

February 2, 2004

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 2, 2004**

Present: Arnold Wilson, Chairman
 Charles Blanchard
 David Schmida
 Hal White
 Doris Sosik
 James Malloy, Town Administrator

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

**MOTION: To approve the minutes of January 20, 2004 as corrected, by
 H. White.
 2nd: D. Schmida
 Vote: All in favor.**

**MOTION: To accept the executive session minutes of January 20, 2004
 as submitted, to remain confidential, by C. Blanchard.
 2nd: H. White
 Vote: All in favor.**

Budget Issues

J. Malloy submitted to the Board additional requests from the Board of Assessors for an additional \$8,000 for the now mandatory interim year adjustment; and the Historical Commission for \$250 for supplies (copies on file).

Snow & Ice Deficit

**MOTION: To approve deficit spending in the Snow & Ice Removal
 Purchase of Services Account #14232-52000 in the amount of
 \$15,000 for the purpose of paying independent contractors, by
 C. Blanchard.
 2nd: H. White
 Vote: All in favor.**

**MOTION: To approve deficit spending in the Snow & Ice Removal
 Supplies Account #14232-54000 in the amount of \$15,000 for
 the purpose of purchasing salt and sand for snow plowing
 operations, by C. Blanchard.
 2nd: H. White**

Vote: All in favor.

Wallace Road Development

John Massauro of Waterman Design Associates, Inc. sent a request formally withdrawing the Wallace Road Elderly Housing project application (copy on file).

Mass Motion Dance Academy Lease

Regarding 2.3, H. White noted that those capital improvements for which the lessee expects to be reimbursed upon sale of real estate should be approved in advance. Some improvements could be made for the benefit of the tenant and should be identified as being reimbursable or non-reimbursable. It was the consensus of the Board to add that to the lease.

MOTION: To authorize the Board of Selectmen to execute the lease agreement between the Town of Sturbridge and Terri Gordon Djelassi d/b/a Mass Motion Dance Academy, and to add: that capital improvements be approved in advance, and identified as being reimbursable or non-reimbursable, by H. White.

2nd: C. Blanchard

Vote: All in favor.

Resignation

MOTION: To accept the resignation of Stefanie Gershowitz as the Ambulance Billing Clerk, by D. Sosik.

2nd: D. Schmida

Vote: All in favor.

Correspondence

Regarding the letter from Senator Guy Glodis about a legislative proposal to exempt cities and towns from paying a sales tax on fuel purchased for municipal automobiles, including highway, police and fire department vehicles, J. Malloy offered to write a letter on behalf of the Board, in support of the proposal.

Old Business

C. Blanchard asked about the status of the state requirement for the Class 2 license holders to obtain a \$25,000 bond. J. Malloy said that a letter was sent to all Class 2 licensees informing them of the bond requirement, and Syl's Auto Sales was the first to respond.

C. Blanchard noted that the logging on Pontbriand land has nothing to do with the Nipmucs. A. Wilson said that the Board had voted on a logging permit on

November 3rd for 225 acres on Breakneck Road, owned by Pontbriand. There was to be selective cutting under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission.

A.Wilson said that the final draft of the Board of Selectmen's report for the Annual Town Report was given to the Board.

New Business

C. Blanchard said that information regarding the school district crisis was handed out at the schools, and a letter will be handed out to the community. Kathleen Reynolds, Superintendent, offered to come in to meet with the Board to answer any questions. She will send a letter regarding the funding controversy electronically to the newspapers, and the information will be posted in the public libraries and school libraries. She said that the public hearing on the school budget is always held in March; the vote will be taken afterward.

A.Wilson informed the Board that he had volunteered to meet with the department heads on a one-on-one basis to come to an understanding of their common concerns, which are: (1) The new personnel policy that we adopted has not been well received; (2) There should be an increase in the communication level between the department heads and the Town Administrator relative to policy changes and to allow department heads to participate in the process; (3) The Board of Selectmen needs to define the role of the Personnel Committee, an ad hoc group that this Board asked to help with studies on compensation, grades, etc.; (4) The bonus issue raised a lot of questions, such as whether it would be included in the calculation for retirement; (5) The Board of Selectmen liaison system with the departments is not working as well as it should. The Board members need to meet with department heads more frequently. A.Wilson suggested setting up a sub-group of the Board, and noted that there is a lot of work to be done.

J. Malloy said that the Personnel Committee had been created under Article 38 of the 1985 Town Meeting, and he read §2, 2.1 regarding the primary duties of the Committee. A.Wilson asked that he make copies for the Board. C. Blanchard noted that the new policy was not well received, and employees have expressed the concern that the general increase would be very minimal. He said that when the Personnel Committee discussed it, they were clear that the general increase would be a competitive increase. He also stressed the need to improve communications between department heads and the Town Administrator. He said that the role of the Board of Selectmen is not to step into the day-to-day operations or resolve disagreements between the Town Administrator and department heads. He suggested that the Board get more information on some of the issues before deciding what further action to take. J. Malloy said that he had met with the department heads and employees last Thursday, and some of the issues were clarified. Nancy Ryder said that dialogue has been opened up,

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and a lot of the issues were brought up and discussed. She considered it to be a positive step forward. Ellie Chesebrough thanked A.Wilson for meeting with the department heads to discuss the matter with them.

Budget

A.Wilson said that there is \$544,600 in the stabilization fund and \$778,000 in free cash. J. Malloy said that the Town is about \$5,000 away from the levy limit.

It was the consensus of the Board to put the following items on hold: Town Administrator Merit Based Incentive; Town Administrator Department Head Salary; Board of Assessors Purchase of Services; Planning Dept. Purchase of Services; Planning Dept. Salaries/Wages; ZBA Salaries/Wages; Building Custodian Salaries/Wages; Building Inspector Dept. Head Salary; all Education items; DPW Salaries/Wages.

MOTION: To recommend approval on all items except those put on hold, by H. White.

2nd: D. Sosik

Vote: All in favor.

Ask the Selectmen

There were no calls.

MOTION: To enter into executive session under MGL Chapter 39, §23B, Paragraph #3: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation, not to reconvene in open session, by D. Schmida.

2nd: H. White

Roll call vote: All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date