

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, November 21, 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. The board reviewed minutes of 11/14/11 meeting, approved as written.

The board reviewed draft of letter to Senator Donoghue relative to the response by National Grid – 8 days to recover from storm, calling attention to aid provided or lack thereof for Dunstable. He noted as late as 6 days after the power went out we still remained more than 35% without service. In the event of extenuating circumstances at any household, a form must be filled in and submitted to National Grid. Chairman Alterisio advised there are some people who would be reluctant to fill out form but as a community we are or should be aware of areas needing attention.

Chairman Alterisio indicated that lack of maintenance caused much of the problems and discussion continued on what measures could be put in place in the future. Fire Department is scheduled to attend another session in Leominster @7:30AM next Wednesday. Chairman Alterisio's letter will also address hanging branches still hung up in wires - would like to get those addressed as well. The letter will suggest that there's a number of areas that need to be addressed; a little bit sinister in terms of why their maintenance program is so lax. Brian advised he was talking with the guys who advised that Dunstable is one of the few towns that allow them to touch the trees and branches; most do not. Board was supportive of the letter and it will be in the mail tomorrow.

Chief Charles H. Rich, Jr. and Deputy Chief Brian Rich appeared before the board to advise on the repairs needed for the rescue truck – the one that Chief Bacon fabricated. They advised the cutting of the wheel wells, to slide tank in, has allowed the body to deteriorate and rot out. When they noticed it was starting to rot out they got nervous because of problems with engine 3. They need to work on the utility body, reached a gentleman who does that type of work, can take utility body off, repair, sandblast, repaint, etc. – all for \$4,000 and put trailer hitch on which would allow them to trail equipment for themselves and the police. He's spoken with Fincom who's approved but will need transfer as are almost out of funds. This 99 truck goes out all the time, has around 3500 miles on it. When truck was fabricated instead of solid run of weld, was only tack welded which allowed rust to penetrate. Discussion continued on the use of the vehicle. Selectman Leva asked if Fincom had asked for any additional quotes and chief reported they hadn't as long as under \$5K unnecessary; have requested quotes from other individuals but none received. While vocational school has the ability to do this type of work, they wouldn't be able to do it for at least six (6) weeks. He advised that

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, November 21, 2011

he'd tried to get ahold of Madigan who's moved. If it's done right, this should allow us to get 30 years out of this truck, whether as a rescue truck or forestry truck. Chassis is in great shape. Right now ice rescue sled – there's no room on the truck for it – this will allow it be housed on the truck. Just the weight of the water off the truck, brought the body up. Board approved but would like to see a couple of other quotes before it's presented to advisory for transfer request from

Chief Rich advised they'd like to meet with the Board some time about where the department needs to go – looking into a new station whether opening this station up with addition. Walter noted the board would like to put together process for Fire Chief search in preparation. would like to set up meeting to map out strategy for the search. Selectman Devlin back to the rescue truck – on cross members, nominal amount, what could that cost run? Chief Rich didn't think it could run much more than \$1K. Selectman Leva advised that they've encountered issues like this before where the initial cost falls within the realm, once the project begins, overruns takes it over.

The group scheduled Wednesday, December 7th @1PM for the discussion of fire department needs. Brian Rich advised the problem they're encountering is new equipment will not fit.

Jon Crandall visited the board briefly and the board presented him with a copy of the letter being sent to Senator Donoghue's office relative to National Grid response during the October snowstorm.

7:30PM board began discussion on DLS Financial Management Review – with all noting includes things that are long term, and others short term. Chairman Alterisio advised 1st question that needs to be answered – is to try and get a handle on how we are governed as a town – content hits a lot of the things he was looking for in context but doesn't necessarily give us steps to accomplish them. Thinks can work with this report for management review – may not need UMass to get involved as this seems to provide enough direction for restructuring organizational. Also noted there are some things that could happen rather quickly...didn't see any show stoppers on searching for new accountant. Board discussed some of the issues raised – whether it made sense to bring on an administrator who has a financial background – other thing that gives an advantage is regional school reporting is handled. Bonnie talked to Dick and one thing he does know is that he has no intent to be long term as he'd indicated from the beginning, intends to be in Florida for February so doesn't want town to drag feet and be left without an accountant. Chairman Alterisio advised he would like to have conversation with Dick whether he has any idea of someone in the area who might be interested. Bonnie advised that Dick had spoken with the individual who has taken on Ashby and

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, November 21, 2011

Ashburnham as to whether there's any interest but hasn't had any response. Chairman Alterisio suggested the accountant in Groton might be another option but only conflict might be negotiations between towns relative to schools, etc. Only concern he has is possibility of creating an issue that might put the individual in hot seat. Also discussed the possibility of opening the process up – would have to take a look at who could be qualified... group recollected some of the applicants in last round. Chairman Alterisio advised on the advantages we had with Kim was her experience with municipal accounting as well as the Vadar. Bonnie will work with Dick to pull something together – Carol advised that can also post on Town Clerk's network. Board was inclined to look at both the accountant and clerical. Board suggested Bonnie and Dick come up requirements and prepare ad; also through networking, if Dick knows of some individuals who might be interested can point them in our direction. Other thing is Advisory Board will be part of the selection process. Decision will be made based on the individual who comes in – will be two part – clerical portion as well the accountant – Bonnie advised that clerical is about 7 hours a week.

Set target of 30 days to come up with selection committee. Next step is to begin to frame what kind of strategy want to take to begin to approach this across the board. An initial meeting with everyone to get an idea of direction – take a stab at long term and short term goals and how to best address. Chairman Alterisio continued to explain the need for moving forward – laboring to work through. Just an example of getting the brush taken care of – other towns had system in place to move forward but with us it was so cumbersome to move forward. All the things that come into the picture need to be smoothed out. Chairman Alterisio would like to get some sort of strategy and committee in place to have initial meeting beginning of January to map out best process. Clearly needs to be some heavy lifting – job descriptions, plans for moving forward all will take some work. Not an awful lot of changes but need to put project together and move forward – need buy in from departments and officials. Boards do not have the review yet – will soon be available in electronic format for sharing with all boards.

Chairman Alterisio indicated a good time might be beginning of January – work along with the budget process. Chairman Alterisio continued to explain 1st step is to move forward with the accounting position – other things that can be put in place, has recommended Bill Ahern as one of the individuals who'll assist with this. Need to make determination whether it makes sense to have an accountant/administrator rather than an administrator and an accountant. Discussion continued on some of the options and the need to have an administrator – no provisions to have an administrator in place before budget process and town meeting. Are going to have to work with Fincom and budget to get something in place-

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, November 21, 2011

do you get a junior individual or a senior individual – aggressive work efforts and initiative to learn and move forward. Bonnie asked what happens if we hire the accountant and then decide to move forward to an administrator. Most attractive option, based on what we're looking at – is to move forward with the accountant with hopes that the individual we bring on board might be able to satisfy both needs. Chairman Alterisio looks at this, where a 3rd year political major may look at as piece of cake. Right now his thoughts are would like to keep separate... rules we follow right now. Carol as an observation, combining an accountant with administrative issues, what would happen if there was an election issue – wouldn't you want your administrator to have different basis of expertise. She questioned why they would even consider combining those two positions; board advised if there's an individual out there who could take on both positions, it could be beneficial for the town. Board still uncertain what they want to do – wants everyone to understand collectively must come up with best approach. The board tentatively set timeframe of 1st week of January for collective meeting of boards to establish committee to move project along. While BOS will be involved in the project, committee will bring the recommendations along. Town Clerk advised one of the 1st things that she sees needs to be done is to look at amending the advisory committee bylaw to address discrepancies in the language. Discussion continued on whether looking into elected vs. appointed, etc. Carol advised the only reason she questioned that is because deadline for nomination papers is February 1st. Once we're done, Chairman Alterisio felt it might be a lot simpler to get volunteers. Board will aggressively be working to pull committee together. Chairman Alterisio advised that the quicker the better, noting the fellow that drives the town truck already has the report and knows how it affects his department.

Chairman Alterisio advised that he did not anticipate there would be a bevy of ballot questions relative to this but may be some special town meetings. Chairman Alterisio would like to get copy to NMCOG who might be able to provide some assistance...secretary will check with Melinda about getting the report in electronic format. Chairman Alterisio will work to set up date for initial session; Carol asked to look closely at dates so she can work into her schedule.

Town Clerk also asked the board to consider sending a letter to legislature to rescind the surcharge – if we increase the fees, will cost the town money as less people will license dogs and more of the costs will be absorbed by the town. MSPCA – this is their bill. In times where state is taking money away from the towns, shouldn't be requiring the towns to provide them with funding. The bill is picking up speed – the board will craft letter for signature. The other thing, along these guidelines, Sean has come to members about what's going on with the dog officer,

Minutes: Selectmen's Meeting – Monday, November 21, 2011

additional time and requirements. Chairman Alterisio reported he'd told him to put together requirements and needs and will incorporate into next year's budget. Carol explained the background of the bill, her research with Sean and Town Clerk's efforts relative to this dog bill. She further reported primary has been moved.

Chairman Alterisio referenced the management letter for the audit, was uncomfortable signing as he had no direct knowledge of the statements contained within the document and would like confirmation from the departments involved before signing.

Selectman Leva referenced the DLS Financial Management Review report noting reference to appointment of an executive secretary or administrator. He noted that some of the things recommended within the report will require cuts in the budget in order to find funding for the changes – have to make provisions to make these things happen. No one's looking to gore any department...the recommendation for changing the tax collector & town treasurer to an appointed position makes total sense – helps to insure the individual is qualified for the position not just popular.

Chairman Alterisio reported he'll be attending the NMCOG managers meeting tomorrow on the AECOM's report. Chairman Alterisio provided background on the survey and how recommendations might impact the area towns.

Board noted e-mail request from Steve Boczenowski for appointment on the board's agenda for presentation re: Project INTERFACE & TADS. Secretary will schedule.

Motion was made to accept nomination to Recreation Committee for Derek S. Berard of 285 Forest Street – term to expire 2014; 2nd and voted unanimously to appoint.

Treasurer's warrants were reviewed and signed and the meeting adjourned at 8:45PM after appropriate motion and vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Danice N. Palumbo,
Board Secretary