

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2015

The regular meeting for the Board of Selectmen convened at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room at 110 Main Street. In attendance were Edward S. Harrison and John R. Morrell. Dr. Richard M. Smith was absent. Also present were Town Administrator Evan Brassard and the media.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Morrell made a motion to accept the meeting minutes for March 10, 2015 – open and executive sessions. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

Replanting Monson Tree Committee Fruit Tree Sale:

Mr. Brassard announced the Replanting Monson Tree Committee will be selling fruit trees; 4 types of apple trees, 3 types of cherry trees, 2 types of pear trees, 2 types of peach trees and 2 types of plum trees, and blueberry bushes. All fruit trees are \$90 each and come in 15 gallon pots and are 4 to 6 feet tall. High bush blueberries come in a 2 gallon pot for \$15 each; a 3 gallon pot for \$20 each or a 5 gallon pot for \$27 each. There is an order form on the town's web site under Boards and Committees – Replanting Monson Tree Committee. Orders must be prepaid and must be received no later than April 3rd. Pick-up will be on April 25th between 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. in the First Church parking lot on High Street. This is open to all Monson residents.

Board and Committee Guidelines:

Mr. Brassard explained the Planning Board is going to be holding a public hearing to develop rules and guidelines for their Board. Mr. Brassard noted most of the Committees and Boards currently don't have any guidelines under which they operate and they are primarily guided by whichever town employee helps steer that Committee or Board or whatever legal framework they are given. Mr. Brassard added this could lead to committees over extending their scope, or to start working within the scope of another committee, or get involved in things that aren't really within their purview.

Mr. Brassard said he would like to propose that throughout this upcoming year, to work with all the Boards and Committees to establish rules, regulations and guidelines developing a "mission statement" that talks about what you are legally obligated to do, where that legal obligation ends, what is expected of people on Boards and Committees, and just a general overview.

Mr. Harrison agreed for Mr. Brassard to work on this and to bring any recommendations back to the Board of Selectmen.

Owners Project Manager Contract Extension:

Mr. Brassard noted the procurement law states any project over \$10 million must have an Owners Project Manager, who represents the Town. Daedalus is our Owners Project Manager on the construction project of our new town office building, and they are the liaison between the town and the builder working hand-in-hand with the architect.

Mr. Brassard said a letter was received from Daedalus requesting additional funds beyond their initial contract to cover the cost they are incurring being here during the extended amount of time. Their rationale is they had expected the project to last 24 months and we are now in the 30th month, with more to go moving into the spring.

Mr. Brassard noted Phase III of the construction begins as soon as the frost is gone and the ground is solidified. Once this happens we are looking at another 30 days on top of that.

Mr. Brassard explained Phase III consists of anything beyond the rear municipal parking lot; the Police driveway leading up to the sally port only has a base coat on it, there is additional ground work that needs to be done as far as grading, there is some site work for curbing and guardrails, the basketball court needs to be installed, concrete work including replacing three panels in the front of the building, signs, outside pad for storage for some of the police evidence, landscaping, etc. The skate park is separate as the insurance company is doing that project and it will start following Phase III.

Mr. Brassard said the Building Committee met last Monday and voted to recommend to the Board extending Daedalus' contract considering the amount of work there is left to do and the amount of complexity involved in finishing up this project, going through the punch list phase and insuring we close out in a way we want to be closed out, at the additional cost of \$34,000 which will go right to the close out of the project.

Mr. Brassard said the Building Committee is looking at outstanding work orders and feel there is adequate money to do the things that need to be done.

Mr. Morrell made a motion to approve the expenditure of \$34,000 from the Building fund to extend the contract for the Project Manager. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

School Department Budget Presentation:

School Superintendent Cheryl Clarke approached the Board of Selectmen and gave a presentation on the School Department budget.

Ms. Clarke explained the five objectives are to continue to build back programs and initiatives that have been lost; continue to expand opportunities for students at all levels; and to expand the use of technology in the classroom; to keep the students that they have to sustain the school buildings and the faculty, and to keep the district thriving which is done through school choice (they have lost approximately 36 to 38 students in the last two years). They also want to increase the number of school choice slots. This year they have 43 students from surrounding communities choosing to attend Monson schools at various grade levels, which bring in a substantial amount of money to help offset the school department's costs.

Ms. Clarke went on to explain the strategic plan objective which she noted guides everything they do in student achievement, educator excellence, and resource alignment.

Ms. Clarke went over what they have brought back since she has been the Superintendent and what they plan on bringing back next year. At Quarry Hill Community School, every classroom is now outfitted with smart-boards which are really interactive whiteboards so videos and items on the computer can be displayed on them for everyone to see; there is an additional computer lab; there is a cart of tablets that the students use; there is a technology specials class where the students from pre-school age are learning how to navigate the computer and learn programming, and they have added an additional pre-school class. Granite Valley Middle School has a full-time music teacher, and in this year's proposed budget a part-time Spanish teacher and a part-time art teacher will be added. At the High School there is now a cooking class as an elective; child development as an elective where the students walk down and assist the pre-school teacher along with their own classroom time in child development; and an advanced integrated Science class that combines science, technology and mathematics which involves a lot of work on the computer, a lot of technology, research and just a higher level class that is started in the Middle School and now will be carried over into the High School. The wood shop is open again in the High School along with technical drawing and the introduction to computer networking. Another no cost initiative they have is an articulation agreement with Holyoke Community College where students can take courses at Monson High and receive full college credits. In the up-coming year they plan to bring back music – chorus, guitar, and band.

Ms. Clarke explained the school is looking at a level funded budget again this year with School Choice dollars funding the items they will be, or have already, added or restored. Some staff positions will be eliminated as she is proposing the reduction of the Technology Specialist

position and reallocating those duties, therefore this position will not have to be funded creating a savings.

Ms. Clarke said in level funding they will receive \$10.5 million from the town. Their savings for the non-replacement of the Technology Specialist will save them \$65,000; due to enrollment they will be able to eliminate four instructional aide positions saving \$60,000 one certified nursing assistant saving \$43,000 two teaching positions saving \$90,000 for a total of \$258,000 in savings. The only new positions the School is adding is the part-time art teacher and the part-time Spanish teacher.

Mr. Harrison stated there is supposed to be a \$60,000 savings in energy with the new upgrading of the lighting and so on and wondered if this was included in the budget. Don Smith who was in the audience approached the Board of Selectmen and said the utilities have been built into the budget just in case as they haven't decided, or don't know, how this will be allocated, and whether a portion will go to the town. Therefore, Mr. Smith said the budget is fully burdened with what they expect to pay for electricity. The net metering also has not been factored in at this point, so this money has not been allocated.

Mr. Brassard stated he and Finance Director Deborah Mahar have been working on the budget with the Finance Committee and after \$300,000 in Free Cash infusion in the budget and making some pretty significant cuts; we are still about \$272,000 short. This doesn't include cost of living increases for staff, or the salary study outcome.

Ms. Clarke continued on with her presentation showing the preliminary annual Town Meeting appropriation of \$10,537,630; the total operational budget of \$10,740,034 including technology; and School Choice \$202,404; with a budget funding gap of zero. Ms. Clarke said she is getting students back to the Monson school system now that Monson is offering music and art again, and if she cuts her budget the school system will start losing students again. Salary increases are built into this budget.

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

Transportation Department Budget Presentation:

Michelle Loglisci approached the Board of Selectmen to explain the budget for the school transportation department, and provided each of the Selectmen with a copy of her presentation, as attached. Anything color coded in yellow are operating expenses, anything in blue are capital which are vehicle purchases or leases, and anything in green are revenue

accounts which include fees collected from students to ride the bus, and fees collected for doing athletic and field trips, and after school programs.

Ms. Loglisci explained the budget reflects a 2% increase. Since FY08 they have eliminated three busses. They had fourteen routes and now they have eleven. In the eleven routes they have a bell schedule they have to adhere to. Dismissal at Quarry Hill is at 3:10, the chart Ms. Loglisci presented shows five of the eleven routes arriving right at 3:10 or right after. The students must be loaded and ready to leave by 3:20; therefore she said she doesn't have time to cut any more routes at this point.

Ms. Loglisci said as she cut routes in the past, it makes the routes longer and longer. Now there are more and more parents picking their children up at school in the afternoons causing traffic confusion, and she has heard them say they don't have time to wait for the bus to bring their children home, as the children would get home too late for scouts, dance lessons, soccer, and all the other activities their children are involved in.

Ms. Loglisci also provided the Board with a vehicle inventory of the entire fleet with the mileage as of last week, the general condition of the bus, and what the bus does on a daily basis, for example is it a regular route vehicle or a spare vehicle. Ms. Loglisci stated the spare vehicles are not extra vehicles. They are used for athletic and field trips, or to take a regular route bus out of service for maintenance and repairs, and are vital to the success of covering their mandated services every day.

Mr. Morrell asked if the transportation department has ever considered using half buses or smaller buses. Ms. Loglisci replied they have, and they didn't work out, they didn't hold up to the route they were putting it on which was out on the outskirts of town, and they really don't save a lot of money when you consider it limits your flexibility on what you can do with the vehicle. Also the smaller buses got stuck more times than not, even with chains. Part of what they do with their fleet is switch them around to try to keep their mileage somewhat regulated. Ms. Loglisci explained at the High School level currently the buses legally hold 47 passengers because you can only fit two students to a seat, once they get to about the 7th grade level due to the students size. When is says on the side of the bus 71 passengers, that's 71 elementary students that can fit three children to a seat due to their size.

The vans are for special needs students, and they have two that service in-town students and the rest service the out-of-district placements that go all over creation with students that are going to alternative schools. The town is required by law to transport them. Out of the twelve vans, nine on are regular routes. They go to Holyoke, Springfield, Southbridge, Fitchburg, etc.

Ms. Loglisci reiterated she is asking for a 2% increase and noted she did a survey this week of districts that have recently gone out to bid for outsourced bus service. Monson does not outsource this as we own our buses.

The chart Ms. Loglisci showed, as attached, showed the percentage increases they have seen in their contracts, which are their low bids. Palmer would have faced a 10% increase but they cut a route to help bring that down. Pathfinder saw an 18.8% increase in their contract. Worcester just opened their bid last week and they initially started with an 18% increase and after sitting down with their vendor to negotiate some items out of their contract they brought it down to a 12% increase. Chicopee has gone to a new contractor and they are hoping it works out for them as the new contractor has not had the capacity that Chicopee requires; they have only done smaller contracts and jumped on with this vendor for a 4.6% increase instead of the 15% increase they were facing. Ms. Loglisci said, again do this in-house and she is asking for just a 2% increase.

Ms. Loglisci said the bus fuel is included in this budget along with the purchase of one new bus and two new vans. Negotiations are on-going for salaries, so she doesn't have a firm number on contract negotiations. Ms. Loglisci said this would have to be looked at seriously if we are going to continue the success of the department as the Monson drivers are paid considerably lower than surrounding towns.

Ms. Loglisci told the listen audience, if you see a van with flashing lights, you need to stop, just as you would for a regular school bus.

Ms. Loglisci said if they don't replace vehicles, it's going to put them in a position of putting vehicles on the road that aren't safe to be on the road or won't pass inspection. Inspections are done on a school bus four times a year; once for the sticker on the windshield just like on a car and three times with the registry where Registry officers come and inspect the vehicle for student transportation, and it's very strict. If they don't meet that standard, that bus is taken off the road.

The Board thanked Ms. Loglisci for coming in.

Procurement Policy Review:

Mr. Brassard said the Board has the final draft of the proposed procurement policy. He has reviewed this policy with Mr. Morrell to edit or tweak mostly the Chapter 90 issues, and with Finance Director Deborah Mahar, Town Clerk Mary Watson, and Town Treasurer Cristina Pedro

the policy was tweaked regarding the surplus property section as well as some numbering issues and noted the policy follows what we are told we have to do legally.

Mr. Brassard noted the biggest change was in Section 9 "Disposition of Surplus Property". What they are proposing to the Board is for the town to go with a vendor called GovDeals.com who is an on-line government liquidation website.

Mr. Brassard noted the purpose of this website is for municipalities to take their surplus equipment and be able to put it on-line to sell much like eBay. What we would do is take a picture or several pictures of the item and put them up on the site with a description of the item or items and list it as, as-is where-is, so the buyer has to come pick it up and take it away, so there isn't any shipping. GovDeals collects the money for us and deposits it into our account.

The other portion Mr. Brassard said he put into this document, is for surplus under \$10,000 to be placed on the site for only 30 days. If it's not sold in 30 days we can dispose of it in the most effective way possible and that can be decided at that point. Anything over \$10,000 would need a sealed bid.

Mr. Brassard said he also put in the policy the Board of Selectmen retains the ability to donate items or sell them to another municipality without having to go through this process.

Mr. Brassard noted there are a number of different pay structures with this on-line marketplace. The first way is we pay a 7½% premium for everything that gets sold, so if it sells for \$100 they get \$7.50 etc. The second way we can do it is we pay zero percent and the buyer pays the whole amount. GovDeals has told Mr. Brassard the majority of municipalities go with the zero percent because there is no cost to the taxpayer and we get every dollar. The converse to that is maybe we won't sell the item because the person won't want to pay the premium. Mr. Brassard has also put in a line that states if for some reason we are not happy with GovDeals.com we can go with another on-line vendor of equal or lesser cost.

Mr. Brassard noted he has been very impressed since he began working with the town that all of the department heads follow the law, and added it will be good to have it now formalized.

Mr. Morrell made a motion to approve the Procurement Policy. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

Opening of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

Mr. Morrell made a motion to open the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

Opening of the Special Town Meeting Warrant:

Mr. Morrell made a motion to open the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

Mr. Morrell made a motion to set the Special Town Meeting within the Annual Town Meeting on May 11, 2015. Mr. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

In Other Business to Come Before the Board of Selectmen:

- Mr. Brassard said he will try to schedule a meeting with the Finance Committee after the School Department meets with them.
- Mr. Morrell said in regards to the Chapter 90 program, the Board just signed tonight a \$432,831.82 reimbursement for Chapter 90 work done on projects completed on Margaret Street, Gates Street, Country Club, Ely Road, and Wales Road last year.
- Mr. Brassard said on Friday, March 20, 2015, at 3:30, the Monson Fire Department began operating as a paramedic level service, and noted this is a pretty big accomplishment for the Town.
- Mr. Brassard announced the Open House for the Municipal Town Office Building/Police Station is scheduled for Saturday, April 11th at 11:00 a.m. The ceremony will be held out front, with guided tours including the Police side. Everyone is invited to attend. Mr. Brassard noted people are still calling in to say they will attend and so far he has heard the head of the DOER will be here, Brian Ashe, a representative from Anne Gobi's Office, and Senator Brewer is going to try to make it, among others. Former Governor Patrick sends his regrets and will not be able to make it, and wished everyone well.
- Mr. Harrison reminded everyone the Town Elections are coming up on June 9th and there are a lot of positions open including the Board of Selectmen, Highway Surveyor, Board of Assessor, Cemetery Commission, Water/Sewer Commission, Parks and Rec. Commission, Housing Authority, and 2 seats on the School Committee. Anyone wishing to take out nominations papers can do so now in the town Clerk's Office. The last day

for taking out papers is April 16th and they have to be returned to the Town Clerks Office by April 21st. Thirty valid signatures are required on the nomination papers in order to get your name on the ballot.

Correspondence was read and completed.

At 8:55 p.m., Mr. Morrell 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. Harrison seconded and it was so VOTED.

John R. Morrell, Clerk