

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 6, 2014 BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman David Canada, Selectmen Bruno Federico and Tim Copeland, and Town Administrator Paul Deschaine.

At 7:30 pm, Mr. Canada opened the general meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: Mr. Copeland moved to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2013 meeting as written. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Deb Bronson reported that there is \$9,936,649.41 in the general checking account.

NEW BUSINESS: Town Administrator Paul Deschaine introduced Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) as a traffic control consultant company who assisted us in the Plan New Hampshire project at the Town Center. Town Planner Lincoln Daley explained that GPI is present at the meeting to discuss possible alternatives for traffic control at the intersection of NH Route 33 (Portsmouth Avenue) at Winnicutt Road.

John Diaz from GPI updated the Board of the study done on Route 33 and Winnicutt Road. He presented the volume of traffic at different times of the day, going both northbound and southbound. Also included in the report was an accident summary and crash rate, which is 0.52 per million vehicles. The accident data was obtained from the Stratham police department from the period of January 2007 through September 2009.

Mr. Diaz stated the objective is to discuss potential safety and capacity improvements, not to propose a solution. Some of the options would include: to do nothing and continue with a stop control; a traffic signal; a possible roundabout, or anything else that would be brought up during the discussion. Some of the benefits with a traffic signal would be to allocate right of way; improve safety and access; traffic responsive and programmable; accommodates emergency vehicles; protected pedestrian movements and ADA accessibility; and to accommodate bicycles. Detriments would be that it adds delays to Route 33; higher construction costs; potential for equipment failure; aesthetics; and potential increase in rear-end collisions.

Lincoln Daley asked about the coordination of traffic lights. Mr. Diaz explained that coordination of lights will not be a problem because typically a traffic light is coordinated when it is within ½ mile of another traffic light. The nearest traffic signal is at least a mile away.

The benefits of having a Roundabout control would be fewer conflict points; decrease in crash rates and severity of crashes; non-mechanical; 24 hour traffic calming; and aesthetic potential. The detriments would be, yielding of right of way; Route 33 operations; and construction costs (approximately \$500,000).

The study included level-of-service criteria for intersections that gave a grade of A through F, similar to high school grading system, for the intersection of Route 33 at Winnicutt Road. The traffic on a weekday morning would receive a B for the Roundabout, a B for a signal with left turn lanes, and a D for stop sign with left turn lanes. On a Saturday at midday the grading would

be an F for the Roundabout, C for a signal with left turn lanes, and F for stop sign with left turn lanes. The traffic on a weekday evening would receive C for the Roundabout, C for a signal with left turn lanes, and E for stop sign with left turn lanes.

Mr. Diaz said the estimated cost for the options would be:

- to use a stop control, there would be no cost;
- to install a traffic signal using existing equipment put the cost between \$50,000-\$100,000;
- to purchase new equipment, that cost would be \$150,000;
- cost of a roundabout would be \$500,000.

Mark Eddinger of O'Brien Energy asked if the TE Grant could provide funding for any of the traffic control options discussed. Paul Deschaine clarified what the TE Grant is for, and explained that the answer to the question is that the grant would not provide any funding for traffic control.

Mr. Eddinger said that his company is planning to do some landscaping and make improvements in conjunction to what the Town is doing. In addition, at the last meeting John Forma indicated that O'Brien Energy would be willing to commit to give \$50,000 cash towards the traffic signal option, if that is the decision made by the Board.

Mr. Eddinger asked about the condition of the existing equipment that would be used, if that option was selected. Mr. Diaz responded that the computer that runs the signal would need to be upgraded (which would be the biggest cost), and the next question would be if the Town wants to maintain the wood poles that are out there or to go with the steel structures.

Mr. Canada asked if the existing controls for the Fire Department preemption light could be used to control a pedestrian light. Mr. Diaz said that it was possible; they would have to look at what additional costs would be associated with that function. Colin Lavery mentioned that the grant will provide sidewalks in the area, and so a pedestrian crossing signal would make it safer for pedestrians.

John Sapienza, Fire Department member, mentioned that he has seen cars zip right through the red light that is in front of the fire station. He doesn't think a traffic light would have any impact for the folks leaving the little grocery store/gas station because it is beyond where the traffic light is proposed. He also advised that if sidewalks are installed, the highway people would need to maintain them and remove snow – that is an additional cost to consider. Mr. Canada acknowledged that was a responsibility the Town was accepting. Mr. Lavery commented that typically in towns where new traffic lights are installed, signage is in place that alerts drivers that a new traffic signal is ahead of them.

Bob Goodrich asked if the study covered how many people actually attempt to cross Winnicutt Road at that intersection. Mr. Diaz responded that not many people do it now, but what the demand would be was not determined by the study. Mr. Goodrich commented that the only thing on the other side of the street is the bank and if someone wanted to go to the bank, most likely they would drive to it – he doesn't see the need for a pedestrian crossing. He continued to comment on sidewalks saying there is no place to park the car to get out and walk on the

sidewalks, and there is no attraction around that would warrant the need for sidewalks. Mr. Diaz responded that there is no provision for pedestrians, and as the Town is improving the Downtown area, what provisions would the Town want to have, pavement with no provision for pedestrians, or bicyclists, or to encourage folks to use the Town center by having sidewalks that could increase the demand for use and room for growth – “if you build it, they will come” – perhaps folks will want to walk to the bank if they feel safe doing so.

Mr. Copeland asked if we signalize that location, how much would it back up the traffic, and would it cause problems for folks in the side streets entering the circle, as well as coming out of Chisolm Farms Rd. Mr. Diaz referred to the intersection capacity analysis summary in the study and explained it would depend on the time of day. Mr. Copeland asked how many cycles of the light would a car be delayed in the worse-case scenario. Mr. Diaz responded 2 cycles during the peak of commuter traffic.

Mr. Copeland asked if it would affect the response of the volunteer firemen having to get to the firehouse from the traffic circle if the traffic is already stopped, and backed up. Mr. Diaz said, that yes, it could. Mr. Copeland then asked if he was aware that the emergency operations center is on the second floor of the firehouse, and, for example, if there was a hazardous spill or propane tank fire in the roundabout, it would stop traffic completely at that location – how would we deal with that. Mr. Diaz responded if the traffic signal option is in place then preemption along all the approaches would be used. With the roundabout option, it can be designed so that vehicles can pass in an emergency vehicle lane. Mr. Diaz added that if it was a spill at the intersection that shuts the intersection down he doesn't have an answer for that. Mr. Copeland expressed that he doesn't want to create other problems by solving one problem.

Resident Colleen Lake commented that the reason she is interested in this issue is to slow speeding cars down and to make sure the big trucks carrying hazardous waste, don't create more problems in the area. She commented that the Chisolm Farms residents are in favor of some kind of traffic control there. Ms. Lake also commented that sidewalks and a pedestrian signal is a high priority for her.

Mr. Eddinger asked if the speed is reduced to 35 mph in that area, and no stop sign, signal or roundabout was in place, would that be a viable option for the Town. Mr. Diaz responded that you can't just lower the speed limit to what you want it to be, it is actually based on the 85th percentile speed of what the traffic is doing out there, any changes to a speed limit need to be based on an engineering study.

Bob Goodrich asked if rumble strips in the street would be another option to slow drivers down. John Sapienza commented that rumble strips would not be a good solution for patients being transported by the emergency vehicles. Joe Johnson, GPI, mentioned that the analysis showing in the presentation is for future year 2030, we did account for growth in the numbers. They were counted in 2010 but we assumed a 1 percent growth per year. The feedback we have received about rumble strips, or textured crosswalks are a bit noisy.

Gina Guirola presented a petition to the Board with approximately 70 signatures which stated the following: We the undersigned do hereby petition the Stratham Board of Selectmen to consider placing an article on the Warrant for the next Town Meeting addressing our safety concerns at

the intersection of Winnicutt Road and Portsmouth Avenue. We would like to encourage the Town of Stratham to vote to take the necessary steps to install a fully functional traffic light at this intersection. Thank you.

Mr. Copeland asked Chief Scippa where most of the accidents are occurring on Portsmouth Avenue at either intersections with traffic lights, or non-traffic lights. The reply from Chief Scippa was he reviewed data from the last two years at Winnicutt Road and Bunker Hill Avenue at Portsmouth Avenue, and then at the traffic light by the Market Basket – he said there is an average of 3 accidents per year at each of those intersections. They are equally in need of being evaluated. Chief Scippa's conclusion is that there is not one intersection in need more than any other intersection. He commented that if a traffic light was placed at the intersection of Winnicutt Road and Route 33, it would benefit drivers making a left hand turn off Winnicutt Road onto Route 33, not sure it would help the traffic coming out of O'Brien's store unless the improvements are made.

Mr. Copeland asked Chief Scippa if we used more traffic enforcement, would it help cut down the amount of accidents and people not yielding the right-of-way. Chief Scippa responded that traffic enforcement is valuable, it gives people the expectation that something is happening there. However, there is not enough resources to monitor it 24 hours a day.

Board recessed at 8:38 pm and reconvened at 8:42 pm.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT: Highway Agent Colin Lavery was present at the meeting to update the Board on his Department's activities.

Mr. Lavery apprised the Board that the Municipal Center parking lot lighting is underway. Kramer Electric has installed five wall packs on the exterior of the Municipal Center. He is looking into the number of light poles that will be needed and researching the most cost effective way to complete the project.

Mr. Lavery reported that the Municipal Center had a roof drain leak in one of the Library meeting rooms. We had a company come and extracted all the water – it was contained to a 14 x 15 area. A few ceiling tiles were damaged but the insulation wasn't ruined. The cause was that a significant amount of snowfall had built up around the roof drain. Mr. Deschaine mentioned that a second leak was found on the opposite side of the building – not near a roof drain. The cause seems to be the extreme temperatures we have had lately.

Mr. Lavery updated the Board on the redesign at the Transfer Station. Improvements that recently were made included going to a cash only policy; residents seemed to understand. Another Transfer Station improvement was a change in the containers. This spring new signage will be added.

Mr. Lavery updated the Board on various projects throughout Town, including the status of Dave Short's property off Scamman Road. He is doing a nice job of thinning the larger trees but keeping all species, which has given it a park-like feel. It is really nice and he has even added trails to the parcel.

Mr. Lavery reported that the Fire Department's squad vehicle had repairs done to the frame rails that support the utility body at a cost of \$1,000, mentioning that \$5,000 was saved on that project.

Mr. Lavery then gave a brief update to the Board on the Stratham Heights Road paving near Robert drainage easement and Guinea Road. The improvements made appear to have corrected the drainage problem.

Mr. Lavery updated the Board on the salt shed maintenance. The salt shed has not been painted since it was built. The shed and the concrete base were painted and a couple pieces of trim and fascia below the shingles were replaced.

Mr. Lavery reported that the radio remotes the Board had approved have been placed in various areas of the garage and break room. They have been installed and are working perfectly, it really helped improve the communication during the recent storm.

Mr. Lavery reported that the waste oil furnace is "on its last legs." The police department phoned last week to report that residents were complaining about a fuel smell that the waste oil furnace is putting out. The heat exchanger is failing and we have not found a company willing to service it. We are looking into pricing to replace it, and also into the possibility of grants to pay for it.

Mr. Lavery made a request to the Board to compensate him for 100% of his cell phone use since he uses his cell phone to conduct Town business and it is not uncommon for him to receive a call from a resident any time of the day or night to report conditions of the Town roads. After discussion among the Board regarding this request, the Board asked Mr. Deschaine to get feedback from the Town employees who use their cell phone for work to see if the reimbursement rate is adequate.

PARKS & RECREATION: Director Seth Hickey was present at the meeting to update the Board on his Department's activities. He announced that after school activities started this week. He mentioned a challenge he is facing with room availability and discussed that some groups reserve their rooms for a full year and sometimes that creates a challenge for finding space for other groups or new classes. He asked the Board if they would consider limiting the number of dates a group can reserve at one time.

Mr. Hickey informed the Board that two ski programs begin this week – there are 134 middle school and high school kids in one program and 40 kids in the elementary program.

Mr. Hickey updated the Board on the skating rink in the Park. There is the highest level of water of the season there now; we have had two deliveries of water from Buxton to bring it to the current level. The rink is about 50% filled. Mr. Canada suggested to Mr. Hickey that he add the cost of purchasing water for the ice rink into his budget rather than using the Park Reservation Fund money which, in his opinion, should be reserved for capital expenditures. Another option would be to use the fire tanker to fill the ice rink, instead of purchasing from Buxton. The Board also discussed the size of the ice rink. It may be too big to effectively fill and manage.

Mr. Hickey stated that the old snowmobile was sold for what we paid for it, and that another was bought for \$3,000 plus \$700 for repairs. The new one is much better at meeting the trail grooming needs.

Mr. Hickey reported that they are working with the fire department on safety zones in the park. They are looking at creating a zone map to post at the fire department and the police department in case of a need for search and rescue, or evacuation.

Mr. Hickey reported the wooden fencing at Stevens Park has been replaced.

Mr. Hickey then updated the Board on the basketball program. Mr. Canada expressed a desire to work with the School Board on space usage and commented that if we use their space we would take care of it, and make it accessible and safe for public use.

Mr. Hickey asked the Board for a decision on whether or not to allow the school PTO to use the firehouse sign to advertise a fundraiser. The Board discussed that they would want to take every request on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Canada moved to allow the PTO to use the sign. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, the motion passed with 2 in favor and one opposed with Mr. Copeland as opposed.

Mr. Hickey asked the Board for a decision regarding a request to use the sign for one day for an Eagle Scouts ceremony, which will be occurring at the firehouse Sunday, January 12, 2014. Mr. Canada moved to allow the PTO to use the sign. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, the motion passed with 2 in favor and one opposed with Mr. Copeland as opposed.

Mr. Hickey updated the Board on the upcoming community trip event on January 11, 2014. Every space is filled, a very popular event. He also commented that they are looking to expand the winter bike series next year.

There was a discussion about Kim Woods driving the truck home in the winter so that she will have access to it for the purpose of plowing the Park. It was decided by the Board that the truck will be parked at the Highway Garage.

PARK PERMITS/MUNICIPAL CENTER RENTALS:

The following Park permits and Municipal Center rentals were discussed and acted upon:

Kate Fitzpatrick reserved the use of the Municipal Center for a wedding reception on September 20, 2014 and she has now asked for permission to serve alcohol at the reception. Mr. Canada moved to approve with the stipulation that Ms. Fitzpatrick provides liability insurance. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Tammy Heath requested use of the Firehouse on January 31, 2014 for an EHS hockey team dinner. Mr. Copeland moved to approve the request and waive the fee. Mr. Federico seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously.

Denise Jules requested the Municipal Center for a party on June 21, 2014. The request was approved.

Catherine Borgerson requested the Municipal Center for a 1st birthday party on February 16, 2014. The request was approved.

Vicky Cook requested the Firehouse for Ladies Auxiliary meetings for February 27, March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26, July 10, August 28, September 25, October 23, and November 20, 2014. The request was approved.

Vicky Cook requested the Firehouse for election day food preparation on March 11, September 8, September 9, November 3, and November 4, 2014. The request was approved.

MEETINGS: The Chair then reviewed the meetings scheduled for the coming week and reviewed the meetings held since the last Selectmen's meeting in December 2013.

ADMINISTRATION:

The group briefly discussed Senator Stiles proposed (SB 223) and wants to have the Public Works Commission discuss it at the Public Works meeting on Thursday, January 9, 2014. The Board of Selectmen support SB 223.

Mr. Deschaine updated the Board on roof leaks in the Library. Also, the urinals in the men's room are out of service. Plumbers will come in and give an estimate for fixing them.

At 10:30 pm, Mr. Canada moved to adjourn. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

At 10:31 pm, the Board reconvened to discuss Town Hall workstations that need improving. Three new computers are needed, and 10 workstations need updated memory and software upgrades for a total of \$5050. Mr. Canada moved to appropriate \$5050 from the CIP appropriation for that use to implement the workstation upgrades. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

At 10:36 pm, Mr. Canada moved to adjourn. Mr. Copeland seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Hensley
Executive Assistant