

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTBOARD'S MEETING
MINUTES
MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2014
6:00 PM – JOINT MEETING SELECTBOARD AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
7:00 P.M. - REGULAR SESSION
TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: ED ABRAHAMMS
DANIEL BAILLY
STEPHEN BANNON
DEB PHILLIPS
SEAN STANTON

JENNIFER TABAKIN, TOWN MANAGER

Finance Committee: Michael Wise Leigh Davis Bud Atwood Sharon Gregory Tom Blauvelt -absent

6:00 PM - OPEN MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER.

Deb Phillips called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

2. REVIEW FY 2014 AUDIT REPORT.

Auditor, Pat Squillante, representing Melanson Heath presented the FY2014 audit. She stated that the audit is designed within the concept of materiality.

Ms. Squillante explained that the general fund is the focus of the audit.

The 5 parts of the audit statement were listed.

No audit adjustments are to be made. Ms. Squillante said that Lauren Sartori does a great job with accounting and the numbers that she gives the Selectboard to base their decisions on are accurate.

She added that our financial position is 'enviable.'

Ms. Squillante said that the stabilization fund is a bit low at 2% of the operating budget. She usually sees 8-10%. We are taking in 5% more revenue than is budgeted and closing out with 5 % of the operating budget, which is very high compared to others.

Ms. Squillante said that the account receivables are current.

She stated that the tax title balance, which is 3% of the net levy is not very high but has grown; it is good that the town is taking the next step.

Ms. Squillante explained some changes that will be coming in the next few years. She explained in FY15, Berkshire County's share of the unfunded pension liability will be recorded in 'one shot' on the government wide financial statement. This figure will be calculated by the Berkshire County retirement system. In order to comply with standards, the retirement system has to be audited. As our auditor, she will receive the Berkshire County audit when it's completed, she will review it and book the liabilities on Town's records. More information on this is forthcoming.

Sharon Gregory referred to the management letter and asked about the retirement plan for employees. She asked if the actual number, versus what has been accrued, gets 'hit' on the town's statement or on the county wide system.

Ms. Squillante replied that it is factored into the town's portion.

Sharon said that the school budget is seen as one line but liabilities are blocked by the district. She asked if the school district will have a system like this.

Ms. Squillante replied no but said that they do have OPEB liability.

Sharon asked how much should be put in the reserve for OPEB.

Ms. Squillante replied there haven't been any recommendations from state agencies. She said putting something away is better than nothing.

Sharon asked if free cash budgeting can be recorded under anything else.

Ms. Squillante replied no, however, some put it under health insurance.

3. APPROVAL OF FY 16 BUDGET AND FINANCIAL POLICY. (VOTE)

Jennifer Tabakin presented the FY 16 budget and financial policy. She said that it was already voted upon and she was requesting signatures.

Sharon Gregory said that things that were discussed to be added were not. She said that she made suggestions regarding revenue reports and allocation of expenses. There was supposed to be a follow up meeting to discuss these items and this meeting was never scheduled. She said that she trusts that there will be a reasonable process to get the reports needed in order to evaluate the budget moving forward. Selectboard Chair Deb Phillips and Finance Committee Chair Sharon Gregory signed the FY 16 Budget and Financial Policy.

7:00 PM – REGULAR SESSION

Deb Phillips asked for a moment of silence for past Selectboard member, Bill Mooney.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

November 24, 2014 Regular Meeting.

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve the minutes from the November 24, 2014 meeting

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

5. SELECTBOARD'S ANNOUNCEMENTS/STATEMENTS:

A. GENERAL COMMENTS BY THE BOARD – None

B. SIGNING OF TEMPORARY BOND ANTICIPATION NOTE (BAN).

The Selectboard signed the temporary bond anticipation note.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. TO CONSIDER REMOVING 3 PUBLIC SHADE TREES IN THE VICINITY OF ST. JAMES PLACE, INC., AT ST. JAMES PLACE AND MAIN STREET ON TOWN OWNED PROPERTY AND SHOWN ON THE ASSESSOR'S MAP 19, LOT 92. THE TREES SCHEDULED FOR REMOVAL ARE 5 INCH +/- DIAMETER RED OAK TREE, 15 INCH +/- MAPLE TREE AND 16 INCH +/- MAPLE TREE. (DISCUSSION/VOTE)

a. Open Public Hearing

MOTION: Sean Stanton to open the public hearing

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

b. Explanation of Project

Fred Harris explained that there are plans to convert St. James Church into St. James Place which will become a performance and cultural center. The basement will include the People's pantry and possibly Salvation Army. Construction has begun and trees will need to be removed to assist in the conversion. There are 2 larger trees that need to be removed to create access to the basement. A smaller tree is in front of the building. This tree is not part of the Main St. Reconstruction project, but the ingress and egress of heavy equipment would be aided by its removal. Mr. Harris explained that the removal will be at their cost and new trees will be planted in replacement in another area.

Dennis Gibbons, the Chairman of the Tree Committee, said that the committee had a meeting to discuss this project. They recommend not to remove the small tree unless it is a hazard. The committee approved the removal of the 2 larger trees only if there are replacement trees planted to fill in the canopy. Mr. Gibbons said the type and size of the replacement trees can be determined after construction in order to determine the need.

Jennifer Tabakin said that there should be wood chips around the trees to protect the roots.

Dennis Gibbons explained that it was agreed upon that wood chips be placed around the trees if any traffic is near.

c. Speak in Favor/Opposition

David Magadini said that the trees should be preserved. He feels that they are 'historic' and have been shading the roadways for hundreds of years. Mr. Magadini said that the trees are an asset to the community.

d. Motion to Close Public Hearing

MOTION: Sean Stanton to close the public hearing

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

e. Motion re: Findings

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve the findings

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

f. Motion re: Approval/Denial/Table

MOTION: Steve Bannon to remove the 2 larger trees and leave the smaller tree with woodchips to protect the roots where the crane goes over. The trees shall be replaced after construction.

SECOND: Sean Stanton

VOTE: 5-0

7. LICENSES OR PERMITS:

Michelle Loubert pointed out that the license renewals do not indicate if any changes have been made. She stated that she has suggested in the past to put (*) next to any license that has a change, for clarity.

Steve Bannon suggested that all annual licenses with the same information (including hours) as last year be approved and any licenses with changes need to come before the Board.

A. 2015 ANNUAL LICENSE RENEWALS. (DISCUSSION/VOTE)

- COMMON VICTUALLER RESTAURANT ALL ALCOHOLIC

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve with the same hours as last year

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- COMMON VICTUALLER RESTAURANT WINE AND MALT

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve with the same hours as last year

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- COMMON VICTUALLER WINE AND MALT WITHOUT FOOD

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve with the same hours as last year

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- PACKAGE STORE ALL ALCOHOLIC

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- PACKAGE STORE WINE AND MALT

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- CLUB ALL ALCOHOLIC

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve with the same hours as last year

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- COMMON VICTUALLER

David Magadini's letter regarding 'Froyo' and questioning the 'weights and measures' was read into the record.

Jennifer Tabakin said that she will have the Town's Sealer of Weights and Measures check the weights.

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on most recent application approval

SECOND: Dan Bailly

VOTE: 4-0-1 Steve Bannon recused

- INNHOLDERS

David Magadini's letter regarding the Days Inn was read into the record.

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve the licenses

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- LODGING HOUSE

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- AMUSEMENT

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- BOWLING ALLEY

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- MOTION PICTURE

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- CLASS II AUTO

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- CLASS III AUTO

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- WEEKDAY ENTERTAINMENT

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

- SUNDAY ENTERTAINMENT

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve based on the most recent application approval

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

8. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

Jennifer Tabakin reported that the property auction information is posted on the Town website, as well as, MLS and on the Sullivan & Sullivan website.

Chris Rembold spoke about the DLTA (district local technical assistance) grant program. This is used to do more 'in depth' programs than towns are typically able to do in this area. Great Barrington has used it in the past to support the Master Plan, to conduct zoning studies and more. This year, 4 applications will be presented as follows:

1. Investigation and evaluation of a possible north/south bike path route.
2. A target of an Economic Development Plan that would involve identification of economic growth and opportunity sectors as identified recently in the Great Barrington plan and the regional sustainability plan.
3. A retail market study to identify potential retail opportunities in Great Barrington
4. As a co-application with the town of Sheffield – a survey of the millennial generation (ages 20-34) to better understand housing, service, and jobs needs and wants in order to better serve them.

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve and give Deb Phillips permission to sign

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

Jennifer said that Pittsfield will be writing the DLTA grant on behalf of the 6 municipalities that are in the 'Rest of River' committee to continue with the policy work that is underway.

MOTION: Sean Stanton to approve the Pittsfield application and give Deb Phillips permission to sign

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

Chris Rembold stated that the CDBG Grant is ongoing with a focus on Housatonic. Applications are being accepted and are strictly confidential. Jennifer Tabakin encouraged the Selectboard to get the word out.

Jennifer reported that Karen Jo Sicotte has been appointed as the Town's Animal Control Officer.

- PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES (PILOT) LETTER.

Jennifer Tabakin said that she and Principal Assessor, Chris Lamarre have been doing research as to how other towns address requesting voluntary contributions from Not-For-Profits for payment in lieu of taxes. She found that Boston has a formal letter that is provided to Not-For-Profits. There was a policy study done on this option and Jennifer feels that this is a good report to look at to see what issues came up. Jennifer added that the Mass. Municipal Association will be presenting a policy that will be put forth to allow municipalities to opt into a process where they require a level of contribution. However, currently, it is voluntary. More discussion on this is to come.

Sean Stanton said if there are organizations that felt like they can contribute, then they should be asked.

Jennifer responded that there are 268 tax exempt parcels in Great Barrington.

All agree that more discussion is needed.

9. NEW BUSINESS:

A. SB – 2015 REGULAR MEETING CALENDAR. (DISCUSSION)

The Selectboard discussed the meeting calendar and the possibility of adding another meeting. All agreed to keep the calendar as it was presented.

B. SB – APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO THE GB CULTURAL COUNCIL.
(DISCUSSION/VOTE)

MOTION: Sean Stanton to appoint Dan Thompson to the Cultural Council

SECOND: Steve Bannon

VOTE: 5-0

10. CITIZEN SPEAK TIME:

David Magadini said that he was at the Mason Library this afternoon and asked for the meeting agenda. He said that it was posted on the wall very high and required a step stool to view. Mr. Magadini said that it is not readily accessible. He feels that this constitutes a violation of the open meeting law. Ed Abrahams said that he will take care of making a change.

11. SELECTBOARD'S TIME: None

12. MEDIA TIME: Eileen Mooney asked Deb Phillips and Sean Stanton if they will be running again. There was no comment.

13. ADJOURNMENT:

On a motion by Steve Bannon, seconded by Sean Stanton, the Board adjourned its meeting at 8:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Cara Becker
Recording Secretary