

BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 2015

The regular meeting for the Board of Selectmen convened at 6:30 p.m. in the conference room at 110 Main Street. In attendance were Edward S. Harrison, Dr. Richard M. Smith and John R. Morrell. Also present was Town Administrator Evan Brassard.

Dr. Smith made a motion to go into executive session at 6:30 p.m. to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A Sec. 21 (3). Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

At 7:00 p.m. Dr. Smith made a motion to adjourn from executive session to return to open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED. The media was now present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:**

Mr. Morrell made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of March 24, 2015 – open and executive sessions. Mr. Harrison seconded. Mr. Harrison voted Aye; Mr. Morrell voted Aye; Dr. Smith abstained as he was not present for that meeting.

**Public Hearing on Pole Petition #18150947 – Stafford Hollow Road:**

The public hearing was opened at 7:05 p.m. Mr. Morrell read the petition into the record and noted the pole location was approved by both the Highway and Water/Sewer Departments. There wasn't anyone in the audience to speak for or against the pole petition.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve Pole Petition #18150947 as presented. Mr. Harrison seconded the motion. Dr. Smith voted Aye; Mr. Harrison voted Aye; Mr. Morrell abstained as he receives a payment for inspecting the cross-alter.

The public hearing was closed at 7:10 p.m.

**Girls State Request:**

Mr. Brassard noted this is the second year in a row he has been asked to participate in selecting candidates for the Girls State program. Girls State is a program through the female side of the American Legion where girls from the High School are selected to attend a multi-day symposium where they act and interact and learn about the government.

Mr. Brassard noted this year there was enough money to send three candidates of the six that applied. All six candidates were strong and impressive. The committee had a hard time narrowing it down to the top three, as there was a very strong forth candidate.

Mr. Brassard inquired how much it would cost to send the forth girl as well, and was told \$300. Mr. Brassard asked the Board of Selectmen if they would approve this expenditure since it is for a very good cause.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve \$300 from the Gifts to the Town Account to support the 4<sup>th</sup> student going to Girls State. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Harrison questioned Boys State. Mr. Brassard responded they have a different source for funding, and they also have a lower participation.

**Appoint Wendy LeSage as Monson's Inspector of Animals effective May 1, 2015 through April 30, 2016:**

Mr. Barssard noted this appointment is for the State.

Dr. Smith made a motion to appoint Wendy LeSage as Monson's Inspector of Animals effective May 1, 2015 through April 30, 2016. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

**Summerfest Beer Garden Request:**

Steve Slozak approached the Board of Selectmen and said this request is for the night of the fireworks, and is pretty much the same as last year. He met with the School Committee and has their approval, since the School Committee is the governing body allowing a non-profit organization to allow alcohol to be served on school grounds.

Mr. Slozak said now the Summerfest Committee is coming to the Board of Selectmen seeking a one-night liquor license for beer to be served in the Beer Garden at Quarry Hill Community School on June 28<sup>th</sup> with a rain date of June 29<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Mr. Slozak noted there weren't any issues last year and he has people at the gate to the Beer Garden who are T.I.P.S. certified checking I.D.'s. People cannot come and go with a beer in their hand. All the consumption must take place within the boundaries of the snow fences. Also they can only get one drink for themselves; they can't get a drink for someone else.

Mr. Slozak noted there will be a block dance as well which will all be finalized when he comes back next month.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the one-day Beer License for June 28<sup>th</sup> with a rain date of June 29, 2015 from 6:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Slozak said he would get a copy of their insurance to our office. Mr. Slozak also noted he has approval from the Police Chief, and has spoken with the Fire Chief who hasn't said anything otherwise.

**Finance Committee Budget Discussion:**

Finance Committee members Peter Fimognari and Robert Finnegan, approached the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Brassard said he and Finance Director Deborah Mahar did the spreadsheet the Board has in front of them and he explained this, noting anything in the orange color is where a reduction has occurred. Blue means that item has been consolidated into a line item somewhere else. Yellow is where there is an increase or something that wasn't there before, such as technology lines, phones and copiers. Green is technology and is a hybrid; \$6,000 of the \$9,000 is out of the Police Department budget and \$3,000 is new expenditure there.

Mr. Brassard noted there were no employee positions cut or any impacts to services, and the Police Department, Fire Department and Highway Department made some cutback requests in their budgets. Mr. Brassard said basically we kept what we had last year, grew in a couple of small areas and maintained what they felt should be maintained.

Dr. Smith said the last he knew the requests were about \$768,000 over budget. Mr. Brassard replied that was due to requests, plus the Pathfinder number, plus the Hampden County number. They basically wiped out most of the requests, made some cuts, worked with the Finance committee to talk about Free Cash and infused about \$325,000 in Free Cash, and came up about \$25,000 off.

Dr. Smith asked how \$325,000 in Free Cash was going to be used as a one-time expense and not recurring so it won't affect our bond rating. Mr. Fimognari said it's always used as capital. Mr. Brassard said \$100,000 is in capital expenditures, for a truck for the Highway Department, a fire truck for the Fire Department, and a pressure washer for Parks and Rec. Mr. Brassard said there is also a way to use \$100,000 toward the Pathfinder number because it's a short-term expenditure. There is also \$25,000 in severance in there, as well as \$100,000 in Snow and Ice that is above and beyond what's normally budgeted.

Mr. Morrell explained because there was so much snow and ice expenses for cities and towns in the state this past winter, the Governor proposed carrying over the Snow and Ice deficit for 2 years, which could free up some money if it was needed. The Senate proposed five years instead of just the two years which would really extend it and for a better deal. Mr. Morrell said now it's in the Conference Committee and should land somewhere between two and five years. Mr. Morrell said he didn't think it was wise to do it for just two years as you never know what's going to happen next year; however when you expand it over three, four or even five years, he felt some money could be freed up now for other needs.

Dr. Smith said it might meet some of the short-term needs now but it doesn't provide a buffer for the future; therefore he is happy with the way the budget has been worked out using part of the Free Cash along with making some cuts.

Mr. Fimognari said he didn't know if this bill would pass before the Finance Committee has to pass the budget.

Mr. Morrell said the Finance Committee could approve this now, and rescind their vote later on if they wished to do so, but at least it would be in place if they wanted to take advantage of this option.

Mr. Harrison said right now the budget calls for the money to be there, and he felt if the money is there the town should just pay the Snow and Ice deficit. However if we needed \$50,000 later on, that can always be kicked down the road a little bit.

Dr. Smith agreed if we have the money, the town should just pay for it now and move forward.

Mr. Finnegan said the Finance Committee looked the budget proposal over and voted last night to approve it.

Mr. Morrell said Mr. Brassard and Ms. Mahar did a terrific job in getting this down and thanked the department heads as well.

Mr. Brassard noted, pretty much every department head came forward with cuts they could make, and added it's been a really good process working with the Finance Committee and everyone involved.

Dr. Smith thanked everyone involved.

Mr. Harrison said everyone did a good job of pulling it all together.

**USDA Grant Application Approval:**

Mr. Brassard said the town is receiving a \$35,000 grant from the USDA for the outfitting of our new pumper fire truck that was approved last year at the Annual Town Meeting. The other aspect of this USDA grant is to fund the Sewer station upgrade that is happening on Hospital Road that was approved at the fall Town Meeting.

Mr. Brassard stated this application is for a \$600,000 loan and a \$200,000 grant. The way the program works is we use the \$600,000 loan first and anything over that \$600,000 inside of the \$200,000 is grant money. Any part of the \$200,000 not used goes back to the USDA. The \$35,000 for the Fire Department is separate and not affected by this.

Mr. Harrison noted the payment for the load comes out of the sewer fund and does not impact the operating budget. Mr. Harrison added it is a very low interest rate over a long period of time. Mr.

Brassard said he thinks the impact to the rate payer over the first year is about \$20.00 and then it goes down after that.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the USDA grant application for the sewer station upgrade; \$600,000 loan and \$200,000 grant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

**Closing of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant:**

A discussion ensued regarding the proposed Article 24: To see if the Town will raise and appropriate or transfer and appropriate \$80,000 to pay for costs related to the installation of sheetrock on the back stage and ceiling of Memorial Hall and have all exposed wood areas in the stage area painted with intumescent paint, or take any other action relative thereto. Mr. Brassard said he did not include this on the document as he felt the Board should review it and decide whether or not they want to include it. If it is included it would be Article 24.

Mr. Morrell asked where this \$80,000 would come from. Mr. Brassard replied from either Free Cash or Stabilization. Mr. Morrell responded if we don't have the Free Cash to do some of the other things, he didn't know how we had the Free Cash to do this. Mr. Brassard said that is why we are having the discussion first.

Mr. Brassard noted the original thought was the sheetrock would only cost \$30,000 to \$40,000, but it turned out to be \$80,000; the electrical was going to be \$70,000 and it turned out to be \$90,000 as they were best guessed estimates. Mr. Brassard said we are at the point when we finish this project we won't have completed the sheetrock and we might have about \$25,000 left. What's been done is electrical, fire alarms, and handicapped accessibility for the front area. The door hardware project has finally been bid and awarded and is being completed within the next three weeks. With the approximate \$25,000 left over, we might still need the full \$80,000. The Memorial Hall Committee felt it prudent to go for the \$80,000 so there would be a buffer there for any unforeseen expenses that arise any time a project at Memorial Hall is touched.

Dr. Smith questioned where we are with being able to occupy the building. Mr. Brassard responded right now with the doors up and done, accessibility done, electrical and fire alarm completed, we can occupy the building as long as we have a fire watch in place, which basically means we are paying a firefighter to be in the building to watch the stage area because that's the fire break. If the building is used, the cost of having the firefighter there would need to be figured into the cost of tickets etc. by the organization using Memorial Hall. Mr. Harrison said that would probably make it very difficult for the Big MAC with the booth rental fees, or the Monson Arts Council to hold a play there as they would be doing rehearsals all the time. Dr. Smith asked if we did the sheetrock, would it remove all of that. Mr. Brassard responded yes.

Mr. Brassard explained the sheetrock warrants a deeper discussion than all of that. There are a couple of different ways this can go. Mr. Brassard said there should be ample money for the Memorial Hall

Committee to apply for CPC money in the fall. One of the things he has requested from Ann Gobi is to earmark in the State budget \$200,000 as this is going to be perpetual, to perform a comprehensive study, engineering and architectural, of the property to be able to phase the project and then figure out how to pay for it, whether by bonding the whole amount, pay that out of CPC, or some other reiteration of payment, and it needs to be looked at as to how we are going to do that.

Mr. Morrell felt we should wait until the fall when CPC gets more funds, without hitting the Free Cash or the Stabilization.

Dr. Smith felt there is a demand in the town for this building and felt we should do it with Free Cash and give the towns people a chance to vote on it. Mr. Harrison agreed the town's people should have a vote on this. Mr. Brassard noted the fall Town Meeting is in November.

Mr. Morrell said this is going to bury us as the Free Cash could be used for something else, and felt the right way to do this would be with a Town Meeting in the fall.

Dr. Smith asked Mr. Morrell if they use Free Cash how this would bury us. Mr. Morrell replied it would be that much less free cash available for the union negotiations that are coming up along with anything else. Mr. Morrell said you don't want the Free Cash to fall below a certain amount when it can be handled in the fall with Preservation money.

Mr. Brassard said from his and Finance Director Deborah Mahar's standpoint, it was the Free Cash issue. We are already using \$325,000.

Ms. Mahar approached the Board of Selectmen and explained we need to develop a policy, use for cash as a role in sustaining a good bond and strong credit rating, as the DOR encourages towns to adopt a policy regarding Free Cash. For sound financial policies the DOR suggests having between 3 and 5 percent of your annual budget in Free Cash, which for Monson is \$707,000 to \$1.1 million. This way it can be used in a planned way. Ms. Mahar said in stabilization, we have \$655,000. Ms. Mahar said if the recommendations for Town Meeting go through for using the \$325,000 together the balance in Free Cash and stabilization will be \$1.3 million.

Mr. Morrell said he really isn't in favor of taking the \$80,000 from Free Cash. Mr. Morrell said he would rather take it from stabilization before he would take it from the Free Cash. However, his preference would be to take it from the CPC funds.

Mr. Brassard said right now our Free Cash is at \$979,000 and after we take the \$325,000 out it leaves \$654,000 roughly.

Mr. Brassard said he felt if we waited until the fall the town might stand an excellent chance at securing the funds from CPC.

Mr. Harrison suggested postponing the placement of the article until the November Special Town Meeting.

Mr. Morrell made a motion to not allow article 24 on the warrant until the fall. Mr. Harrison seconded. Mr. Harrison voted Aye; Mr. Morrell voted Aye; Dr. Smith – abstained as he wanted to give the voters the option.

Dr. Smith made a motion to place Articles 1 through 17 on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith made a motion to place article 18 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded. Dr. Smith voted Aye; Mr. Morrell voted Aye; Mr. Harrison abstained as he is a member of the Unitarian Church.

Dr. Smith made a motion to place articles 19 through 23 on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith made a motion to close the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

**Closing of the Special Town Meeting Warrant:**

Mr. Morrell made a motion to approve the placement of articles 1 through 3 and 6 through 10 on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Dr. Smith seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the placement of articles 4 and 5 on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Harrison seconded. Mr. Harrison voted Aye; Dr. Smith voted Aye; Mr. Morrell abstained as they pertain to his department.

Dr. Smith made a motion to close the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Correspondence was read and completed.

At 8:50 p.m., Dr. Smith made a motion to return to executive session to discuss strategy with respect to non-union personnel pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Sec. 21 (2), not to return to open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

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John R. Morrell, Clerk

