

**Town of *Dunstable* Selectboard**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**October 14, 2015**  
**Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827**

**Convened:** 6:00 pm

**Present:** Kenneth J. Leva, chair, Walter F. Alterisio, Daniel F. Devlin, members; Tracey Hutton, Town Administrator; Brian Rich, Fire Chief

**Selectboard Reviewed & Signed the Following:**

- Vendor Warrants

**Open Forum**

Mr. Leva spoke briefly about the purpose of the open forum and briefly discussed the agenda. Seeing no members of the public in attendance the Board dispensed with the open forum.

**Electrical Permit Fees & Approval of Fee Schedule**

Ms. Hutton started off the discussion by updating the Board on her conversations with the Commonwealth and Town Counsel regarding electrical permits. These included specific questions such as whether the Electrical Inspector may have stricter requirements than what is required by code and whether a homeowner must have an electrician pull the permit for work they do themselves. According to the Commonwealth it would appear that the town lacks the authority to make inspection requirements more stringent than the code and Town Counsel tends to agree. The Electrical Inspector may make recommendations for work that is more stringent than the code requires, but it would appear that it cannot be required. As for the requirement that a homeowner doing electrical work on their own home have a licensed electrician pull the permit, the Commonwealth's position is that this would be "aiding and abetting" the unlicensed practice of electrical work. Homeowners may conduct some electrical work on their own dwelling, but requiring the interposition of a licensed electrician would be improper.

In the case of making recommendations for work that are more stringent than the code the Electrical Inspector has requested that the Board sign off on his recommendations. Ms. Hutton advised that the Board not do so and noted that Town Counsel agrees. So this leaves the Board with the fee schedule. Ms. Hutton noted that the Electrical Inspector agreed that while the Board considers his fee increases as proposed, he is okay with the Board in the interim adjusting the fees to have the \$10 increase for the permitting software. Therefore she has proposed a "clean" fee schedule that takes existing fees and increases them only by \$10. The Board responded that the biggest concern they had after their conversation with the Electrical Inspector is the practice of modifying fees from their set rate on the fly. Ms. Hutton responded that this proposed fee structure would not allow for that. The Fire Chief asked whether the permits regarding Fire would be added. Ms. Hutton responded that these would be phased in over time.

Ms. Hutton reiterated that she is currently focused on getting a new schedule with the \$10 fee increases adopted so as to move forward with the adoption of software for inspections. She further noted that she's clarified re-inspection fees on the schedule so that they are more apparent so that it is clear that if the inspector has to return multiple times he may charge re-inspection fees. In her experience, electricians will respond to the fees and re-inspections will drop. There was further discussion concerning the various fees including underground permits. The Board noted that the Planning Board has been encouraging more to go underground, especially with new developments. Ms. Hutton agreed to make a few additional clarifications to the fee schedule. The Board also requested that the software company's contract be vetted by town counsel.

A motion was made by Mr. Alterisio to approve the fee schedule for the inspections department, pending the adoption and availability of the new permit link services contract. The motion was seconded by Mr. Devlin and passed unanimously.

*Approved and adopted on 11/2/15*

## **Appointments**

Ms. Hutton informed the Board that the Council on Aging has provided the name of a person whom they request be appointed as a member to fill an existing vacancy.

Donald J. Pottle is appointed as a member of the Council on Aging Term Expires: June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
*Motion by Mr. Alterisio, seconded by Mr. Leva, passed without objection*

## **Town Hall Heating System**

Ms. Hutton informed the Board that she has requested assistance from a citizen in town to help find a contractor with the proper insurance and ability to pay prevailing wage to fix the system. The bids for fixing the system came in higher than expected which is what has prompted this latest effort. Ms. Hutton requests the Board consider taking the article concerning the boiler off the special town meeting warrant. Currently, the town has funds currently set aside to fix the system, about \$10,000 in total. The Board noted that it might be prudent to keep the article in with an explanation for the public as to why. Ms. Hutton noted that she has spoken to the boiler company that built our existing boiler and the cost just for this boiler alone is \$15,000 not including installation. The Board determined that all of the options available to the town need to be looked at and weigh. In the meantime, the Board felt that keeping the article on for discussion may be important and determined to consider the matter further before the warrant articles are finalized. Discussion concluded with the determination that the plan now is to find out if the existing system is even repairable before the town goes ahead with full replacement.

## **Snow & Ice Deficit**

The Advisory Board has requested the Board agree to amortize the snow and ice deficit over a three year period as permitted by the Commonwealth. Ms. Hutton noted that Advisory made this request mostly out of reluctance to paying the full deficit not knowing what Free Cash would be. Now that it has been certified they may be willing to change their position. Ms. Hutton advised that this could wait until after another meeting by the Advisory Board on the topic now that Free Cash has been certified, but made the Board aware that according to DOR, if the town elects to amortize the amortization schedule has to be followed. The Town Accountant does not feel that amortization is the best way forward given the possibility of future snow and ice deficits. Further, the Accountant advises that payment of the deficit doesn't have to come out of Free Cash. Ultimately, it is the Boards decision. The Board determined that Advisory should be given an opportunity to re-consider the matter in light of Free Cash as certified before the Board takes action. Ms. Hutton agreed to speak with Advisory about this further. It was noted by all parties that this will have to be done before the tax rate is set.

## **Special Town Meeting Warrant**

Ms. Hutton started of the discussion by explaining how she's added dollar amounts to each of the articles. In addition, she is currently pursuing cost reductions including talking to the Library Director to see if the Library can help cover the cost of the design and engineering of the solution for their egress and ingress problem. From there she moved discussion to the costs for several other articles including the elevator repair article which will cost \$10,000. Ms. Hutton explained that without the boiler article the total cost of the remaining articles taking money out of Free Cash would be approximately \$88,000. With the boiler, the total cost to Free Cash would be approximately \$135,000. Adding in the snow and ice deficit would increase that figure by about \$50,000. In order to stay on time with the target date for the special town meeting, the authorization for the warrant would have to occur by Monday night.

Ms. Hutton informed the Board that she has already sent emails to Advisory requesting a meeting. She explained that after Monday she will be unavailable to attend any joint meetings due to procurement training, but stressed that she intends to continue communicating with Advisory. Given the tightness of the timeline, we may have to postpone the special town meeting date again. Because Advisory has to hold a hearing prior to the meeting, it is important to figure this out so that the posting may be done properly. If the boiler has to be

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replaced the Town Hall will have to be closed for a period of time. The Board expressed concern about ensuring that the offices are properly heated for the winter season. The Board finished by discussing the articles further, including the cost in each one and various other elements. Ms. Hutton reminded the Board that Town Counsel has reviewed the whole warrant and is okay with it.

### **Update Regarding Meeting with Secretary Jay Ash & Sheila Harrington**

Mr. Alterisio reported on the meeting in Groton with the Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Economic Development. The meeting, which was setup by Representative Sheila Harrington, was to provide a forum for local leaders and members of the communities in the region to have an open dialogue with the Secretary regarding housing and local development. The meeting included much discussion about the Governor's community compact program in particular and was a good meeting about community development. The compact would provide technical resources to the town along with many other benefits.

### **NMCOG Roads**

NMCOG is putting together discussion for roads projects and the Board noted that it wants to ensure that the town's Main Street Project is put on this list. Ms. Hutton noted that Safe Pathways has already contacted them to make sure this is done. A meeting regarding this will be held at Middlesex Community College. Mr. Alterisio stated that he would be in attendance.

### **Administrators Report**

Ms. Hutton started off by elaborating on discussion of the situation with the earth removal permit for Alexander Estates. She informed the Board that she intends to speak with the Planning Board in regards to this topic at their next meeting. From there she reported on her meeting with Capital Planning. Capital Planning has put together a formal by-law for themselves. The by-law will be ready for the annual town meeting in May. In the meantime Capital Planning is reaching out to the departments to find out what they need. Otherwise Ms. Hutton is pursuing integrating them into the budget process. Starting out their work is a big job and means a significant operations change for the town. The Board expressed the thought that with patience and a willingness to work together this will succeed. Ms. Hutton noted again that she will be out of the office next week for procurement officer training. This includes time in Boston and in Northborough. Part of this includes a "boot camp" for new Town Administrators. From there she turned to discussion on the grant being applied for the fire dept.

This grant is a one shot deal, and if it isn't done right the town won't get another attempt. She recommends that the town wait until the next grant application period because it is, in her professional opinion based upon experience in grant writing, that the application currently isn't ready. So she recommends going forward with the temporary solution being proposed for the special town meeting. The Fire Chief noted that he wants to be sure we do this right. The Board agreed concluding that it might not be bad for the public to appreciate what the need here. Discussing this topic at town meeting could therefore be beneficial. Moving forward we need to work with Groton in our regionalized dispatch to get these kinds of grants to pay for upgrades and improvements. Ms. Hutton informed the Board that she and the various chiefs will be meeting to get her more up to date with the technology required for this so that she can better inform the Board of what needs to be done. The Fire Chief explained that he's talked to National Grid about a possible solution that simply requires a slightly taller than normal poll that could accommodate the necessary antenna.

The Board had a few questions regarding whether the warrant could be approved tonight but contingent on Advisory Boards approval on Monday. Ms. Hutton said this would be possible, but the Board will need to sign it no later than on Tuesday morning. The Board determined they would wait to approve until Monday and would sign that subsequent Tuesday morning.

### **Use of the Town Hall Requests**

A request to use the Town Hall on December 19th for a Cookie Swap from 12pm till 2:30pm was received from Sue Tully and Sue Psaledakis.

*Approved and adopted on 11/2/15*

A motion to accept and approve the application was made by Mr. Devlin and seconded by Mr. Alterisio. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Water Project**

Ms. Hutton reported that the Town has put together a plan to deal with failure. Moving forward, the Board will need to continue to seek a long term plan, but for any immediate water system failure there is a plan in place.

### **Minutes**

The Board considered the adoption of two sets of meeting minutes. One for a morning meeting on October 7<sup>th</sup> with the Electrical Inspector, and another set for that evening for the Boards normally scheduled meeting on October 7<sup>th</sup>.

A motion to accept the minutes, as written, for October 7<sup>th</sup> (morning minutes) was made by Mr. Alterisio and seconded by Mr. Leva. The motion passed without objection.

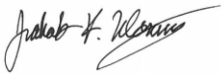
A motion was made to accept the minutes for the regular meeting on October 7<sup>th</sup>, as written, by Mr. Alterisio. The motion was seconded by Mr. Devlin and passed without objection.

### **Letter to MassDOT**

Ms. Hutton presented the Board with a draft letter to the DOT regarding the Kemp St. speed sign request. A study was conducted by the Police Department and a posting has been requested. Ms. Hutton reported that she will adjust the letter one last time and remove the draft mark. She requests that the Board sign it subsequently. The Board agreed.

A motion to adjourn at 6:55 pm was made by Mr. Alterisio and seconded by Mr. Devlin. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Hamm  
Admin. Assistant to the Selectboard & Town Administrator

*Approved and adopted on 11/2/15*