

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
MINUTES
Tuesday, November 13, 2012**

PRESENT: SEAN STANTON
DEBORAH PHILLIPS
STEPHEN C. BANNON
ALANA CHERNILA
ANDREW BLECHMAN
TOWN MANAGER KEVIN O'DONNELL

JOINT MEETING BOARD OF SELECTMEN & FINANCE COMMITTEE

PRESENT: THOMAS A. BLAUVELT
MARK LEFENFELD
SHARON GREGORY
ANDY MORO
WALTER F. ATWOOD III

The meeting began at 6:32 p.m. at Town Hall.

REVIEW OF FY 2012 AUDIT REPORT

BY PATRICE SQUILLANTE, MELANSON HEATH & COMPANY

Ms. Squallante briefly described her review function to new members of the Finance Committee. She said the town is in good financial shape and its finance officer does an excellent job. She said some towns are creating OPEV trust accounts to accumulate money toward unfunded pension and health insurance liabilities. She said Great Barrington is short \$350,000 on its annual accrual. Town Manager O'Donnell said discussions with Berkshire Health Group will give the town a handle on this issue when it comes to negotiations with town employees as contracts come up for renewal in FY 2014. He said he would recommend creation of a trust fund. In answer to a question from Ms. Gregory, Mr. O'Donnell said he does not look at trends in private benefits, as only municipality experiences play a role. Mr. Atwood confirmed, if a matter goes to arbitration, union-approved mediators will only consider comparisons to other municipalities. Ms. Squallante said a health cost trust fund must be used for that purpose, and in that way is unlike a stabilization fund. She said Great Barrington routinely takes money from its free cash account to reduce the tax rate for a given year.

The auditor said her management letter suggests the town look closely at its rising tax title and tax receivables accounts, which are about \$800,000. She said there are legal procedures to follow to take properties and return them to the tax rolls. Some towns, she said, advertise the names of the top ten tax delinquents. Few communities, she said, have found it viable to sell their tax receivables. She said recommendations made in her last management report have been implemented and she has only minor suggestions this year regarding invoicing.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING

The joint meeting ended at 7:06 p.m. and the regular meeting came to order at 7:08 p.m.

1. ACTING AS BOARD OF SEWER COMMISSIONERS

SEWER ABATEMENTS Jan. 1 to June 30, 2012

After a brief review, Ms. Phillips moved to approve abatements as presented (see separate document), Mr. Bannon seconded and all voted favorably.

2. MINUTES

The board approved minutes of the Sept. 24, 2012, meeting as presented. Ms. Phillips made the motion, Mr. Bannon seconded, four voted in favor, Mr. Blechman opposed. Mr. Blechman had asked to insert further information regarding a sidewalks discussion with Joe Sokul of the DPW, but no one seconded his motion.

3. SELECTMEN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Mr. Blechman asked if the crosswalk signal light slated to be removed from in front of the post office could be relocated on Route 7 near the fire station, where it is sometimes difficult to cross the highway. Other selectmen said the device is expensive to maintain.

Ms. Chernila asked that more be done to generate responses to a Wired West survey, available on the town's Website or through the Selectmen's office, as a step toward acquiring top-of-the-line high-speed Internet service.

Mr. Stanton told Eileen Mooney the board had approved minutes of an executive session Sept. 10, 2012, and she would receive a copy.

B. The Board discussed sustainability practices and set a date to meet on Dec. 19, 2012, at 7 p.m., Town Hall solely for this topic. A meeting on Jan. 30, 2013, at 7 p.m. at the new Fire Station with the Planning Board, Agricultural Commission and Energy Committee is scheduled for broader discussion with each Board addressing how to establish sustainability practices. The meeting will also include a discussion to look at possibly partnering with Otis on a wind turbine endeavor and look at Monterey's solar bylaw.

4. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. O'Donnell said volunteers are needed to serve one each on the Agriculture, Conservation, Tree, Energy and Housing committees.

He said the annual ban on overnight street parking (from 1 to 6 a.m.) will be enforced from Nov. 15 to April 1.

He said 50 percent of Great Barrington's residents live within 10 minutes (a half mile) of a park or public forest.

He said Verizon has been advised of a dead tree on its property on Bridge Street.

He said work on Seekonk Road is expected to be completed by Thanksgiving.

He said a review of audio tape confirmed the annual fee for use of the town's transfer station is \$300.

He said Massachusetts is providing funding for three years for a smartphone application through which information about potholes, dead trees, etc., can be conveyed

to the town's DPW. In three years, he said, a decision can be made as to whether to continue the app and pick up costs.

He said the town libraries are giving out bookmarks that have information about emergency telephone numbers.

5. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME

David Magadini asked that the American flags flying at Town Hall and the fire station be raised to the tops of the poles.

6. PUBLIC HEARING ON SIGN BYLAW

On a motion by Ms. Phillips, seconded by Mr. Bannon, and voted unanimously, the board at 7:42 p.m. opened a public hearing to collect information on potential amendments to the town's sign bylaw. Ms. Phillips said that the Saturday farmer's market at the train station had asked to be able to put up day-before signs, but the board wanted to know what other issues there were. Building Commissioner Ed May said people find the sign bylaw is too confusing, too long, and no one reads it. Mr. O'Donnell said Rotary, for its flying, wanted to put up temporary signs, and the organizer of the arts festival at Ski Butternut wanted to put up temporary signs. The bylaw says no more than six signs may be put up two days before an event.

Mr. Bannon moved, Ms. Phillips seconded, to ask town meeting voters to change the bylaw to allow up to 14 signs for up to 14 days before an event, to be removed the day after the event. On a motion by Ms. Phillips, voted unanimously, the board closed the hearing at 7:52 p.m. The board continued its discussion of a request, reported by Mr. May, that Fairview Hospital inquired about placing banners on trees and poles to mark its 100th anniversary next year. The board said no to trees, and said any banners should be limited to the business section of town. Mr. O'Donnell suggested the board continue the hearing to Nov. 26, at which time he would work up potential language for bylaw changes.

7. LICENSES/ PERMITS

The board, on a motion by Mr. Blechman, seconded by Ms. Phillips, tabled action on a driveway permit request from Karen and Peter Lindstrom, 40 Everett St., until it could be determined if the surface would be dirt or gravel and if any runoff mitigation would be needed. Appropriate town departments and committees had made favorable recommendations on the permit. Mr. Blechman said he wanted to make a site visit.

8. NEW BUSINESS

D. MORTGAGE DUE DATE FOR SEARLES/BRYANT SALE

Mr. O'Donnell said voters at the annual meeting in May 2013 will be asked to approve upwards of \$100,000 in remediation costs at the Bryant/Searles school complex. Iredale Mineral Cosmetics has already spent \$73,000 and needs to be reimbursed. More than \$10,000 is needed to monitor the Searles building. The last mortgage payment of \$634,000 is due in August 2013. Mr. Bannon moved, Ms. Phillips seconded, extending the mortgage due date to May 1, 2014, taking \$89,000 from free cash to cover remediation. All voted in favor to authorize the 8 month extension in the Mortgage closing date from September 1, 2013 until May 1, 2014 for the final mortgage payment

and support the transfer from free cash in the amount of approximately \$89,000 to cover the contamination related costs for the Searles/Bryant property.

A. CINGULAR WIRELESS/AT&T ANTENNAS

The board decided to make no recommendation to the building inspector on the pending building permit for three new Cingular/AT&T antennas and associated equipment at 425 Stockbridge Road.

B. OTIS WIND TURBINE

Ms. Phillips moved the board send a letter to Otis officials indicating interest in the town's wind turbine energy project, and indicate further communication after the board holds its sustainability meetings in January. Ms. Chernila seconded. All were in favor.

C. EILEEN MOONEY OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAIN

Mr. Stanton earlier told Ms. Mooney the minutes had been approved. She said her complaint would not go forward.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Phillips moved to sign a contract with Richard M. Kobayashi, senior associate, Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management, University of Massachusetts, Boston, to conduct one or both phases of a town manager search, with a spending cap of \$18,000. Ms. Chernila seconded. The contract is \$14,000 plus travel, motel and other expenses. All were in favor. The town manager as chief procurement officer will be given a copy of the contract and is expected to have completed a review by the end of the week.

10. SELECTMEN'S TIME

Mr. Blechman suggested Mr. Kobayashi could provide helpful information to the charter review team. And he suggested the information about the town's abundance of parks should be boasted in some fashion.

Ms. Chernila praised the Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce Facebook page for providing a good deal of information to the public.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m., after all members approving a motion by Mr. Bannon, seconded by Ms. Phillips.

Respectfully submitted,



Bernard A. Drew
Recording Secretary