

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE
January 6, 2014**

PRESENT:

SEAN STANTON, Board of Selectmen
DEBORAH PHILLIPS
STEPHEN C. BANNON
DANIEL BAILLY
ANDREW BLECHMAN
JENNIFER TABAKIN, Town Manager
SHARON GREGORY, Finance Committee
THOMAS BLAUVELT
MARK LEFENFELD
LEIGH DAVIS
WALTER F. ATWOOD III
LAUREN SARTORI, Town Accountant
SANDRA LARKIN, Town Treasurer
CHRIS REMBOLD, Town Planner
JOSEPH SOKUL, Town Engineer

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting began at 6:04 p.m. at the new fire station.

2. BANS

Town Treasurer Sandra Larkin witnessed as members of the Board of Selectmen signed renewals of temporary bond anticipation notes totaling \$251,400.

3. REVIEW OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

Town Manager Tabakin said proposed capital improvements in FY 2015 will aim to return to critical maintenance needs and catch up with deferred equipment purchases and resume the regular pace of street work, the design phase of the Main Street Rehabilitation having been accomplished. Some projects are in the pipeline, some need to go through a scoping phase so they can be considered for the pipeline.

The Town Manager said projects have been clustered in certain geographic areas such as Housatonic or side streets downtown and road, drainage and sidewalk work combined, in hopes of drawing more favorable bids.

Mr. Sokul said he preliminarily recommends \$826,000 of paving, sidewalk, guardrail and drainage work. He said areas for improvement include Lake Mansfield Road, where he would like to start permitting work; Route 41/North Plain Road, where he would like to start design work on the retaining wall of the railroad underpass; Front Street, where he would like to design drainage work and identification of any remaining old sanitary pipes that go beneath mill buildings into the river (he would like to seek a Community Development Block Grant for this construction); and a bike path feasibility study to see how it would fit with a countywide program. He acknowledged the new Master Plan guides some ideas for work. He said bridges are on a five-year plan and Bridge and Cottage Street structures need attention. He would apply for grants after the Main Street

Reconstruction is completed. Work on downtown side streets would come in FY 2017. For FY 2015 he would like to work on Crosby, Grove, Higgins and Quarry Streets and Monument Valley Road. He would like to repair sidewalks on Silver Street.

Potential projects have been assigned names and are listed on a spreadsheet, Mr. Sokul said. In recent years the town's Chapter 90 money has mostly gone to Main Street design work, and now only the cost of construction engineering remains. He said he wants to have some projects "shovel-ready" should grants become available. He said some projects will be tied to economic development. In answer to a question from Mr. Blauvelt, Mr. Sokul said line item 44 is for \$200,000 equipment storage Butler-type building at the Transfer Station, to replace storage at the Castle Street fire station.

Regarding a bike path study, Ms. Tabakin said the project could take a lot of planning time. Mr. Rembold said Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission has federal funds and has been methodically working with South Berkshire communities. Great Barrington will be up soon. He said the preference is for an off-road bike path, but there are limitations in Great Barrington. Housatonic Railroad, he said, is not interested in being involved. And it costs \$1 million a mile to construct bike path. So present efforts are to include bicycle considerations in any new state reconstruction. The Town Manager said there is no specific route in mind—that's the purpose of the scoping effort. Mr. Rembold said Great Barrington signed a contract with other towns to investigate a bike route. Mr. Stanton said the item should be kept in the budget to show the town's support.

Answering a question about item 76, the statue at Newsboy Lane, Mr. Sokul said the water system and pump need work, and the statue needs to be cleaned. It is a likely candidate to submit for Community Preservation Act funds, he said. There followed discussion of the CPA and the Community Preservation Committee, the protocol for submitting projects, whether projects should simultaneously submitted for town meeting funds, when the CPC would be ready to accept applications (FY 2015 seemed unlikely as the group is still organizing). Mr. Rembold said that should the CPC not issue grants in a given year, 30 percent of its funding that year would be earmarked for a future year and for projects in housing, history or open space. Mr. Bannon said proposals to the CPC coming from the town should be weighted over private proposals. Mr. Rembold agreed the CPC should make its decisions early enough in the year that the town would know if it needed to take rejected proposals to town meeting. Ms. Phillips said town meeting approves what the CPC recommends. Mr. Rembold said he assumes town staff determines which projects are appropriate to submit to CPC. Ms. Tabakin said a ranking mechanism will be devised, as not all projects eligible for CPC funds meet a level of public safety need.

Mr. Blechman said the new Master Plan suggests 15 percent of street funding be for sidewalks, but he doesn't see that reflected in the capital plan. Mr. Rembold, Mr. Sokul and Ms. Tabakin said some sidewalk work is clustered on the spreadsheet. Ms. Gregory and others said the Master Plan is new, the goal is a good one, but the goal may not be precisely achieved every year, particularly as the town tries to catch up on deferred projects. Ms. Tabakin said a future version of the spreadsheet will isolate sidewalks.

In response to a question from Ms. Gregory, Mr. Sokul said sidewalk work has been done on Castle Street, the next work is on the underpass entrance structure. Regarding Housatonic School, the Selectmen said, there will be a meeting to discuss what to do with the building and its maintenance. Ms. Davis asked about \$40,000 designated for the Housatonic fire station and the likelihood of its being closed. Others answered that the plan at present is to keep the station open as it provides for quick response to emergency calls in the village. The boards will hear further from the Fire Chief.

Regarding the Senior Center, Ms. Gregory suggested neighboring towns (whose residents come to activities there) should be sent a letter asking for financial support. In answer to a question about a Mason Library line item, Mr. Sokul said heating and lighting work has been completed using leftover construction funds. Ms. Sartori answered a question from Mr. Blechman about an energy improvement revolving fund said Massachusetts Department of Revenue discourages such funds, though it would be possible to establish a designated contingency fund.

Mr. Sokul said he will bring in a list of sidewalk priorities. Mr. Blechman noted wording in the Master Plan about advancing the "connectivity" of neighborhoods, and suggested Gilmore Avenue's sidewalks should qualify for immediate improvement. Mr. Sokul agreed the sidewalks there need work.

Regarding equipment, Mr. Sokul said every vehicle is multi-use, even the sidewalk plow has a mowing attachment for summer work. He said the town purchases stainless steel bodies that can be transferred to other chasses. Plows and sanders can be transferred to other vehicles. The loader up for replacement has 8,000 hours on it. The second loader, at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, is 20 years old and is not roadworthy. There are four large dump trucks that in winter plow rural roads, smaller trucks doing in-town streets. The town has plowed roads since the prevailing wage law discouraged many private contractors, it was noted. Town staff maintains the vehicles well and the town has in recent years gotten good trade-in values. Ms. Sartori said the town tries to stagger replacement of vehicles. Ms. Tabakin said if vehicles are pushed further, there would need to be a contingency fund. Mr. Atwood suggested the town could save money by again hiring out some of the snow plowing. Ms. Sartori said there is likely a union issue. Mr. Sokul said the prevailing wage is twice what the town pays in salaries.

4. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting stopped at 8:06 p.m.

Bernard A. Drew

Bernard A. Drew
Recording Secretary