

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 18, 2015**

Present: First Selectman Edward G. McAnaney, Joanne Sullivan, Brian Fitzgerald, Timothy Reynolds and Ed Basile. Also in attendance were Human Resources Director Katherine Christopher, Fire Chief Chuck Flynn. First Selectman McAnaney called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes from February 4, 2015 Regular Meeting

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to accept the minutes of the February 4, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen (BoS). Vote 5-0 in favor.

Public Comment: None

Update from Bridge Street School Ad-hoc Committee

Krystal Holmes and Beth Chaftez, members of the Bridge Street School Ad-hoc Committee provided the Selectmen with their Business Plan. They will be making a presentation to the Board of Finance on March 9th. The committee believes that Bridge Street School can be renovated to become an effective community center. Ms. Holmes noted that Bridge Street School use has been discussed for 10 years. The group completed a needs assessment and determined that there is a need for a community center. They need space for daytime programs and daytime playgrounds. The proposal includes about 24,000 square feet of space including a gym addition. The project will cost about \$8.3 Million. The document includes a bonding projection. The report shows that within 5 years Parks and Recreation will be able to fully sustain the operating costs of the building. Selectman Reynolds stated that he hopes the project gets to a referendum to allow the voters to make the final decision. Selectman Fitzgerald noted that the BoF has to recommend the appropriation of funds. Selectman Sullivan said the committee did a great job and she hopes that the Selectmen keep an open mind as they review the document.

Update from HR Director Katherine Christopher regarding administrative changes implemented for cost savings.

Ms. Christopher was hired by the Town about fourteen months ago. In that time she has done an assessment and RFP for an insurance broker and ultimately the Town changed to MDG. This change with a locked in rate has yielded a savings of \$14,000 annually. She also found a more cost effective provider for Health, Life, STD and LTD which will yield \$11,000 in annual savings for the next three years. A change was also made to the carrier for worker's compensation and liability. The Town now uses CIRMA who specializes in municipalities and covers these needs for over 120 towns. Ms. Christopher submits worker comp claims directly and the Town still uses Ahrens, Fuller, St. John and Vincent for liability claim reporting. A discussion followed about sick time and timing of when short term and long term disability coverage begins. Ms. Christopher has

also moved 32 retired employees to a Medicare supplement plan. This option has been in the Union contracts but hadn't previously been implemented. Mr. McAnaney reminded the Selectmen that the Town is self insured. In a six month time frame there were over \$108,000 in claims for half of the retirees. Ms. Christopher said the biggest change to the retirees is in the area of prescription drugs where co-pays went from 0 or \$5 to a \$10-\$20-\$30 tier. For many of the retirees the reduced cost share has made this increase negligible. By reducing the number of employees covered under the regular health plan there should be fewer claims and the rates should flatten or be lower over the next 4 years. There was discussion whether or not the Board of Ed non-certified retirees could be moved to the Medicare supplement as well. Ms Christopher also noted that she has introduced a vision plan to employees at no cost to the Town. Ms. Christopher's future projects will be to determine how to evaluate and compensate non union employees. She is gathering job descriptions and will be creating an organizational chart and salary bands to aid in performance evaluations. Mr. McAnaney noted as 2015-16 budget preparation is underway non-union employees have been asked to provide a written justification for their increases. There are about 15-20 non-union employees.

Discussion regarding Fire Hydrant Ordinance

Fire Chief Flynn was in attendance to discuss his proposal. A draft ordinance was provided. The ordinance requires that the property owner needs to clear a 3 foot wide path from the street to the hydrant. Three feet around the hydrant must be cleared. This must be done within 24 hours of the snow or ice event. First offense is a written warning; the second to fourth offense is a \$50 fine and fifth offense or greater will be a \$100 fine. Chief Flynn noted that about 60-75% of fire hydrants are cleared by the property owners. There are about 300 hydrants in Suffield and West Suffield. He said that the Fire Department cannot stay on top of clearing the other hydrants with only two paid staff members. Chief Flynn said the department has maps for location of hydrants but they do not pinpoint the exact location and the hydrants are difficult to find in some instances. He said property owners know where the hydrants exist on their property. Chief Flynn noted that 28 out of the 30 hydrants in West Suffield are cleared by the property owners. He also noted that the Highway Department is very helpful in clearing hydrants. Selectman Reynolds said he is in favor of an ordinance. Selectman Basile noted that it may be hard to enforce with many foreclosed properties. Mr. Fitzgerald asked about the appeal process but it was agreed that since there is no sidewalk appeal process none is needed for hydrants. Selectman Reynolds moved to approve the Fire Hydrant Winter Maintenance ordinance as presented by Chief Flynn. Vote 5-0 in favor, It was noted that ordinances must be approved at Town Meeting and that the ordinance would probably not go into effect until next winter.

Appointment of Mary Ellen Tunsky as a member of the Social Services Commission through November 30, 2018 to fill the vacancy created when Bridget Fidler moved out of town.

Selectman Fitzgerald moved the appointment of Mary Ellen Tunsky as a member of the

Social Services Commission through November 30, 2018. Vote 5-0 in favor.

Approve a tax rebate for First National Bank of Suffield in the amount of \$1,820.56 due to a reduction in assessment.

Selectman Basile made a motion to approve a tax rebate for First National Bank of Suffield in the amount of \$1,820.56 due to a reduction in assessment. Vote 4-0 with Selectman Reynolds abstaining as he is on the Board at First National Bank.

Recommend a transfer of \$40,000 from Contingency (0195011-50920) to Town Counsel – Legal Fees (0141551-50341).

First Selectman McAnaney explained that it has been an expensive year for legal matters. He noted that the Fire Pump Arbitration is being held over the next six days which will add to legal costs. Selectman Reynolds moved to recommend a transfer of \$40,000 from Contingency (0195011-50920) to Town Counsel – Legal Fees (0141551-50341). Vote 5-0 in favor.

2015-16 Budget Discussion

A departmental level budget was provided comparing current year to next year requests. First Selectman McAnaney and the Finance Director have met with department heads to discuss their budgets. The document showed the requested budget amounts and the revised budget amounts after the meetings. Some of the larger increases include the Assessor budget where funds are being built up for the 2018 revaluation. The Finance Department is requesting a new position. First Selectman McAnaney noted that the payroll will be increased due to a 53 week year. Discussion followed about the non-union employees who essentially receive an extra week of pay for a 53 week year even though they are considered salary (non-exempt) employees. Selectman Fitzgerald noted that if employees were paid twice a month the fifty third week issue would disappear for non-union employees. Mr. McAnaney is looking at the effect of the 53 week pay for non-union employees and will report back to the Selectmen. Mr. Fitzgerald suggested that the First Selectman salary be raised after the election and \$105,000 was the agreed amount. First Selectman McAnaney noted that Debt Service will be reduced by about \$100,000 until 2021. A special meeting will be scheduled to finalize the Selectmen's budget.

Selectmen's Update

Tennessee Gas pipeline expansion and easements

First Selectman McAnaney noted that the Tennessee Gas pipeline expansion requires easements across Town owned property. These are located on Hill Street (near the Carson residence) and on Mountain Road near Sacred Heart Church. The First Selectman has received easement agreements for the new easements, temporary workspace and calculation sheets for payments for the easements. He will work with

them to negotiate the easements. These will have to be approved at a future Town Meeting.

Road Project Costs and Funding

First Selectman McAnaney shared documents received from Town Engineer Gerry Turbet regarding the outstanding road projects included in the last bond funding. There is a shortfall since estimates were developed in 2009 but the actual bids have been at higher amounts. Selectman McAnaney requested Mr. Turbet to work on Project #3 using the remaining bond funds and additionally up to \$300,000 from the Pavement Management account and to focus on Colson, Oak and North Stone Streets. Other roads in project #3 include Blossom Street and Hale Street. Mr. McAnaney noted that the bonding funds expire at the end of the calendar year.

Charter Revision Commission Update

The Charter Revision Commission (CRC) has spent lots of time on the structure of the Treasurer/Finance Director and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) positions. Today they had an interview with Selectman Ed Basile. First Selectman McAnaney noted that the Selectmen need to fill the vacancy due to Mark Cervione's resignation from the CRC. He hopes to replace Mr. Cervione with another unaffiliated voter. Selectman Fitzgerald is planning to stay on the CRC and there is an Ethics Commission meeting next week based on Ernie Petkovich's request for an Advisory opinion.

Selectman Sullivan moved to adjourn and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

The next Board of Selectmen Meeting will be Wednesday March 4, 2015.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Trase
Recording Secretary