

HALIFAX BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
SELECTMEN MEETING  
TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009 – 7:30 P.M.  
SELECTMEN MEETING ROOM

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Meeting came to order at 7:30 p.m. with Selectmen John H. Bruno II and Troy E. Garron present. Selectman Margaret Fitzgerald joined the meeting late.

The following business was discussed:

**AGENDA**

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board approved the Agenda for Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, without revision.

Later in the meeting, Fitzgerald added an executive session to discuss collective bargaining and security of town. Under “Reports and Discussions,” Fitzgerald added a discussion of the town meeting warrants and questions from the Finance Committee.

**MINUTES**

No Selectmen Meeting Minutes were considered or approved.

**ABATEMENTS/ COMMITMENTS/ BILLS/WARRANT/TURNOVERS**

Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board committed for collection Mobile Home License Fee #04 in the amount of \$5,160.00

Moved by Garron and seconded by Fitzgerald, Board approved payment of the following warrants:

Payroll Warrant	#79	\$308,876.90
Vendor Warrant	#80	\$ 63,308.66

Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board approved payment of the following Selectmen bills:

Cushman insurance (fleet) .....	\$ 960.10
Matthew Bender (law books) .....	\$ 152.00
National Grid (Pope’s Tavern/Mar) .....	\$ 42.80
Constellation New Energy (Pope’s Tavern/Mar) .....	\$ 95.11

Land Planning (Roach earth removal permit/partial payment).	\$ 900.00
National Grid (street lights/Mar) .....	\$1,042.18
National Grid (pole at old police station/Mar) .....	\$ 31.67
Constellation New Energy (Town Hall/Mar) .....	\$ 763.83

Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board acknowledged payment of the Selectmen Office Payroll for the period ending March 28, 2009 in the amount of \$6,031.93

**GENERAL MAIL/BUSINESS**

A. Resignation - Laurel Rigo/Town Accountant

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board accepted with regret the resignation of Laurel Rigo as the Town Accountant, effective May 15<sup>th</sup>, because she is retiring from the Town. The Board will send her a letter thanking her for her service as the Assistant Town Accountant and the Town Accountant.

Bruno said the search needs to begin for a new Town Accountant. Seelig said the ads will be placed in various locations by Sunday including newspapers, websites, etc. Bruno wanted to schedule Assistant Town Accountant Sandra Nolan in on April 7<sup>th</sup> to see if she would be comfortable with taking the job as Acting Town Accountant. Garron wanted to see if she would need any assistance in the interim.

B. Gasoline and Diesel Fuel

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board voted to continue the contract with Dennis K. Burke, Inc. for the delivery of Premium, Unleaded Gasoline and Diesel fuel to the Town of Halifax for the period July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. The mark-up price submitted in the initial bid will remain in effect.

C. Wal\*Mart Renovation Project

Stop and Shop has requested that the Building Inspector order Wal\*Mart to stop work on the renovation project as Stop & Shop believes it is violation of the Town's zoning by-laws. Seelig said there is no action required by the Selectmen

SELECTMAN MARGARET FITZGERALD CAME INTO THE MEETING AT THIS POINT (7:53 P.M.) BRUNO UPDATED FITZGERALD ON WHAT BUSINESS HAD BEEN COMPLETED.

D. Selectmen Association Meeting

Board noted a meeting scheduled in Plymouth with Senate President Therese Murray on Wednesday, April 29 at 8:15am at the Plymouth Town Hall. The topic of discussion is local aid cuts for this and next fiscal year. Seelig and Fitzgerald plan to attend.

E. Head Start Kingston/Community Sign

Seelig stated the Head Start Program in Kingston is looking to have a notice posted on the Halifax community signs about sign-ups for the 2009-2010 school year. As Halifax does not have a Head Start Program and it is a non-profit organization, Seelig did not see a problem with allowing use of the sign. Halifax organizations and events will take priority.

F. Energy Assistance Program

Seelig announced that energy assistance programs from Bay State Gas are still available and the income requirements are based on weekly income, not annual income. Information is available at the Town Hall and Council on Aging.

G. 275<sup>th</sup> Committee/Flag Ceremony

Seelig announced the flags will be unfurled from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. at the Halifax Country Club as part of Armed Forces Day and the 275<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town.

H. Fire Chief Search

Seelig stated the Town has received proposals from Municipal Resources and the PAR Group to conduct assessment of Fire Chief candidates and that the Town had already received a proposal from Emergency Response Systems. The Board will review the proposal at the next meeting.

I. Pilotte Dogs

Seelig informed the Board the letter to Corrine Pilotte of Lake Street about licensing her dogs by April 14<sup>th</sup> has been delivered.

## **VETERANS AGENT APPLICANT INTERVIEWS**

The Board interviewed the following individuals to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Harold Pratti as the Veterans Agent, Veterans Service Officer, and Veterans Burial Agent:

### A. George Gonsalves

Gonsalves has been 38 years in the American legion and has gone from the post level to district level and is now the State Commander. The American Legion is about helping veterans and their families and he has been doing it for a number of years.

With regard to the American Legion, at the post level within a town, you raise money for American Legion baseball, Memorial Day parades, make sure flags and flowers are on the veterans graves and provide funds to families who need the money. At the district level, you raise money, visit veterans homes, assisting individuals fill out paperwork for veterans administration benefits, etc. As State Commander, he has an office at the State House which provides guidance on where to go for help for family problems, financial assistance, etc. The American Legion provides schooling for veterans service officers who then work in the Commander's Office. After doing the initial intake, Gonsalves turns the individual over to a service officer who, in turn, puts them on the right path for assistance. They offer many programs. For example, a woman whose husband was in Iraq was provided with a new roof and new boiler for her home through funding from the American Legion. While he has never performed the duties of a Veterans Agent himself, he has friends who have done so.

To learn the interaction between the Veterans Administration and the Veterans Agent, Gonsalves would sit down with the Veterans Agent and be shown what is involved. He felt he would have a short learning curve. A lot of the work he does for the American Legion is similar to a Veterans Agent. He was aware that the State reimburses the Town 75% and that meticulous files must be kept. Right now, he is sent information on any incident that happens throughout the State and must keep his records organized and current. He is retired and has not worked since 2004; he has devoted his time since then going through the various levels of the American Legion.

The Board noted that Gonsalves had been given a prestigious award for his work with the American Legion and congratulated him on this achievement.

### B. Roxanne Whitbeck

Whitbeck is the administrative assistant to the Veterans Service Officer in Plymouth; she has been in that position for the past eighteen months. In February, she completed VSO training in Boston which consists of a three day

course covering everything involving veterans benefits - intake, VS1, VS21, compensation, pension, social security, etc. The Plymouth VSO is out of the office doing house visits, transporting veterans, etc. and she is responsible for running the office. She currently handles veterans cases herself from beginning to end.

Plymouth currently has about 100 veterans on Chapter 115 which is the State program that reimburses the Town 75% and which determines qualifications and procedures. Other cases involve compensation and pensions. One of the things she did was, when ALS was designated a serve-connected disability, she went through the database in the Town Clerk's office which kept information on cause of deaths and contacted the widows and offered to help them fill out the paperwork for compensation. She felt it was important to go that extra step.

Whitbeck does all the paperwork, files for reimbursements, is familiar with all of the forms, and keeps a spreadsheet of what is paid out by the Town and compares it against State reimbursement. Plymouth has an operating budget of \$650,000 for veterans benefits and she is responsible for tracking and reconciling that account.

Whitbeck would continue to work her full-time job in Plymouth. She saw no conflict in working both jobs as she has had part-time jobs in addition to her full time job in the past. Since the Veterans Agent sets their own office hours and covers the work that needs to be done, the Board saw no problem in this regard if she were chosen for the position.

Whitbeck is a thirteen-year veteran. She left the military to be able to raise her children in one location. In addition, it was difficult for her husband to relocate in accordance with her assignments. She considered continuing in the reserves but the location was too far away. She enjoyed the military and feels veterans should be treated with respect and dignity and should not leave her office without an answer.

C. Gary LeBouef

LeBouef served three years active duty, thirty years in army reserves as a dual status technician - hospital units, engineering battalions, doing personnel work and training. Doing all sorts of administration work - recruiting, putting ads in newspaper, interviewing, testing, qualifying people, and doing professional recruiting of doctors and nurses. He has an extensive background in military and regulations.

LeBouef supervised thirteen people but also had hands on experience with regard to filing, record keeping, data base, etc. He is a retired Civil Servant who was an administrative supply sergeant for a 1,000 bed hospital. In

addition, he held another full-time job working with a mental health group during the years he raised his family.

If in need of assistance, LeBouef can call upon three or four friends who are Veterans Agents to help him. He is self sufficient and can refer to regulations as needed. Through his involvement with the VFW he has helped veterans and is familiar with VS1 and VS21 and understands a monthly report must be filed with the State for 75% reimbursement. He has helped people put in for disability when they were hurt/discharged and have helped them with documents for veterans administration.

At this point in his life, he would like to spend his time helping veterans.

D. Tyler Blanchard

Blanchard volunteers at the VA Hospital in Brockton and is familiar with working with veterans. He was involved in funeral services for many years and has dealt with grief, bereavement and veteran's burials. He has lived in Halifax for the past four years.

In April 1996, he was the Veterans Agent for the Town of East Bridgewater for about eighteen months. He worked approximately twenty four hours a week with a secretary manning the office full-time. He was generally in the office in the afternoon, some evenings and weekends when needed. He is familiar with Chapter 115 as well as the federal services. While the secretary did most of the paperwork, Blanchard interacted with the VA, developed the budget, met with the Selectmen, was responsible for the decision making, and signed the paperwork. He was promised the job would become full-time when the Town's population reached 12,000, but that did not come to fruition and he left to take a full-time job in funeral services to support his family. He did not seek a full-time Veterans Agent job in another town because there were no openings at that time. His family is grown and there is no longer a need for him to work full time. He has spoken to the Veterans Agents in Bridgewater and East Bridgewater, and they have offered their assistance to bring him up to speed.

Blanchard was in the Navy as an engineer but most of his duties included purchasing and paperwork. He kept files as well as inventory, etc.

Garron felt Whitbeck could run the office now. Bruno felt her resume stood out with regard to experience and training. He felt the other candidates would make excellent assistants. Peg was impressed with the quality of all the applicants but concurred with Garron and Bruno that Whitbeck was the best candidate. Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board unanimously appointed Roxanne Whitbeck of 64 Pine Mountain Drive, Plymouth as the Veterans Agent/Service Officer/Burial Agent for the Town of Halifax to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Harold Pratti., term to expire June 30, 2009.

**MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE**

Board met with Chairman John Campbell. Also present was Director of Building Maintenance Gerry Elliott. Following is synopsis of discussion:

**A. Clerk and Treasurer-Collector Offices**

Campbell stated that all parties involved agree to move the two individuals working for the Treasurer to the Finance Committee Meeting room upstairs on the second floor and to move that meeting space to the stage area in the Great Hall. This is the least costly reconfiguration and will involve moving telephone lines, computer wires, furniture, and filing/storage cabinets. Cost of wiring will be about \$700 which can be taken out of the Building Committee budget. However, it may need to be replaced into that account later in the year. A Reserve Fund Transfer has been approved to purchase two locking cabinets. The photocopy machine will remain in its current location in the room. Fitzgerald asked if there was room in the Regulatory Board office. Campbell said they will see how having it in the Treasurer's office works out. The move is planned for April 19<sup>th</sup> which is a holiday and the Town Hall building is closed.

Fitzgerald suggested Finance and Wage and Personnel could meet in the Selectmen Meeting Room. Campbell said the meeting table and filing cabinets for the Finance Committee and Wage and Personnel will be moved to the stage. The stage is no longer used and it will provide a meeting space for other boards as well. Finance and Personnel have been notified of the change.

The Town Clerk's office will remain where it is; the voting machines may be relocated in that office space.

**B. Town Meeting Articles**

Discussed ensued relative to articles on the Town Meeting warrant:

- **Library Roof**

Fitzgerald had told Campbell she talked with an architect that is on the Finance Committee who was going to send down an expert to provide a report. Campbell said the expert recommended someone who the Town hired to look under the roof and he found dry rot because of the lack of ventilation. The person hired is a technician engineer who does troubleshooting for an architectural firm. The total cost of the engineering is not known. This was an hourly contract to determine the problem and provide the report outlining the steps that had to be taken. Fitzgerald had talked with the Library Trustees who were willing to pay for someone who will tell the Town the best way to proceed up to

\$1,000. Elliott did not believe the cost would be that high. In addition, the expert will put in writing that an architect will not be needed. The cost of replacing the Library roof is estimated at \$35,000 to \$40,000. It was understood the job will have to be bid out.

- Town Hall Painting

The painting will not happen this year. Sandblasting involves hazardous handling which requires screening it off, staging, etc. The best solution is to re-side the building with hardy board. Campbell did not have an estimate at this time. He believed the Committee's recommendation will be to re-side the entire Town Hall beginning with the older section first. The trim work would be repaired. The Committee has not met with the Historical Commission about this option but believed the Commission would be more conducive to this than vinyl siding.

- School Generator

The generator does not go on automatically when there is a loss of power. Fitzgerald asked if this will be more than \$20,000 which was been budgeted. Campbell said a new generator will cost \$50,000. Fitzgerald said the article will be for \$20,000 which can be amended provided there is a firm figure available.

- Furnaces

The total cost for this article is \$25,000. The oldest furnace in the Town Hall and the furnace in Pope's Tavern need to be replaced for a total cost of \$20,000. In addition, retrofitting these new furnaces and the three other furnaces in the Town Hall with programmable thermostats, control dampers and individual venting units, etc. will allow for each office to individually set the temperature for that office provided the heat is running. The retrofit will cost \$5,000 and is estimated to save about 1/3 on the heating bill. At some point in the future, the three other furnaces will have to be replaced given that they are fourteen years old and will eventually wear out.

C. Energy Audit

Campbell provided the Board with a copy of the energy audit report for the Town Hall. The auditor will return to do the Police Station.



**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board voted as follows to enter into Executive Session at 9:00 p.m. with Board of Health Chairman John Delano and Town Counsel John Spinale to discuss litigation:

John H. Bruno II	-	Yes
Margaret T. Fitzgerald	-	Yes
Troy E. Garron	-	Yes

Fitzgerald announced there would be no statement at the end of the Executive Session and the Board would reconvene in open session.

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Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board voted as follows to come of Executive Session at 9:30 p.m.:

John H. Bruno II	-	Yes
Margaret T. Fitzgerald	-	Yes
Troy E. Garron	-	Yes

**GENERAL MAIL/BUSINESS**

A. Acceptance of Kenzie's Path

The Board acknowledged a request from Richard Springer to withdraw his article from the Annual Town Meeting warrant for the acceptance of Kenzie's Path because he will not have resolved all of the issues with the Conservation Commission prior to town meeting.

B. Home Energy Savings Seminar

The MMA is sponsoring seminars for residents to help them save energy in their homes. Seelig wanted to set up a workshop in the Great Hall for Halifax residents; the Board concurred with his request.

C. Unsung Heroine - Susan Basile

Susan Basile has been designated Halifax's unsung heroine and will be honored at the State House on May 13<sup>th</sup>.

D. Appointment - Cemetery Superintendent

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board unanimously re-appointed Robert Badore as the Cemetery Superintendent, term to expire May 1, 2010.

E. Trailer Permit - Hatch/Holmes Street

The Board acknowledged a report from the Building Inspector outlining specifically what must be completed in order to issue an occupancy permit to David Hatch so that he can move into his home on Holmes Street. The Board instructed Seelig to send a strong letter telling Hatch the Board expects this work to be completed before the current trailer permit expires.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT (CHARLES SEELIG)**

A. Donelson Scholarship

Seelig stated the interest rate has dropped substantially. He recommended awarding one scholarship this year for \$250 and then waiting two or three years to allow the account to grow before giving out additional awards. The Board agreed with Seelig's recommendation.

B. Clean-Up Date

Garron set April 18<sup>th</sup> as "clean-up day." Seelig will send out announcements.

C. Affordable Housing Committee

Seelig is working on finding some financial assistance for the Affordable Housing Committee to develop the housing plan. There may be money through the Community Development Block Grant program or through OCPC. The article to provide funding for this Committee will remain on the town meeting warrant.

D. Roach Earth Removal Permit

The Selectmen's Office received an anonymous call on Monday that one or more parties from the property had moved out. Sergeant Broderick visited the property; and, while there is some disorder in some of the rooms, other rooms still have furniture and there are recreational vehicles in the garage. Seelig has sent Todd Roach an e-mail to reiterate what the Board is looking for in a landscape plan.

E. Veterans Agent

Seelig stated that Winston Bolton wanted the Board to know that he is thankful and appreciative of Harold Pratti's five years of service.

## **REPORTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### A. Town Treasurer Training

Fitzgerald said that Kathy Shiavone (the current Collector and soon to be Treasurer-Collector) has asked an article be placed on the town meeting warrant to provide funds so that Marcia Cole (the current Treasurer who is retiring with the election in May) can provide training with regard to the Treasurer's office. The Board agreed to open the warrant and place an article on the town meeting warrant. Fitzgerald will determine the dollar amount needed based on the number of hours of training.

### B. Town Clerk and Treasurer-Collector Salaries

Fitzgerald informed the Board that the Finance Committee wants the Selectmen to set the salaries so that Finance can give its recommendation as it does on all other money matters.

Fitzgerald felt the Finance Committee's position was valid and that someone else should do the research and put forth the figures. She opined the Town Clerk and Treasurer-Collector wages should be related to grades under Wage and Personnel since everyone works side by side whether elected or hired. She felt the Town Clerk salary should fall somewhere in Grade 10 and the Treasurer-Collector salary somewhere in Grade 11 since it requires more technical skill. Seelig and Fitzgerald will provide a recommendation to the Selectmen next week.

### C. Town Meeting Warrants

Seelig provided the Board with the current drafts of the Annual and Special Town Meeting warrants.

### D. Recycling Fee

Fitzgerald said the Finance Committee recommends the Board do an in-depth study of the recycling fee to include all costs. The Committees feels that town meeting was misled into thinking it covered all the costs. Fitzgerald then the Selectmen made it clear the fee was to cover those costs coming out of the solid waste account. Garron and Bruno agreed and said the intention was made clear to just include the cost to run the program in terms of salaries, etc. and not to include insurance, capital purchases, etc. Fitzgerald said that, while it was not the plan to include every overhead costs, it would be good to have that information.

Bruno stated the Board sets the fee each year and evaluates the costs involved. When that information is available for Fiscal 2009, the Board could look at all the costs.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Moved by Bruno and seconded by Garron, Board voted as follows to enter into Executive Session at 9:50 p.m. to discuss security of the town and a collective bargaining issue:

John H. Bruno II	-	Yes
Margaret T. Fitzgerald	-	Yes
Troy E. Garron	-	Yes

Fitzgerald announced there would be no statement at the end of the Executive Session and the Board would not reconvene in open session.

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Moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board voted as follows to come of Executive Session at 10:05 p.m.:

John H. Bruno II	-	Yes
Margaret T. Fitzgerald	-	Yes
Troy E. Garron	-	Yes

There being no further business, moved by Garron and seconded by Bruno, Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m.

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Troy E. Garron  
Clerk

/bfs (transcribed from video)