

Minutes
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Tuesday July 29, 2014 @ 7:00 PM

Selectmen Present:
Colin Stubbings, Robert Lang and Ernest Hartley

The meeting was called to order @ 7:04pm by Chairman Stubbings.

Chairman Stubbings announced that the meeting was being recorded solely for the purposes of preparing the minutes and that others inside the meeting may also be recording the meeting.

Linda Lauer – Grafton County Commission, Linda Lauer, was present to give the Board an overview of the new County Budget. Ms. Lauer noted that there was a 2.51% increase in the amount that needed to be raised through country taxes. She had not seen the final figures for how much each Town would be responsible for, but did note that in about 50% of the Towns there would be a decrease in their contribution. Ms. Lauer stated state the budget included a 1.75% cost of living increase for their employees. They have also added a new position for an alternative sentencing director. The County Attorney has added two new full time positions. About four years ago the country saw an increase in crime rate and as a result the case load increased as well. It was originally thought that this would be temporary and would not be sustained, but it has been so the new attorneys were added. There was a small increase in the social services budget but this still does not bring them back to where they were in 2011. The increase was in programs that will help keep seniors in their homes longer.

Selectman Lang wanted to know about the status of the Country Farm. Ms. Lauer stated that the farm actually made a profit last year in large part due to the price of milk. The Commissioners are dedicated to keeping the farm going. They are milking about 75-90 cows at this time. There is a herdsman that they hired that got rid of the bull and has brought in high quality artificial insemination for the herd, so they are hoping that the quality of the herd will go up.

Ms. Lauer stated that the jail came in under budget and the County used some of the remaining funds to build a biomass plant. She noted that this has worked out very well. Over the first nine months they have saved over \$127,000 over the cost of propane and oil. In fact it was functioning so well that the decision was made not to turn it off during the summer months and continuing to use it for hot water. They are looking into the possibility of selling some of the thermal energy credits back, but they have to wait until they can get the plant fully operational so that they can see if the air is clean enough.

Selectman Lang wanted to know Ms. Lauer's feelings on what should be done if the County has a surplus. He noted that a couple of years ago the County did have a surplus, but chose not to return any of it to the Towns. Selectman Lang felt that because the Town of Piermont has seen such a huge increase in the taxes that went to the County, he would like to see any surplus returned to the Town. Ms. Lauer said that this was something that she had not considered because the County is facing some major expenses. They currently have a major problem with the nursing home and she doesn't think they will see a surplus this year, but it is something for her to consider in future years. Selectman Lang said that he really dislikes the fact that when we get the County bill it says that we have to pay it by December 15th or else we will get hit with a lot of interest. He stated that as a Town we can't demand that the residents pay their bills by the due date and sometimes the Town has to take a Tax Anticipation Loan just to pay the County taxes.

Ms. Lauer noted that their maintenance department discovered some significant life safety issues at the nursing home in the 1969 portion of the building, which have to be addressed. They are looking at costs of about \$450,000 and since these issues go back so far they may not be able to recover any of the costs from the builder, but they are looking into that. The other issue that they are dealing with is that they need to move residents out of the nursing home in order to correct the problems and they don't have any place to put them. They are looking to open the second floor of the administrative building to house some of the residents temporarily so that they don't lose the revenue or have to lay off any of their workers. The County Commissioners and the finance people will relocate to the basement.

Chairman Stubbings noted that Ms. Lauer had stated that she had mentioned that the increase in the social service budget that is to help the elderly stay in their homes longer creates a problem to the Town. He stated that some of the individuals end up unable to pay their taxes to the Town. Ms. Lauer thought that this was interesting and made a note of this issue.

Highway Department – Frank Rodimon said that the monuments are in for the Memorial Garden and they should be set on Thursday (07/31/14). Most of the roads are now back to pre-flood conditions. They will be grading and treating the roads over the next two weeks. From August 19th – 24th they will be doing the roadside mowing.

Resident Quentin Faulkner had a question about the portion of Indian Pond Road that was unpaved. He noted that it was very dusty and caused visibility issues. Mr. Rodimon stated that this was probably an issue during the winter because there really wasn't anything he could do to treat it at that time of year and he will look into the issue and see if there was a product out there that he could use to treat the roads during the winter. Mr. Rodimon noted that the roads are treated during the summer so there should not be any issues with dust during that time of year.

Selectman Hartley thanked Mr. Rodimon on behalf of the Conservation Commission for burning the Purple Loosestrife that was cut down from the field behind the Town offices by the CT River Watershed Council.

Treasurer – Erik Wagstaff reported that everything with the auditors was going okay. He hadn't heard anything back from them so he assumed that they had everything they needed from him. He said that Susan Belyea was catching on quickly. Chairman Stubbings mentioned that there was an issue with where the bonds were being kept. Mr. Wagstaff said that he now held all the bonds.

Emergency Management Director- Bernie Marvin said that the Department of Homeland Security was going to be putting on a series of sessions on Hurricanes. They will be held at the EOC in Concord, NH. Mr. Marvin noted that he will be meeting with Corporal Blanchard to discuss security during the parade on August 9th. On August 12th he will be meeting with Donna Keeley from PSNH. Selectman Lang said that Mr. Marvin should address the security of personal residences during the anniversary celebration. Residents should take care to lock their homes and secure them. Selectman Hartley also asked Mr. Marvin to check with Ms. Keeley about the pole attachment permit for the flags on the telephone poles. He stated that the Town had submitted their annual permit request, but had not heard anything back from PSNH.

Fire Department – Chief Bruce Henry said that they have only had three calls during that last couple of months. They had SCBA training in June and Haverhill Corner Fire Department also attended. In July they had a car extraction drill. Chief Henry noted that the Town has some tools that can be used for extraction and they had done a really good job cutting the roof off the car before Bradford came over to finish the drill. He thanked Jim McGoff for the donation of the car that they used in the drill.

Chief Henry asked Selectman Hartley about the generator for the Town office building. Selectman Hartley said that it takes a portable generator and he has two of them that he is offering for the Town to use. He noted that he still needs to get together with the Fire Department and the EMD to train them on how to hook the generator up to the building. The only issue with plugging in the generator is that they need to make sure that the heater in the safe is manually turned off. Once that is off then the generator should run everything else in the building.

Chief Henry said that Jared Shipman and Chris Jacobs worked on and rebuilt the chicken shack. It was noted that all time and materials were donated and the new shack was done in honor of Austin Hogan.

Mr. Rodimon will do the ditch work around the Fire Department soon. Chief Henry wants to meet with Mr. Rodimon to discuss what needs to be done on some of the fire ponds. The department had looked over all the fire ponds and found four that worked well right now. The working ponds are located on Route 10 by Donald Steven's home, on 25C at the Four Corners, on Mazzilli Drive and up on Cape Moonshine road. It was noted that the hydrant on Church Street was not working. Chairman Lang said that the department should look into what needs to be done to get it operational and the costs could then get put into next years budget. Chief Henry will also need to look into what permits are needed and try and get the paperwork done

this year. Tim Cole said that the hydrant should be worked on yearly to make sure that it keeps working properly. Chief Henry will also need to contact the new owner of the property to make sure that they can get onto the property and work on the hydrant.

Selectman Hartley asked Chief Henry to coordinate with Mr. Rodimon for service on the fire trucks so that we can avoid large service bills. He stated that all regular maintenance should be done by Mr. Rodimon. The department can still use Lavoie's for their yearly inspections and other large repairs that can not be done by Mr. Rodimon.

Chairman Stubbings wanted to know how they were doing with the association by-laws. Tim Cole said that they will get back to the Board on this.

Executive Assistant – Jennifer Collins said that she had given the auditors the last piece of information that they needed from her and they are just waiting on a survey to be completed by Chairman Stubbings and the Tax Collector. Once they have those items it will go to their manager for review.

Selectman Lang asked if the outstanding check issues had been straightened out. It was noted that they were. Selectman Hartley asked how much longer Brendan Jones would be in the office. Ms. Collins stated that he was off on August 8th and his last day would be August 18th. Selectman Hartley wants to see the minutes a little more timely and would like to see if Brendan can start working on them as soon as possible to have them for the Board hopefully by the end of the week.

Selectman Lang wanted to know what was still needed to be done at the Town Office. It was noted that all the filing was caught up. Selectman Hartley asked what else Brendan had been working on. Ms. Collins said that he had been learning the accounts payable and payroll and running some of the financial reports. He also reorganized the maps for Chairman Stubbings.

Selectman Lang said that Mr. Jones could work on organizing the safe. Chairman Stubbings asked Mr. Rodimon to get some plywood to put on the wire shelves in the safe. He said that he would stop by the office tomorrow and measure the shelves.

Tax Collector – Ceil Stubbings had nothing to report.

Manifests – The manifests were reviewed and signed by the Board.

Old Business

Camp Walt Whitman Mediation – At the last meeting the Board was still looking into coming to an agreement with Camp Walt Whitman regarding their abatement appeal. However, the last offer from the camp was still so far away from what the Town had assessed them at and if the Town accepted that value we would be losing a lot in taxes which the Town can not afford. The Board has decided that they need to take their chance in court.

Bagley Appeal – At the trial, the Town’s attorney asked that the appeal be dismissed because Mr. Donald Bagley had failed to meet the burden of proof. It was noted that the assessed value must be looked at as a whole and you can not dispute one part of the assessment, which is what Mr. Bagley was trying to do. The case was dismissed. The Board noted that they could look at recovering legal costs, but they were not going to do so. Chairman Stubbings, Selectman Lang, Mark Stetson from Avitar Associates and Walter Mitchell from Mitchell Municipal Associates were present at the trial.

Fairpoint Abatement – The Board signed an abatement for Fairpoint Communications based on the recommendation of Gary Roberge from Avitar Associates. The assessed value was reduced by \$22,300.00 and is related to the number of poles that had previously been assessed by the Town versus the number of poles being reported by Fairpoint to Avitar.

New Business

Police Department Update – Chairman Stubbings read the joint public statement that was issued by the Board of Selectmen and Former Police Chief Robert Garvin. The statement was posted on the Town’s webpage last Thursday morning (July 17th) and Chairman Stubbings contacted a number of manager’s to let them know what was going on. Chairman Stubbings also contacted the State Police to inform them of what was going on and to make sure that they would provide coverage for the Town. Grafton County Sheriff’s department was also contacted. Chairman Stubbings tried to contact Sheriff Doug Dutile, but was only able to speak with Tom Andross at the time. They are both providing coverage to the Town and he noted that he has seen them around Town a number of times.

The Board has approached Richard Dion and asked him to put together a committee to look at the Police Department and see what they recommend the department going forward. They will be looking at changes and improvements to the department as well as interviewing candidates for the positions that they feel the town needs. According to Chairman Stubbings, Mr. Dion and the other member of the committee felt that the Town needed to have its own police presence back out on the roads as soon as possible. As a result, the committee interviewed Phillip Blanchard last night and Mr. Blanchard indicated that he was interested in coming back to the Town. Chairman Stubbings said that he had spoken with Mr. Blanchard and he had some questions that he wanted to discuss with the Board. It was also noted that wages had not been discussed yet either.

Resident Violetta Faulkner asked why Chief Garvin had resigned. Chairman Stubbings noted that he had other things to go and do. She asked if the Board would comment as to the reasoning behind him leaving. Chairman Stubbings said Chief Garvin had other endeavors and didn’t know why he should doubt what he has to do. Property owner Kate Merritt stated that comment was not entirely true. Chairman Stubbings wanted to know why that wasn’t true. Ms. Merritt noted that the Board was not talking about the conflict that Chief Garvin and the Board had with each other. She noted that was part of the issue and it wasn’t just that he had

another job. Chairman Stubbings said that was an ongoing issue, but the statement said it all and it was a joint statement. Ms. Merritt noted that in many cases a statement like that is made because severance is dependant on it. Chairman Stubbings stated that Bob Garvin had signed the statement and that he has a copy of Chief Garvin's resignation letter as well. The Board said that she could speak to his attorney if she wished too and she said that she knew she could.

Resident George Mertz asked the Board how much this agreement cost the town now and how much more will it cost the town over the next few years. Chairman Stubbings noted that there were no costs going forward. Mr. Mertz wanted to know how much the attorney's fees were over the last year in regards to this issue. Chairman Stubbings said that he couldn't tell him off the top of his head he would have to look them up. Mr. Mertz wanted to know if they could be provided at the next Selectman's meeting. Chairman Stubbings said he would look to see if he could separate out the figures. It was noted that a lot of times the bills have more than one item on them.

Resident Sam Rounds asked the Board what plans they had going forward. Chairman Stubbings noted that the Board has no preconceived idea of where things will go. They are leaving that in the hands of the committee and will act upon their recommendation.

Ms. Merritt asked the Board who gives the Police Chief direction in regards to police activity, not in terms of administration or in terms of budget. Chairman Stubbings said that nobody does. The Police Chief is governed by the RSAs and the Police Standards and Training Council. Ms. Merritt stated that the Board does not have a role in telling the police chief what to do or what not to do from a police standpoint. Chairman Stubbings said no, not on a case to case basis. They might recommend that he do something if they noted a lot of speeding traffic in a particular area of Town. Then the Board might suggest that he put out the radar trailer or monitor the area himself to address the concern. The Board has no say in terms of process.

Resident Helga Mueller asked who was on the committee. Chairman Stubbings noted that at this time the committee included: Abby Metcalf, Bernie Marvin, Diane Kircher and Richard Dion.

Violetta Faulkner wanted to know if there was the possibility of hiring at least two officers so that the Town could have more than a 9-5 presence. Chairman Stubbings noted that the Board is restricted by the figures that they have in their budgets for officers right now, but they are open to whatever the committee suggests to them. Budget season is coming up in November and the Board can revise the budget at the time based on the recommendations. Selectman Lang noted that the Board has always wanted a flexible situation and they think that is ideally what they are looking to have, but they don't know what the committee will recommend.

Ms. Faulkner noted that it was very frightening to wait 40 minutes in the middle of the night for the police during an emergency. Selectman Lang said that a lot of people question why the Town has a Police Chief, but they don't realize that there are a lot of things that happen on our

back roads at night. Selectman Lang noted that Troop F has a satellite office at the Police Department and they spend a lot of time in Town. Ms. Veillette said that they had a situation happen in the middle of the night and they had to wait 40 minutes for the police to show up and when they did they drove past their road before realizing that they had missed the turnoff. Ms. Faulkner said that if there is a local presence they will know the roads and the response time will be quicker. She stated that they don't have kids in school and they have to pay to maintain their own road so they don't get the full benefits from what they pay in taxes so she would like to make sure that they get the full benefit from the Police Department and they would really like to see at least two officers.

Ms. Merritt asked the Board if they knew when the majority of the issues occurred. The Board said that there really was no pattern. Selectman Lang said that Corporal Blanchard had good luck on Friday nights. The Board hopes to have Corporal Blanchard back on duty by this weekend after they address his questions and concerns.

Erik Wagstaff said that in regards to the 24 hour presence he hoped that the committee notes that the Police Chief is a salaried position, which means more than 40 hours. He wanted it to be made clear to the Chief that unless he is on vacation he should be ready to respond to calls at any time. Chairman Stubbings noted that the committee is looking at all aspects and there is no guarantee that they will recommend a chief.

The advert will be posted in tomorrow's paper and all resumes will be forwarded directly to Mr. Dion for review and the committee will put forth their recommendations. That doesn't mean that the Board does not have the final say, but there is no foreseeable reason why the Board would go against their recommendations.

Mr. Wagstaff wanted to know if the committee would only bring one recommendation to the Board or if there would be an open forum so that the Town's people could come and ask questions of the candidates. The Board has asked for recommendations and they think that there might be a chance to meet the candidates, but they don't really know what the committee will put forth.

A question was asked about when the committee met. It was noted that the committee met last night and when they are interviewing people those sessions will be non-public, but there will be parts of the sessions that are open to the public when they are discussing how the department should be set up going forward. Chairman Stubbings noted that he had done some research and he found that unless there was some extenuating circumstances the contents of a resume were to be considered confidential and therefore the interviews needed to be done in a non-public session.

Mr. Mertz said that he had never heard of a resume being confidential. Chairman Stubbings noted that he had looked this up and found that it is confidential. There are a number of items on a resume that are public knowledge, but in whole the resume is confidential.

Financials – The June 2014 financial reports from the bookkeeper are available on the front table. The June financials from the Tax Collector and the Town Clerk had been made available at the last meeting and if anyone wanted a copy of them they could stop by the Town Office and get a copy.

Timber Taxes – The Board signed timber taxes for Barbara Fowler in the amount of \$4.20.

Letter to Veillettes – The Courts have approved the Board’s request to place a lien on the Veillette’s property for the fines and legal fees that the Town incurred during their lawsuit against the Veillettes. Ms. Collins will check with the attorney to see if the liens were recorded separately on both of the properties.

The Board is currently trying to ascertain what is being done with the rental property that burned this past spring. The Board signed a letter that was drafted to the Veillette’s concerning this issue. There are some restrictions on what can be done with the property because it is in the village district. It was noted that they cannot build anything larger than the original footprint.

Deputy Tax Collector – The tax collector is requesting the Board approve the appointment of Amy Hatfield as the Deputy Tax Collector. Ms. Hatfield is currently the tax collector for the Town of Littleton and she had agreed to be the Deputy Tax Collector for Piermont if approved. The Board approved her appointment.

Deputy Town Clerk - The Town Clerk has not received any applications for the Deputy Town Clerk position.

Road Closures – The Board noted that for the 250th Anniversary Parade and the block party on August 9th, the Town will need to close some roads for a while. Chairman Stubbings believed that Abby Metcalf was going to personally speak to the residents on Church Street that will be affected by the road closure. Ms. Collins has not seen the parade permit for the 250th anniversary parade. Chairman Stubbings will look into this.

Public Input – George Mertz noted that he had seen they were testing the pond on Mazzilli Drive and it works great. The Board is waiting for Byron Kidders to get back to them. Mr. Mertz also said that the insurance rating is almost non-existent and needs to be addressed.

Minutes – The minutes from the 07/15/14 meeting were reviewed and changes were made. Selectman Hartley moved to accept the minutes as amended. Selectman Lang seconded the motion. The Board voted all in favor of this motion.

Selectman Lang moved to adjourn to executive session per RSA 91:A-3,2A at 9:00PM. Selectman Hartley seconded the motion. The Board voted all in favor of this motion.

The Board adjourned from executive session at 9:15 PM. The minutes were not sealed. Selectman Lang moved to adjourn from the regular meeting at 9:15 PM. Selectman Hartley seconded the motion. The Board voted all in favor of adjourning from the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer L. Collins

Board of Selectman
Colin Stubbings, Chairman

Approved:

Members of the Public Present at the general meeting as recorded by "sign-in sheet" included:
B. Marvin, F. Rodimon, E. Wagstaff, K. Merritt, P. Tafrate, S. Rounds, Q. Faulkner, V. Faulkner, A. Metcalf, B. Henry, T. Cole, C. Yeager, D. Kircher, M. Kircher, G. Mertz, P. Hartley, A. Nuit-de Biasi, D. Mitchell, H. Mueller, C. Stubbings and J. Collins