

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2015

The regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen convened at 7:00 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 were Town Administrator Evan Brassard and the media.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:

Dr. Smith made a motion to accept the meeting minutes for February 24, 2015 – open and executive sessions. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was so VOTED.

Appointment of New Member to the Board of Health:

Joanna Sorreiro approached the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Harrison read the letter into the record from the Board of Health recommending Ms. Sorreiro be appointed to their Board.

Ms. Sorreiro explained her background is in education and food, and she is now retired. Ms. Sorreiro also noted her reasons for applying for the position is she wants to keep Monson as a healthy, safe community while maintaining both our physical and emotional well-being which she feels is important. Ms. Sorreiro stated she has attended some of the Board of Health meetings.

Dr. Smith made a motion to appoint Joanna Sorreiro to the Board of Health effective immediately through June 30, 2018. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Town Wide Clean-up:

Joan Simmons approached the Board of Selectmen on behalf of Boy Scout Troop 168. Ms. Simmons explained they would like to schedule the Town Wide Clean-up for Saturday, April 25th, the weekend before Bulky Day, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and use the gazebo to place a sign and as the headquarters during the clean-up.

Ms. Simmons said they are seeking donations of gloves and bags. Anyone interested in donating, may call 267-9545. People may also call this number to register for an area or street early.

Ms. Simmons said she will notify the Police Department and Fire Department. In order to get the word out to the public she will put a sign up at the gazebo two weeks prior to the Town Wide Clean-up and run a story in the Palmer Journal.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the Town Wide Clean-up on Saturday, April 25th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and allow usage of the gazebo for signage, and as the headquarters for the activities. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Setting of the Ambulance Fees:

Fire Chief Laurent McDonald approached the Board of Selectmen and explained his request of increasing the ambulance fees, as attached. Chief McDonald said this request is for the revenue portion of the ambulance service and explained every year the ambulance billing vendor looks at the top fifty as to what they are charging and collecting and what the insurance companies will reimburse the rates at. This year, on their recommendation, they sent a letter to Chief McDonald showing what the current bundled rates are as opposed to what they are recommending. The Board of Selectmen have a copy of this, as attached.

Chief McDonald said if there is someone who isn't covered by insurance and they can't afford the fee, the Fire Department has a write off policy with a waiver that can be applied for, or they can make arrangements for payments.

The fees generated account for 70% of the ambulance operation including the staff to cover it. Chief McDonald noted insurance coverage is different, as it is based on an individual's insurance coverage.

Mr. Morrell voiced a concern he had during the meeting regarding the apparent increase for paramedics and the cost of a ride in the ambulance, after insurance had covered what it would. At one time this cost was spread across the board to all taxpayers.

Chief McDonald noted for \$75 a year per household, there is an ambulance subscription with a rolling enrollment. If someone has the subscription fee, the Fire Department accepts the fee in lieu of either their co-payment, their deductible, or for services rendered if they don't have insurance. Anyone interested can go to the Fire Department website and click on the Ambulance Subscription Service tab to sign up.

Chief McDonald explained BLS means Basic Life Support – emergency and non-emergency; ALS is Advanced Life Support and is the intermediate level; SCT is Specialized Care Transport and is at the paramedic level; ALS 1 & 2 is based on the different types of narcotics. Mileage is separate from the bundle rate.

Dr. Smith made a motion to approve the new schedule of fees for the ambulance service. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Building Department Budget Discussion:

Building Inspector B.J. Church approached the Board of Selectmen and explained since she started working in Monson as the Building Commission and Zoning Enforcement Officer, she has found a large back log in both the building and in the zoning. There are many issues that have been ignored and not addressed. She has made an attempt to evaluate the current status of the State mandated 110.7, 8th Edition Periodic Inspections and Local Zoning Issues, both current and on-going.

Ms. Church noted currently in the State there has been a growing concern in regard to the backlog of the 110 Inspections. The State building code and the Periodic Inspections per 780 CMR Section 110.7 is performed for the purpose of reviewing the existing and maintenance of the life safety features, system and construction component of the building structure. Depending on the use, these inspections are required every year, every three years, or every five years.

Ms. Church noted numerous fires throughout the state, and even recently in neighboring towns in multi-family dwellings, some with a loss of life, are due to no inspections. The 110 Inspections are important to insure that life safety systems are in place and working as they should.

Ms. Church said she has made an attempt to start addressing the backlog of the 110 Inspections, and added there is much more that needs to be done in the Building Dept. to accomplish this goal.

In the inspections Ms. Church has done, she said she has found many violations with most of the buildings she inspected. These establishments have corrected the violations and passed the re-inspections. Once a violation has been found, Ms. Church said she is required by code to send a written letter out to the property owners notifying them of the violation with the code sections, along with a time line to correct the violations, and then a follow-up re-inspection must be done by both the Building Dept. and the Fire Dept. to assure the violations have been corrected.

Ms. Church said the backlog of Zoning Enforcement issues she has tried to address are many, most pertaining to properties that are violating mostly the junk and car bylaws.

Ms. Church said just the handling of the everyday permitting can be time consuming; answering questions, making sure the contractors are filling the permits out correctly, making sure they are licensed, and then you put in the Zoning aspect, which can take up more time than the Building.

Ms. Church added when the Building Commissioner is there on a more regular basis vs. a part-time basis, more people tend to come in for permits. Ms. Church said we need to ask if we are providing the best service that we are supposed to be providing, to our residents who rent

properties here and who have work done in the Town of Monson and noted our responsibility is to make sure we are available to the people who come in and want this service.

Ms. Church said the building codes first and foremost address life safety issues, to make sure a building is safe to come into for the public and safe to get out of, homes that contractors are doing work on and doing the permitted work and according to code.

Ms. Church said she works four days a week and is requesting that be bumped up to full time.

Mr. Brassard noted the budget for her position isn't level funded at four days a week even. If Ms. Church were to level fund her budget it would be at three days a week plus an extra fifteen days. What is paying Ms. Church now to work four days a week is the fact that we went an entire month without an inspector.

Dr. Smith emphasized the town currently has a \$768,000 deficit.

Ms. Church replied the Building Department fees cover the cost of the department, and she presented the Board of Selectmen with a chart indicating the total income, and increase she is asking for with the total fees collected.

Ms. Church explained page two shows what she has brought in for permits vs. before she started with the Town. Ms. Church said the 110 Inspection is for multi-family dwellings of three or more families, and the inspections are done every three years. 110 Inspections on commercial property is done every year. Monson has twenty-three units of three family and twenty-six units of four or more families, and Ms. Church said business are supposed to be inspected every year and there are several businesses that haven't seen an inspector in years.

Mr. Morrell said he is all in favor if we can do it and feels we should take advantage of the person we have in the position, but the money to cover it.

Dr. Smith felt it should be based on the position and not the person, and felt the need and importance is there, but agreed the funds need to come from somewhere.

Mr. Harrison said he feels the increase in her hours to 40 hours per week is justified and felt it should be argued for competitively along with all the other requests in the budget.

Mr. Morrell asked if the fees could be increase. Ms. Church replied she hasn't done a survey.

Ms. Church said she felt if she had additional hours she could bring in additional income. Ms. Church said she strives for the department to pay for itself from the fees generated and would do a comparison with other towns similar to Monson to see what their current fees are.

The Board of Selectmen thanked Ms. Church for coming in.

Procurement Policy Review:

Mr. Brassard handed a draft copy of the proposed Procurement Policy to the Board of Selectmen and noted this policy is 31 pages long. Mr. Brassard said he felt we needed a much more, clear cut policy on how we're dealing with surplus property, and felt it should be a pretty universal policy.

Mr. Brassard said the policy was received and modeled from the Town of Reading. Mr. Brassard incorporated more into it, and said this document mirrors the law. There are three major sections to the document, and to the laws. Mr. Brassard noted we are already doing this and he feels we are well within the procurement law; we just needed a written policy.

Mr. Brassard explained the second section pertains to surplus property. GovDeals is a site where you can put items on to sell and have people from anywhere bid on the government surplus and unclaimed property. It has a flat fee sales service. GovDeals collects the money and deposits it right into the account that has been established for it. The brokerage fee for using this service is 7 1/2%.

Mr. Brassard noted the Policy Committee is made up of Town Clerk Mary Watson, Finance Director Deborah Mahar, Fire Chief Laurent McDonald, Police Chief Stephen Kozlowski and himself.

Mr. Brassard said he will present the final draft to the Board in two weeks as he is still working on it.

110 Main Street Building Use Form:

This was tabled until the next meeting.

Mr. Brassard noted this form is really just for the general use of this building; what we think is acceptable and what we don't and some terms of use that will go along with it as well; damage, cleaning, etc.

Security will also be part of the policy. Mr. Brassard explained right now to get into the building you have to either be a Chair of a committee that gets issued a badge, an employee of the Town of Monson that gets issued a badge, or either Mr. Brassard or Ms. Mahar have to go and unlock the doors for them.

Mr. Brassard said they are still working on an electronic door issue they are having for open meetings, since that requires the doors to be unlocked for the public. Mr. Brassard noted the only people with physical keys are himself, Ms. Mahar, janitorial and a few member of the Police Department. The swipe badge that some people have only unlocks the doors for about 8 seconds and then relocks the door. Mr. Brassard stated we have been chalk blocking the doors open very slightly as a temporary solution. The electronic key card company is working on a solution whereas there would be an electronic unlock and relock, so there would be a card that toggles; swipe once to unlock and swipe again to relock. Mr. Brassard said he believes right now, at 10 p.m. all of those commands are nullified. So, if you forgot to lock up on your way out, the doors will automatically lock at 10 p.m.

The use form when finished will cover who will be allowed to use the building, when the building can be used, what is expected of people, and to establish some type of security protocol.

Mr. Brassard said the Board will need to have a discussion as to what groups will be allowed to use the public facility.

Dr. Smith said he would lean towards continuing the Request for Use form as we have done in the past that comes before the Selectmen for approval on an individual basis. The Board had set up some sort of guidelines so it's not ambiguous. The Board of Selectmen would then determine if they feel it's appropriate or not.

Mr. Brassard said hopefully he will have the form for the Selectmen's meeting on March 24th.

In Other Business to Come Before the Board:

- Mr. Brassard said he received a telephone call from Pathfinder regarding their budget. Monson has twenty-seven students more than average attending Pathfinder this year, which increased our share of the budget considerably. Normally Monson has about 85 to 95 students attending Pathfinder and this year there are 110 students from Monson. Ms. Mahar came up with the figure of \$293,000 over the current year's budget for the upcoming budget. Mr. Brassard said the figure will actually fall somewhere between \$320,000 and \$369,000. Mr. Brassard said he will have a number on March 18th, if not before.

Ms. Mahar explained Vocational education is more expensive that the regular education, so losing those students from the Monson school system only comes to about \$70,000 extra in the Monson School's budget.

Mr. Brassard and Ms. Mahar will have a meeting with School Superintendent Cheryl Clarke to see what this means to the School Dept. as well as the budget.

It was reiterated Monson had a shortfall of \$673,000 and now the potential shortfall with the Pathfinder figure raises it to a shortfall of approximately \$768,000.

Ms. Mahar said the deficit is due to the following:

- 1) The Library is looking closer to getting to MAR
- 2) The Highway Dept. is looking at adding a man
- 3) The Senior Center is looking at reinstating hours
- 4) The Police Dept. is putting on an Officer
- 5) There is a huge increase on the Hampden County Retirement
- 6) Health insurance costs

- Mr. Brassard said last year there was a discussion on budget priorities and they were put into a budget document to then re-approach the Board and say we've taken your considerations, made the numerical notations and now we're back to share this with the Finance Committee, and they have requested that again this year. Mr. Brassard noted it seemed to be well received last year to do it that way.

Ms. Mahar approached the Board of Selectmen and said in looking at the revenue projections that she currently has, in comparing it to the current year's budget there is \$280,000 additional money to spend, and reiterated Pathfinder wants about \$370,000 more.

Mr. Brassard said if the budget is level funded, there will still be a slight deficit with the Pathfinder number and added he would like to stay away from recurring items. Mr. Brassard noted there is some slight movement that can happen with some Free Cash. Mr. Brassard said we want to stay away from recurring budgetary items as much as possible, and we want to stay away from things that might look like they are one-time expenses but we know are going to be next years expenses too.

Dr. Smith said he feels public safety is a priority, and the way he would approach it is looking at level funding as it already addresses the priorities, and after these numbers start moving around, if we have a little extra money we could apply it as needed, if we have to make up some more then we could look at it. Based on the deficit we have, he would look at the level funding as it already represents the priorities.

Mr. Brassard said he will work on getting this into a working document with Ms. Mahar for Monday, for the Finance committee to utilize as a tool to see what level funding looks like; if we level funded everything were that puts us, etc. for a starting point.

Mr. Morrell said it's important to know what departments are considered public safety. Dr. Smith replied number one is Fire/Police, number two is the Highway department, and number

three is the Building Department. Mr. Morrell clarified this doesn't mean its automatic, requests could still be cut.

Mr. Brassard noted the town does take advantage of getting fuel when the prices are lower; the town has a contract with the lowest bidder on fuel and we pay the market rate.

- Mr. Brassard said regarding the Annual and Special Town Meeting warrant, the plan is to open the warrants at the next meeting on March 24th and to close it on April 14th. He has asked the departments to get articles to him by April 7th.

The Town Meeting is scheduled for May 11th at 7:00 p.m. in Granite Valley Middle School.

Mr. Morrell asked about the salary study and when it will be done. Mr. Brassard replied by the end of March.

Mr. Harrison asked if the salary study would have an impact on the budget. Mr. Brassard replied he would think so. Mr. Brassard said he submitted a list of thirteen comparable communities to the research firm that are closest to Monson in population, budget etc.

- Mr. Brassard said it was hard to get someone to bid on the Memorial Hall Safety Improvements Project for the doors and hardware. Two bids were received; one for \$38,000 and the other just shy of \$20,000.

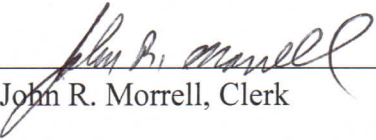
Dr. Smith made a motion to award the bid for the Memorial Hall Safety Improvements Project, doors and hardware to Andrew LaRoche Builders LLC of 41 Converse Street, Stafford Springs Conn. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

- Mr. Brassard said he and Mr. Harrison attended a Western Mass. Fire Chief's Association Annual Legislative Breakfast with Fire Chief Laurent McDonald at the Log Cabin last week where one of the speakers spoke of residential sprinkler systems. The speaker said for what it costs to have a lawn sprinkler system installed in a new build, the house could have had a sprinkler system inside. They saw a demonstration outside in the parking lot of what a fire in a house without a sprinkler system would look like vs. a fire inside a house with a sprinkler system, and the difference was shocking Mr. Brassard said.

Mr. Harrison noted the heat got up to about 1200 degrees and said if you're ever in a structural fire, you need to just get out.

Correspondence was read and completed.

At 8:55 p.m., Dr. Smith made a motion to adjourn from open session to go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation – pursuant to M.G.L. c.30A, Sec. 21(3), not to return to open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.



John R. Morrell, Clerk

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

CORRESPONDENCE & RESPONSES – MARCH 10, 2015

There weren't any responses at this meeting.

1. Invitation to the M-PACT Annual Meeting on Monday, March 10, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. at their facility at 1659 North Main Street Palmer. The public is also invited to attend.
2. Letter from Comcast regarding a price change in the X1 Platform Upgrade Fee.
3. Meeting minutes from the Monson Water and Sewer Commission for February 11, 2015.



Monson Fire Department

200 Main Street P.O. Box 335

Monson, MA 01057



Established 1887

Business (413) 267-3132

Fax (413) 267-4124

Laurent R. McDonald, Chief
Jonathan Miller, Assistant Chief
Marshall Harris, Assistant Chief
Brian Harris, Deputy Chief

February 20, 2015

The Honorable Board of Selectmen
110 Main Street
Monson, MA 01057

RE: Fire Department Ambulance Rates

Dear Honorable Board of Selectmen:

I am writing to request the Board of Selectmen review and vote to confirm my recommendations for our 2015 ambulance service rates. If you vote to approve them, they will take effect March, 1, 2015.

Our ambulance billing vendor recommends we review our rates annually and adjust them to reflect any increases in operating costs we have incurred in the past year or project to incur this year.

There is no appropriate definitive guideline on setting ambulance rates. The U.S. Department of Health, Office of the Inspector General guidance recommends we set rates to cover our costs. Comstar, our billing vendor, provides general information on the rate setting patterns of 200+ municipal clients. In analyzing the current ambulance billing rates set by their top 50 clients Comstar has presented the following average rates which I recommend we adopt. The adoption of these rates will help offset the costs associated with our upgrade to the paramedic level of care:

Our Current Rates

Comstar Top 50 Clients (Recommended)

BLS Emergency	\$1,100	\$1,205
BLS Non-Emergency	\$1,100	\$1,205
ALS Non-Emergency	\$1,800	\$1,950
ALS-1	\$1,800	\$1,950
ALS-2 Presently no rate		\$3,101
SCT Presently no rate		\$3,462
Mileage \$30.00 per loaded mile		\$32.00

Please note, Comstar is successfully billing and collecting the fees set by highest 50 Comstar clients in full (less applicable co-pays) without issue from non-contacted insurance carriers.

Very Respectfully,

Laurent R. McDonald, Chief
Monson Fire Department