles. Alix asked if the Town could put information in the Annual Town Meeting Warrant mailing to educate voters on the ballott questions. Sarah stated that the Town could not put information in the Warrant; under the Campaign and Finance guidelines. Alix stated that the Committee felt as though the policy and personnel issues should remain with the BOS. The Committee included samples of job descriptions, a sample TA Contract and
comparison spreadsheet of costs. John thanked the Committee. Sarah asked for more information on a chart included in the report. Alix provided clarity. Sarah asked what the difference was between an Executive Secretary and TA. Alix stated that the titles are interchangeable under MGL c41 s23a. Job descriptions would create differences; but both have the same authority. Tom Long stated that everyone is excited about this and that it needs the support of the entire Board. Diane thanked the Committee and stated that she hopes that they will serve on the search committee. John motioned to take the report under advisement. Second Diane. The Board voted unanimously.

Amy Dugas, Chair AFHFC:
Amy wrote the Board to inform them that the Committee had selected May 20, 2017 for the AFHF. The Board questioned the use of a shuttle and the potential liability. The Board agreed to contact legal counsel for an opinion.

T Barrett, Computer Tech Committee – Request to Dispose of Equipment Valued Under $5,000:
Terri wrote the Board to request permission to dispose of various monitors, keyboards, cords, computers and other outdated equipment currently in the custody of the Technology Committee. Diane motioned to approve the disposal of the obsolete equipment. Second John. The Board voted unanimously.

Revised Personnel Policy:
(*Sarah recused herself) Diane stated that she wanted to hold off taking a vote on the revised policy as she wanted to include office hours, language stating that advertisements & notices are posted on-line and a Stipend Withdrawal Policy; which is in progress. John agreed to wait, asking Diane to come up with the language she wished to include.

Town Accountant Vacancy:
The Board agreed to post the Town Accountant vacancy in the Worcester Telegram, Springfield Republican and online in the Beacon. The Board agreed to start reviewing resumes on March 6th.

Executive Session (Requested PT Help for Police & AFSCME Grievances):
Diane motioned to go into Executive Session under reasons #3 to discuss the request for part time hires for the police department and to review and respond to several AFSCME Union grievances. The Board noted that they will adjourn directly thereafter. It was further noted that Officer M. Letendre would be included in the police portion of the Executive Session. Second John. The Board voted John – yes, Diane – yes and Sarah – yes.
(*Executive Session Minutes are kept separately.)

Diane motioned to recess the meeting until Wednesday, February 15, 2017 at 10:00am in the Selectmen’s Office. Second John. The Board voted unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signatures]