

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECT BOARD MEETING
TOWN HALL
MINUTES February 6, 2017**

PRESENT:

SELECT BOARD

SEAN STANTON
STEPHEN C. BANNON
DANIEL BAILLY
ED ABRAHAMS
WILLIAM COOKE

TOWN MANAGER JENNIFER TABAKIN

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. Stanton called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. MINUTES

The board on a motion by Mr. Bannon, seconded by Mr. Bailly, approved the minute of Jan. 12, 2017 as written.

3. SELECTBOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Abrahams said a recent tour he and Mr. Bannon took of the town's award-winning wastewater treatment plant was well worth the time.

4. TOWN MANAGER

Ms. Tabakin said union negotiations are ongoing; budget preparation is ongoing; an audit review meeting will be held Feb. 16; work on the annual report is ongoing; information sessions are being held on health insurances changes; and openings in the building department, DPW and administration will be advertised.

She said the Selectboard needs to submit any warrant articles it wants to be on the annual town meeting warrant, such as motions to expand the revolving fund for police details, form a facilities committee and amend the plastic bag bylaw.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A. With members of the Great Barrington Housing Authority, the board took up the appointment of an individual to fill a vacancy on the latter until annual town election. Candidates Josh Riser and Jackie Sinico spoke briefly of their credentials. Nan Wile, Housing chairwoman, moved to nominate Mr. Riser. Mr. Cooke seconded. In a roll call vote, each of the five Selectboard members, Ms. Wile and Housing vice-chairwoman Ann Condon voted in the affirmative. Mr. Stanton said there is yet another vacancy on the board, which needs to be filled by state appointment. Ms. Wile said the authority is searching for a new executive director.

B. The board and town manager reviewed wording for the Housatonic School Request for Proposals and discussed some of the variables that might be presented to a successful lease or purchase applicant. Ms. Tabakin is to make the wording changes. Mr. Bannon moved to approve

the amended selection criteria RFP to sell or lease the Housatonic Elementary School building and to direct town staff to work to show the building and promote it to interested parties. Mr. Bailly seconded. The motion was withdrawn by the proponents and at the suggestion of Diego Gutierrez in the audience further changes were made to indicate what environmental standards would be preferred. Mr. Bannon made a new motion to approve, Mr. Bailly seconded and all voted in favor. Ms. Tabakin said the RFP will be placed in the Central Register and advertised in newspapers.

C. Regarding a Rest of River Intergovernmental Agreement renewal, Mr. Bannon urged haste as perhaps an advantageous plan could be forged before the federal government appoints a new EPA head who is more sympathetic to General Electric than to the interests of towns along the river. Laura Kittross of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission said the EPA has issued a permit and GE has appealed it to a tribunal within the EPA. A decision is expected by March 27. There is nothing the towns can do to rush that along, or to act on their own to shape an agreement. This document, she said, renews one signed in 2013 by Selectboards in five towns to share legal costs. Mr. Bannon moved to sign the document, Mr. Bailly seconded and all members voted in the affirmative.

D. The board discussed a letter of support regarding the natural gas pipeline going through South Berkshire, and oppose a “pipeline tax” which would pass capital costs along to gas consumers. Michael Feldstein of Christian Hill Road said the commonwealth is already under obligation to cut carbon emissions, and such a tax, which the governor apparently favors, could result in taxpayers paying double. Mr. Bannon moved to authorize the chairman to sign the letter, Mr. Bailly seconded and all voted in favor.

E. Randy Weinstein of the Du Bois Center, South Main Street, said the 150th anniversary of social justice activist W.E.B. Du Bois is Feb. 23, 2018, and it would be an appropriate time for the town to hold a month-long celebration. He said he would like to recruit schools, social and educational organizations and others to collaborate on activities. Mr. Abrahams said that if money is sought for this activity, Mr. Weinstein should quickly put together a committee and a plan and return within two weeks — if a budget item is to be created for the 2017-2018 town budget. Mr. Bannon moved that the board endorse the concept of a W.E.B. Du Bois 150th Birthday celebration in February 2018 and formation of a fund-raising committee chaired by Mr. Weinstein, who is to return to this committee with further plans. Mr. Bailly seconded and all were in favor.

6. CITIZEN SPEAK

Sharon Gregory said the Selectboard this year did not allow much time for submission of citizen warrant articles for the annual meeting. Mr. Stanton said three came in.

7. SELECTBOARD TIME

Mr. Cooke said it should be publicized that the town is looking for individuals to serve on the Affordable Housing committee.

8. MEDIA SPEAK

Eoin Higgins of the Berkshire Eagle aggressively complained that he had been unable to arrange an interview with the town manager to discuss the Housatonic School, and that she had not

answered a series of email inquiries. There was 20 minutes of discussion. Mr. Bailly moved that the board direct Ms. Tabakin to hold a news conference and invite all of the press. Mr. Bannon seconded. In a vote, only Mr. Bannon and Mr. Bailly were in favor, Mr. Cooke, Mr. Abrahams and Mr. Stanton opposed. Mr. Stanton alternately suggested he and the town manager meet with Mr. Higgins within the week.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Stanton adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.



Bernard A. Drew
Recording Secretary