

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, June 13, 2011

Present: Chairman Walter F. Alterisio, Daniel F. Devlin, Clerk and Procurement Officer and Member Kenneth J. Leva

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00pm with all members present. Sarah Eisenklam and Kristen Stone from Groton Dunstable Education Foundation provided a presentation for the board advising instead of a spring fundraiser they decided to bring their info to all who were willing to listen. Their mission is to support public schools – in the form of grants. Teachers, administrators, etc. submit grant applications to GDEF to assist them by providing services that aren't available thru school funding. Independent committee reviews grants and make decisions on grants to be funded. They also research other grants that might be able to support the projects that GDEF could not. All pooled together to bring things to fruition. They explained the projects which have been accomplished

They've funded 197 grants for over \$200K would like to thank all for their support for the Firecracker 5K. Whole fundraiser couldn't have happened without Dunstable Selectmen, Police, Fire; next Octoberfest planned for October 2nd this year – Wes Goss very supportive last year with donated pumpkins. Main Street Café fund raiser – trivia night: very successful; going to do that again. Annual giving campaign ends at end of June – direct solicitation from parents, etc. – Most parents know that teachers had ideas but couldn't find support thru school but can apply to GDEF for funding. They advised that PTA is very supportive but GDEF is a full 501C3 which provides more flexibility and are always people there to help. They don't fund consumables – willing to support pilot program to educate a teacher, etc. things that will last a lifetime. They further reported a lot of the best school systems in the state have an education foundation. Their goal is to get money into the schools and to inspire others. They explained the challenges associated with the organization and meeting its goals.

Another challenge is how the budget affects the increase in needs – public education should be paid by the public. – GDEF provides an avenue – looking for ways they can assist. They noted that individuals can sign up on line on GDEF website for Octoberfest 5K. They collaborate with the school district to help them meet the needs of the students – working with all facets of the community to make it work.

The Board acknowledged their approval for the road race and applauded all the efforts that GDEF has put forward. Sarah advised that individuals can see all the grants on the GDEF website and how they've benefited the school system.

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GDEF Dunstable Selectmen Presentation 6-13-2011.pdf

The board reviewed the notice for appointments put together by secretary from another found on line and had concerns for time allowance for individuals interested in appointment. Chairman Alterisio advised there are certain appointments that need to be in place – inspectors, committees where crucial decisions. The board indicated best approach would be to push date to the 24th for deadline and next year get the notice out much earlier. Selectman Leva questioned whether police should be included – Walter indicated he felt basically interested in the appointed boards & committees but could include all in future. Forms need to be returned by the 24th and then on the following Monday, the 27th the board can make appointments. Selectman Devlin suggested next year the applications might require a little bio or reason why individual feels they're qualified; Selectman Leva suggested it's implied now that the board just rubber stamps appointment.

Next item on the agenda is the renewal hearing for Charter Communications, and Chairman Alterisio opened hearing confirming proper notice – legal notice in Lowell Sun on Monday, April 28th and Monday May 6th, as well as posting on the town website. Tom Cohen, the General Manager for Charter was present representing Charter. Mr. Cohen advised that Charter is applying for renewal; has been trying to pull together this meeting for almost 3 years with the committee. Mr. Cohen noted the size of small town, and his understanding that is handed over to the Cable Committee. He reported since they first signed a cable license with the town originally were just a cable company – now offer high speed internet, telephone service – a much more competitive market than in previous years. Satellite dish coverage has become very competitive market as well and Verizon licensed with the town back in 2008. Charter is continuing to add HD channels with 70 now in Dunstable focusing on adding HD to their expanded lineup. They have a local office in Pepperell that Dunstable residents are urged to stop by for service issues, equipment transfers, etc.; studio in their Pepperell facility which Dunstable residents could use as well as the public education access in Groton. Dunstable has higher band than cities. Charter currently has around 340 customers in Dunstable.

Chairman Alterisio recalled Verizon's entrance into the cable realm – and background of cable licensing in Dunstable. Chairman Alterisio noted we know how we began and are aware how Verizon began in Dunstable. Mr. Cohen advised that cable is the only service administered on a local level and reported they've been operating under the same initial franchise license. Difference between Verizon and Charter Communications is that Verizon didn't come to Dunstable until they'd already built their system

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whereas Charter built here from ground up. Charter offers the same products and services as Verizon. Chairman Alterisio – one thing in respect to community service – package becomes kind of a public service kind of a thing which may provide only access in times of state of emergency – for up to date information. He questioned whether it's ever been proposed or considered that in that state of emergency, service wouldn't be shut off, even though there'd been a lapse in payment – which would take away any access to important public information. Mr. Cohen advised on the losses some of their communities encountered in Springfield & Connecticut – noting they work with power companies and need power to operate. The only reason they would disconnect someone is for non payment and the board questioned whether there was a mechanism by which they could reconnect service during the emergency. Mr. Cohen advised that if someone hasn't paid in 90 days they get shut off. Chairman Alterisio advised the problem is residents don't have an alternative. Mr. Cohen advised that if you lose your cable service and have an antenna, you could hook up to that and watch 4, 5 & 7 which would provide any emergency information you might need. Selectman Devlin addressed the legislation regarding tax on telephone poles and Mr. Cohen advised that Charter doesn't own poles, lease all their poles.

Bob Kennedy noted that radio coverage is also available in emergencies, as it always has been. He advised that a few years ago when the push for cable service started he asked whether it was going to cost anything to the Town and while he was assured there wouldn't be any cost, the budget was established at \$5,000.00. Chairman Alterisio advised the only thing that used by the cable committee was to purchase equipment. Charter Communications provided all the wiring and free service. Right now both cable companies have a franchise fee. When Verizon came in they matched the \$3K grant to the Town; they also pay license fee of 50 cents per year. Chairman Alterisio advised it costs the town residents nothing for either one of them. Comcast could also apply for a license. Bob Kennedy advised that he'd contacted Charter a couple of years ago to connect and was advised that there was no port on the pole so they couldn't hook him up. When Verizon came along he contacted them to hook his cable up and then install the phone. Wanted to be sure it's not costing anything for Charter Cable to be licensed with the town. The board confirmed that we have a cable committee, has been on again off again. Chairman Alterisio advised that BOS looked to cable committee to address issue of broadcasting meetings – seem to have become frustrated with equipment, etc., going to be looking at the cable committee and others for assistance in those endeavors. BOS has received a fair amount of pressure both internally and externally to provide visibility to town residents – will be looking.

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Mr. Cohen was asked whether he's dealt with a town without a cable committee and he responded that most have them in theory but often only at licensing time. He further indicated for a small town it's pretty challenging to find volunteers to come in for meetings. Chairman Alterisio advised the problems with the present broadcasting equipment – sound would go off, equipment would lock, etc. – disruptions in the meeting as a result. Mr. Cohen advised it's easy to buy a camera that takes a nice picture – but audio is very important. Chairman Alterisio advised it was more a disruption – not only with meeting going on but also frustration. Mr. Cohen indicated, with \$3K from Verizon and \$3K from Charter should give them something to work with. Franchise fee is state mandated – 50 cents per customer to the town and 80 cents per customer to the state.

Before closing the hearing, Chairman Alterisio confirmed the Town has proposal – board will review and take proposal under advisement and get back to them. Before taking his leave, Mr. Cohen indicated they have some access people in the Pepperell office who can assist – Frank Schmidt who has provided technical assistance in the past, is there to provide assistance.

Minutes of 6/6 were approved as amended reflecting the document as application for demolition of structure on the Beagle property.

The board authorized the Board of Health's request for transfer from one Transfer Station account to another was approved after motion by Selectman Leva and vote in the affirmative.

Judy Larter approached the board advising that someone was mowing the sides of the roads today - mower was ineffective and stopped momentarily when individual riding horseback approached but wasn't cognizant of traffic, etc. resulting in a safety issue. The board advised there is a problem with trying to keep down growth at intersections. Board will ask BORG the rationale for scheduling this operation without provisions for traffic control or police coverage.

Chairman Alterisio provided summary of items discussed at last week's meeting – would like to arrange meeting with Chairs of Boards, if there are any issues. The board would like to meet with heads of various boards – issues or ground rules with town engineer or town counsel – schedule for 27th. Request counsel in attendance, as well as Town Clerk, BORG, Conservation, Planning, Water, Building Inspector, Electrical, Plumbing & Gas Inspector.

Town Accountant Kim Fales appeared before the board to advise that her accounting clerk, Ruth Rogers who just turned 80 has decided to officially retire. She wanted to see what the board would like to do in terms of

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filling the position. Noted with the DOR coming in to do their financial analysis, felt it best to wait until after that analysis and she could take on the responsibility in the interim. Chairman Alterisio advised that in addition to DOR's review, the board will also be working the UMass for an evaluation. She felt to bring someone in to train them, and then go through the review which might only change some of the job description. Instead of bringing the individual in now, put them through training and having them encounter additional or changes in the position – best to keep status quo until review is completed and recommendations made. Board asked whether there is any monetary adjustment to be made – she advised as a salaried employee, her salary is set. With close of fiscal year, busy time. If the board wished to fill the position, would need to get working on it right away.

Retirement, how is it appropriated. Unemployment Trust fund allowable by statute ... also can establish retirement fund....should have something in place. Kim cautioned that even if town set up stabilization fund, would still need town meeting to pull the money out. Only other option would be a special act of the legislature to set up fund. If wanted to take the special act approach, work with counsel to do it. Chairman Alterisio indicated situation exists there are a few people who are in position to go ahead and retire would not want to see individuals having to wait to retire because they have to wait for a special town meeting for the funds to be available. Chairman Alterisio would like to get some form of agreement together with Fincom, town counsel. Would like meeting between BORC, counsel, town accountant and advisory board next Monday relative to bill from Town Engineer for services rendered to Historical Commission for McGovern Wall. Are funds available within the engineering account; Kim advised that legally since it is for engineering services, funds from engineering account could be used.

Secretary was asked to schedule for next meeting, the Road Commissioners, Town Engineer, Fincom Chair, Town Counsel to discuss funding for extra engineering costs re: McGovern Wall project.

Chairman Alterisio reported on request from Berta Erikson relative to banner for Middle School project in attempt to set new record in the Guinness Book of Records. He advised she'd contacted him and he'd forgotten to bring it up. He reported he'd provided approval as long as it's installation and removal was coordinated in conjunction with the banner for summer concerts which had already been approved.

Selectman Devlin and Selectman Leva reported on their attendance at MMA seminar for new Selectmen noting for the record that no town business has been discussed. The board briefly discussed the budget process used in other communities and advantages of each.

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The Treasurer's warrants were reviewed and signed. Chairman Alterisio advised there was a discussion between him and town counsel dealing with Larter Field and how the gift was given to the town, authority for Larter Field was with the Selectmen not with Parks. He further indicated he'd heard that sparks might be starting to fly with concern with certain upkeep and maintenance – going to have to keep an eye on it, work things out – suggestions to keep consensus and work together.

Chairman Alterisio noted in communications Police Chief's vacation & holiday requests – Lieutenant will be officer in charge.

Selectman Leva asked to bring up an item for future discussion – vacant building next to the post office – the board explained the background on the building. Treasurer's warrants were reviewed and signed and the meeting adjourned at 8:46PM after appropriate motion and vote.

Before the board could exit, Alan Chaney stopped in reporting the building on the Beagle property has been demolished and removed – expects transfer from state before end of July.

Respectfully submitted,

Danice N. Palumbo,
Board Secretary