

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 15, 2012
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: David Parker, John Whelan, William Rice

Absent: Francis Cavaco, Robert McLintock

Town Administrator: Pamela T. Nolan

Chairman Parker called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

He announced the meeting was taped via audio and video. Mr. George Morse of the Seekonk Star said he was taping audio.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Town Clerk to Pull Ballot Position

Asst. Town Clerk Karen McHugh was in attendance.

Positions were drawn as follows:

Board of Selectmen

1. Gary Sagar
2. Nelson Almeida
3. Robert Blanchard
4. David Viera
5. David Parker

Board of Library Trustees – Uncontested

1. Sharon Connors
2. Maryann Oliveira

School Committee

1. Mitchell Vieira
2. Brian Freitas

Request to Declare Four (4) OP Tech Eagle Voting Machines as Surplus

Ms. McHugh requested Board authorization to declare the four OP Tech Eagle voting machines as surplus and sell them for approximately \$250 each.

Chairman Parker said it would be up to the Town Clerk or DPW to dispose of the machines.

A motion was made by Mr. Rice, seconded by Mr. Whelan, and it was unanimously

VOTED: That the Board of Selectmen declares the four OP Tech Eagle voting machines as surplus and authorize the Town to dispose of them.

Consider Request from Senator Marc R. Pacheco to Support Keeping Taunton State Hospital Open

A motion was made by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Rice, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To forward a letter to the Commissioner of the Mass. Department of Mental Health in support of keeping the Taunton State Hospital open.

Sign Resolution to Finalize the Financing of the New Ambulance

A motion was made by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Rice, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To authorize the Town Administrator to finalize the financing of one (1) Ambulance/EMS Truck with Municipal Leasing Consultants of Grand Isle, VT, its agents or assigns.

OLD BUSINESS

Continued Discussion to Consider and Vote to Accept Changes to M.G.L. Chapter 32B, Sections 21-23 Massachusetts Municipalities Health Insurance Changes

Chairman Parker declared he would not participate because of a conflict of interest. The meeting was turned over to Mr. Whelan, Clerk.

Mrs. Nolan advised that the legislature and governor passed a law to allow towns to negotiate the cost of health insurance downward. It involves all unions. Employees will have a lower cost plan but higher deductibles and co-pays. Once approved by the Board, it will be implemented on July 1, 2012. The savings will be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Rice asked if unions were properly notified.

Mrs. Nolan said certified letters were sent out and slips returned.

A motion was made by Mr. Rice, seconded by Mr. Whelan, and it was

VOTED: 2 Ayes; 1 Abstention; That the Town of Seekonk elects to engage in a process to change health insurance benefits under Mass. General Laws Chapter 32B, Sections 21-23, and stipulates the Mass. Municipalities Health Insurance.

The vote: Mr. Rice – Aye; Mr. Whelan – Aye; Chairman Parker - Abstained.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion on Changes to the Sign Moratorium

Tabled until the next meeting.

Consider A Stop Sign at Coleman Street and Newman Avenue

Replacement sign – no action necessary.

Set Date to Open and Close Warrant for Town meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Whelan, seconded by Mr. Rice, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To open the warrant for the Spring Town Meeting as of tonight (February 15, 2012) and close on March 23, 2012.

Review Library Budget

Mr. Peter Fuller, Interim Library Director, was in attendance. He said it was a privilege to appear before the Board representing the library.

The budget (\$819,657) includes 14 additional hours staff time per week. It is a level-service budget. It puts demands on the organizations that support the library.

Mr. Fuller noted that it is very important for the library to meet state standards and maintain certification. It enables the library to receive state aid and is eligible to receive federal and state grants and remain a member in good standing with the state library organization.

Chairman Parker asked why there is \$10,000 more in the payroll account than requested.

Mrs. Nolan said she didn't know but there should only be step increases in there.

Mr. Rice felt the small increase (1.6%) is remarkable.

Chairman Parker inquired about the search for library director.

Mrs. Sharon Connors of the Search Committee said they have been working with constituency groups throughout the Town for their input. The position will be advised until March 14, 2012. It will be advertised through the on-line media, the American Library Association, the MMA, the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners and library schools. The committee decided not to use print media because of the nature of the position which requires a Masters in Library Science.

The Search Committee will review the applications and interview starting in early April. An appointment should be made by the middle to end of May.

Review Safety Communications Budget

Communications Director Dennis LeClerc advised there is a small increase in the part time line. There will be two dispatchers on duty from 8 a.m. to 12 midnight seven days a week.

The budget as recommended by the Town Administrator is \$408,000.

Mrs. Nolan advised it includes steps.

She noted there is no money for changes by the EMD that takes effect on July 1, 2012.

Chairman Parker felt the Reverse 911 should be used to notify residents of the election.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

None.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Mr. Rice asked about the possibility of appointing a citizen to the Banna Fire Station Building Committee.

Mrs. Nolan advised it is up to the Chair of the Capital Improvement Committee to appoint a member. The CIC is short members. Town Meeting voted in 2009 to have a representative of the CIC on the Banna Fire Station Building Committee.

Mr. Rice inquired about a Personnel Board.

Chairman Parker advised the appointment is made by the moderator.

Chairman Parker asked about an exit interview letter to call firefighters.

Mrs. Nolan replied she needs a little more time to prepare the letter.

Chairman Parker advised there are a few tickets left for the Celtics game on March 4.

He noted that Mr. Cavaco had recommended the Board of Selectmen should not meet on March 14, 2012 in order to work at the Save-A-Pet auction.

Chairman Parker read a letter from an elderly lady regarding the senior center. She has COPD and has trouble going up the stairs to get to the center.

COMMUNITY SPEAKS

Mr. Gary Sagar wanted to talk about the mechanics of the town election. He spoke to the Town Clerk today. He requested this item be put on agenda for next week.

He referred to M.G.L. Chapter 54, Section 64, which states that polls should be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. for state and federal elections and a minimum of four hours for local elections. Since the Spring of 2009, polls were moved to the high school and open from 12 noon to 8 p.m. in direct contradictions of the Town's bylaws.

He raised that issue with the Town Clerk. She indicated she would try to have those times changed.

Mr. Sagar felt that one polling place does not provide an adequate setting for voting, especially in consideration of the senior center. He felt senior citizens need more time.

Chairman Parker said this has come up before relative to M.G.L. Chapter 54. He provided a ruling from Town Counsel which states the opening of the polls at noon for annual town elections is consistent with state law.

He noted there has been no reduction in voting or absentee ballots since it was changed to one poll location.

This matter will be on next week's agenda.

Mr. Robert Blanchard said he didn't agree with the multiple voting places. He felt that extending the time may get more people out to vote.

He noted that the Town Clerk had indicated it would cost \$3,000 to \$6,000 to have 8 hours of voting. He felt it might only be another \$2,000 for four hours.

February 15, 2012

-6-

Chairman Parker stated it would be difficult to tell residents that we want to increase the time since the Town saved money and did not lose any voters by going to one polling place.

Mr. Donald Kinniburgh stated that he signed up for an ad hoc committee. He hasn't heard anything.

Chairman Parker advised the new bylaw cleared this week. The Board of Selectmen can begin appointing these committee next week and no longer have to advertise.

Mrs. Ellie Wiseman suggested using a school bus to transport people who don't drive to the polls.

Chairman Parker noted that all candidates provide that service and absentee ballots are available.

Mr. Whelan pointed out the Town would be open to liability.

Call Firefighter Shawn Whalen had concerns with the exit interview letter.

Chairman Parker suggested he talk to the Town Administrator.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

A motion was made by Mr. Rice, seconded by Mr. Whelan, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To dissolve at 7:55 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Rice – Aye; Mr. Whelan – Aye; Chairman Parker – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

John Whelan, Clerk

Patricia Gamer, Secretary