

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
NOVEMBER 13, 2013
REGULAR SESSION

Members Present: Nelson Almeida, Gary Sagar, Michael Brady, David Parker

Absent: Robert McLintock

Interim Town Administrator: Gary Stenhouse

Chairman Almeida opened the meeting at 6:04 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence.

He announced that in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 20, any person taping the meeting must notify the Chairman.

OLD BUSINESS

Continued Update on Boards and Commissions and Vacancies

Mr. Sagar advised that Steven D'Amico is interested in the SRPEDD appointment.

Mr. Brady felt he would be a good choice because of his experience as a state representative.

Mr. Jeff Harris has submitted a talent bank form for the Economic Development Committee.

These appointments will be on the next agenda.

Mr. Brady requested that all vacancies should be put on the cable bulletin board and also on the Town's website.

Discuss and Vote to Have Roofing Companies Evaluate the Roof at the Animal Shelter and How Much to Replace

Mr. Sagar stated the animal shelter building committee was before the ZBA when he was a member in 2011. Mr. Read and Mr. Sagar met with them and established a set of stipulations. The proposed building has a pitched roof and they need to do the same on the existing building.

Mr. Parker questioned why the ZBA should be involved in an existing building.

Mr. Sagar said when they first built the building there was a special permit that was never recorded so they had to do another special permit. It was the feeling that everything looks uniform because it is in a residential district.

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He said the building committee agreed to stipulations that construction, reconstruction, or renovations shall architecturally match creating a relationship to the neighborhood that is in harmony with the Town Hall.

Mr. Parker said that would double the cost.

Mr. Sagar said that he worked with the building committee earlier and looked into having the trade school MTTI do some work. They need details from an engineer to do it.

Mr. Brady asked what authority the building committee has if the expansion isn't going to occur. If the building committee walks away, it reverts back to the Board of Selectmen. That building is under the control of the Board of Selectmen. It has never had a special permit.

Mr. Sagar said it has to have a special permit. The building committee was agreeable to the stipulations.

Mr. Brady had a serious problem because a committee that does not report to this Board of Selectmen is now binding this Board to a condition that the Board knew nothing about and he personally does not agree with. If anything in the future has an effect on an existing building, the Board has the right to know.

He noted that this is an example of the need for a permanent building committee or building facilities manager so that there is one person responsible.

Mr. Brady felt this was all premature.

Chairman Almeida advised the building committee would attend the next meeting.

Mr. Brady felt it should go back to the building committee because they are the ones who went to the ZBA.

Mr. Parker said that it has nothing to do with that committee. It is just to determine whether that building needs a new roof.

Mr. Brady wanted to hear from the building committee.

A motion by Mr. Brady to table was withdrawn.

Mr. Parker said this is about the third time. They should have a contractor look to see if the building needs a new roof.

Mr. Sagar said that DPW has patched it and it does not leak right now.

Mr. Brady would be agreeable to that much.

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Mr. Parker suggested getting the same company that did it three years ago.

A motion was made by Mr. Brady, seconded by Mr. Parker, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To direct the Superintendent of Public Works to have professional roofers check to see if the animal shelter roof needs replacement.

COMMUNITY SPEAKS (First Session)

At this time, Mr. Parker introduced Interim Town Administrator Gary Stenhouse.

Mr. Stenhouse stated that he works for the firm that will hire a Town Administrator. He will be in Seekonk for three to four months to assist the Board and provide day to day supervision. He is pleased to be here.

NEW BUSINESS

Review and Discuss Possible Amendments to the Charter, Specifically Article Six, Section 6, and Any Other Relevant Sections

Mr. Sagar advised that a former town administrator had suggested that the Board should strengthen the role of the town administrator. He felt it should be in the appointment process. Currently, the town administrator appoints certain department heads but not others. He proposed to include under Section 6 the appointments of the Assessor, Conservation Agent, Health Agent, and Town Planner. The appointment powers of the moderator should also be vested in the town administrator.

He noted that minor changes can be made through Town Meeting. Major changes would require the creation of a nine-member elected charter commission. He talked to Mr. Stenhouse, who reviewed the charter. Mr. Sagar noted that eight town administrators in eleven years indicates there is a structural problem.

Mr. Parker disagreed.

Chairman Almeida said the Town Administrator is responsible for these employees once they are hired. He has no problem with the Board of Assessors hiring the assessor or the Planning Board hiring the town planner.

Mr. Brady said he felt it was good to have appointments made by the board that oversees because they have the expertise. But, having sat on the Board of Selectmen for seven years, he has heard the comment, "I don't answer to the Board of Selectmen." That is troubling to him coming from an employee paid by the Town. He suggested employees appointed by the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen with input from the boards.

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Mr. Parker said that centralization of power is the beginning of problems. He felt the Board of Selectmen should not have total control.

Mr. Stenhouse said he has never seen a system like this one in Seekonk. The Town has a Board of Selectmen and a Town Administrator. In effect, the Town Administrator is the supervisor of employees in this building. It is not the way to run local government when employees feel they do not have to listen to the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen. That indicates there is a major structural problem. The buck stops with the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Brady felt the Board of Health and Conservation Agent should be appointed by the Town Administrator or Board of Selectmen because the Board appoints members to those two boards.

At Mr. Parker's suggestion and the suggestion of William Keegan, Former Town Administrator, Mr. Stenhouse will seek an opinion from town counsel.

Chairman Almeida said it makes no sense to pay a town administrator who can only supervise half of the building.

Discussion and Vote on a Policy Allowing 501(c)(3) Organizations the Use of Town Buildings and Limited Town Assets

Mr. Stenhouse referred to a draft policy in the packet.

Mr. Parker advised that a resident filed an anonymous complaint with the Ethics Commission specifically, against the Town Clerk favoring certain 501(c) organizations. He contacted Atty. Romney at the Ethics Commission. She suggested the Town should have a policy in place that is open to all 501(c) organizations.

He noted that it is disappointing that someone filed a complaint against selling candy bars to benefit the animal shelter.

A motion was made by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Brady, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To adopt Administrative Policy #67 (attached).

Mr. Bob Blanchard questioned the word "limited." He felt there should be a maximum on how much it would cost the Town.

Mr. Stenhouse said it could not be defined. The Board has to be allowed discretion.

Chairman Almeida said the group or individual who filed the complaint did not realize that by going after the animal shelter it would effect all other organizations.

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Mr. Parker said the quality of life in Seekonk is more determined by the volunteers than any politicians.

Review and Approve Draft Ad for Town Administrator Position

Mr. Stenhouse said this came down from Municipal Resources. He took the requirements out of the Charter. The ad should read, "Masters Degree preferred." The salary is left blank. There is room to negotiate the salary. The town side and school budget will be included.

The ad will run for a month on various electronic jobsites, in the ICMA newsletter, Mass. Municipal site, and newspapers. The deadline will be 30 days from when the ad first appears.

A motion was made by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Sagar, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the draft ad for town administrator position, as amended.

Discussion on Board's Goals and Policies for the Next Six Months

Mr. Parker said he would like to get the four major projects up and running in a year (Banna Fire Station, senior center, animal shelter, and the Veterans Memorial Park).

Mr. Sagar would like to see an increase in the bond rating.

Mr. Brady would like the Board to continue to work with the School Department to consolidate services as was done with the IT person.

Mr. Stenhouse said that works great and it is a cost saver.

He said it is important for board members to work through the Town Administrator.

Chairman Almeida agreed with his colleagues and said that he would like to see an administrator do the job without any influence from board members - be neutral.

He would like more involvement by the Town Administrator at important events. He felt the Town Administrator should acknowledge employees. That could help the morale at Town Hall.

Mr. Stenhouse said he has already seen both sides of the morale issue.

Mr. Brady would like someone more conservative.

Mr. Stenhouse said the Ethics Policy is one of the few he has seen that is clear, readable and understandable.

Mr. Brady felt the Board should also have a policy.

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Mr. Stenhouse suggested a Code of Conduct. That should be discussed at a future meeting.

Consider Approval of Regular Session Minutes from September 18, 2013 and October 30, 2013

A motion was made by Mr. Sagar, seconded by Mr. Brady, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To accept the Regular Session minutes of September 18, 2013 and October 30, 2013.

OTHER BUSINESS

Discuss Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman 48 Hours Before the Meeting

None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Expectations of the Interim Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen

Mr. Stenhouse advised that he is reviewing the applications for Communications Director. Both chiefs have copies. There are twelve applicants.

Mr. Parker said the assistant building inspector position has been vacant for some time.

Mr. Alexander will attend the Town Meeting on November 18th.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN LIAISON REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Mr. Sagar inquired about the lease with the Wampanoag's for the old town hall.

He asked to meet with Atty. Joe Fair prior to Town Meeting for an update on the call firefighter ruling and the Health Department legal matter.

He also inquired about the issue with the Board of Library Trustees and the Veterans Memorial Park Committee.

Mr. Brady explained that Mr. McLintock and he have not been able to mediate and the petitioned article will go forward at Town Meeting. It is up to the residents. He felt it should be postponed and the Board call a special town meeting in January.

Mr. Parker suggested they decide who would present what articles at Town Meeting.

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Mr. Brady said he got a call from a resident who lives near Seekonk Commons. The community garden needs to be cleaned up. He asked that Mr. Lamoureux look into it.

He was told the bid for the senior center came in over. The consultant resubmitted the same RFP with an addendum. If the bid comes in \$1M over again, he does not want to pay the consultant's bill.

Mr. Brady asked how Mr. Sagar made out with the Finance Committee regarding the old town hall and the traffic control device.

Mr. Sagar said the Finance Committee members were receptive. Mr. Lamoureux went to the MCIC. There is support on both articles.

Mr. Parker said the animal shelter building committee gave the architect an upfront figure of \$300,000 and the bid came in at \$600,000. He felt that architect's bill should not be paid.

Chairman Almeida advised that the 9th annual tree lighting sponsored by the Kiwanis Club would take place on Thursday, December 5, at 6 p.m. at Town Hall. Donations will be accepted for Doorways.

He felt the tree did not have enough lights. He asked to reach out to the Kiwanis Club or DPW to add more lights.

COMMUNITY SPEAKS (Second Session)

None.

A motion was made by Mr. Parker, seconded by Mr. Sagar, and it was unanimously

VOTED: To dissolve at 8:04 p.m.

The vote: Mr. Parker – Aye; Mr. Sagar – Aye – Aye; Mr. Brady – Aye; Chairman Almeida – Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Brady, Clerk

Patricia Gamer, Secretary