

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

December 19, 2011

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
DECEMBER 19, 2011**

Present: Thomas Creamer, Chairman
Mary Dowling
Mary Blanchard
Angeline Ellison
Priscilla Gimas
Shaun Suhoski, Town Administrator

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

Geoff Rogers, Hampshire C.O.G.

Geoff Rogers, Hampshire C.O.G. appeared before the Board. S. Suhoski shared the cost savings of BOS; National Grid rates locked to March 2012. The Board requested updated information on C.O.G. vs. National Grid rates since the Town began the program.

Department Head Updates

Police Chief Thomas Ford reviewed his report with the Board. He thanked the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator and department heads for their assistance during the disasters. He discussed the alcohol violations, and it was the consensus of the Board to hold the violation hearings on January 17th.

Fire Chief Leonard Senecal reviewed his report with the Board.

David Lindberg, Building Inspector, reviewed his report with the Board. He discussed the tornado damage, and signage at the hot dog business.

Greg Morse, DPW Director, reviewed his report with the Board. He discussed the noise issue at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, and said that they must work within the specifications of the compressor for the silencer.

MOTION: To approve Marion Nenedio and Cliff Curboy for snow plowing services, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimas
Vote: All in favor.

Shane Moody, Veolia Water North America, reviewed his report with the Board.

Appointment of Veterans Services Director

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Due to a potential conflict-of-interest, the preferred candidate for this position cannot be brought forward. S. Suhoski made contact with an existing Veteran's Agent in a nearby community and they will meet this coming week to discuss an interim appointment.

Discussion: DPU Hearings re: NGRID Nor'easter Storm Response

As indicated in a prior email distributed by Chairman Creamer, and in local news reports, a large contingent of people turned out for the DPU's public hearing in Brookfield on December 13. Sturbridge testimony was offered by the Chairman, the Town Administrator and Kathy Neal during the two-hour hearing. A copy of S. Suhoski's written comments being tendered for the record were submitted to the Board.

Appointment of Plumbing Inspector

S. Suhoski submitted to the Board the cover letter and resume of Peter D. Starkus, of Charlton, who was proposed for appointment as the Town's Plumbing Inspector. Mr. Starkus has been serving as interim inspector for about six weeks and is familiar with the office operations and community. He is a licensed plumber and gas fitter and has served as the Town of Charlton's plumbing inspector for nearly 25 years. The Building Inspector conducted the initial interview and recommended Mr. Starkus. Following a further interview today, S. Suhoski was pleased to offer Mr. Starkus for formal appointment to the post.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen ratify the Town Administrator's appointment of Peter D. Starkus, of Charlton, to the position of Plumbing Inspector effective December 19, 2011, subject to a six-month probationary period, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Energy Savings Program / Lighting Retrofit

S. Suhoski said that associated with the Green Communities effort were a series of programs to review municipal buildings for potential energy savings. The Town is currently awaiting a Whole Building Assessment of the Public Safety Complex and reviewing reports on the Library, Senior Center and DPW structures. One of the other lesser programs was a lighting review through Prism Energy under a program sponsored by National Grid. The lighting review yielded an estimated annual savings on electric costs of \$1,277.61 (or five year savings of \$6,388.05) at the DPW garage and existing wastewater treatment facility building. Also included were municipally-owned buildings now housing the Sturbridge Co-op Nursery School on Main Street, and the Mass Motion Dance studios at 8 Brookfield Road. Each of these four buildings will have the lighting upgrade completed by December 31 with an 83 percent contribution rate from NGRID due

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to the Town's prompt action. S. Suhoski submitted to the Board a chart which illustrated the costs, payback and estimated savings for each building. Also, the reduced energy consumption is estimated to reduce the Town's carbon dioxide emissions by 22,270 pounds per year, or, a five-year cut of 111,350 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere. He said that the additional programs will be shared as they are completed and ready for implementation.

Miscellaneous Items

Following are some concise updates on other matters that are pending and have been updated since last week:

- **Farquhar Road Drainage:** This project is substantially complete. There may be additional clean-up and follow-up seeding in the spring.
- **Disaster Debris Removal:** Curbside debris removal is complete. Grinding and disposal from the Route 15 site is substantially complete. Total costs are being tabulated but are within the approved budget and STM actions. S. Suhoski also approved debris plans and contract documents prepared by the Conservation Agent for the Stallion Hill area, and, for the access road to the Town Barn ballfields. FEMA has not endorsed the grinding and disposal plan through the state vendor and formal bids are being solicited for a lump sum contract.
- **Tropical Storm Irene – FEMA Reimbursement:** The Town has submitted for just over \$30,000 in eligible costs.
- **Riverlands Environmental Monitoring:** The drilling rigs are scheduled to be on site from December 19-22.
- **AAB Variance Update:** This week S. Suhoski was able to get two vendors to review the specifications and both have indicated their intent to submit a quote early next week. The Superintendent passed along his request to TRHS in the event they may be able to provide assistance.
- **Town Hall and COB Building Project Update:** (No change. Prior report shown.) The Town continues to hold just over \$15,000 in retainage to encourage completion of all outstanding items. Still remaining on the list are repairs to cracks in plaster on the first floor of Town Hall, repair of a scratch in the flooring on the first floor of Town Hall, and, in the spring, completion of remedial actions to the HVAC systems. The main entry doors (rear) of Town Hall continue to require readjustment of hardware relative to proper closing.
- **Solar Power RFQ:** The EAC is meeting on December 20 to presumptively finalize its preferred vendor recommendation. Conducted further individual research into the respondents and met with the Chairman of the Energy Advisory

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Committee at length (lack of quorum at December 8 meeting) to discuss status and develop final points for clarification by potential vendor.

- **Visitor Center Dumpster Enclosure Fence:** The dumpster enclosure at the Route 20 visitor center has been installed with only some minor work left on the gate. The wood will cure over the winter and Town crews will paint the enclosure white in the spring of 2012.

- **FY13 Budget, Capital and Betterment Planning:** Capital and betterment requests have been compiled by the Finance Director and provided to S. Suhoski, and he is now reviewing the requests. The Finance Director is continuing her preliminary work on the budget requests. They are all committed to have all budget documents provided to the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen in a timely and efficient manner with an eye towards the annual budget meeting in early to mid February 2012.

- **Local Emergency Planning Committee:** Was an active participant in an emergency planning exercise in response to a hypothetical chemical spill on I-84. The LEPC table-top exercise was well-attended and folks took the work seriously. S. Suhoski said that the workshop was very beneficial to all.

- **Group Health Insurance:** (No change.) Conducted substantive meeting with Finance Director and MIIA representative relative to claims history, premiums and conceptual “plan design” changes to town’s health insurance plan. The Town’s Insurance Advisory Committee will be reconstituted and activated to review, discuss and take action on a plan to reduce costs through reasonable plan design modifications that are anticipated to be initiated for FY13 and not further delayed. Given that costs increased by over 16 percent last year, S. Suhoski’s goal is to mitigate any such increase to no more than single-digit increases through reasonable reform efforts. The Finance Director will be working with him on this initiative.

- **Department Head Performance Evaluations:** Completed, subject to signatures, all performance evaluations and goal setting with direct-report department heads. Based upon the incredibly high workload of the past year nearly all staff will receive their full 2 percent merit payment (spreadsheet to follow once all signatures finalized).

- **Meetings and Other Participation:** S. Suhoski met with FEMA regarding Nor’easter status; prepared narrative for same; attended DPU hearing re: National Grid; met with citizens and WWTP personnel relative to noise concerns; attended Burgess School Building Committee meeting.

Correspondence

M. Blanchard read the correspondence list into the record.

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Old Business

It was the consensus of the Board to meet with the Tantasqua Regional School Committee on February 6, 2012.

M. Blanchard suggested that the Board vote to dissolve the Charter Review Committee.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen dissolve the Charter Review Committee, and to thank them for their service, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimas
Vote: All in favor.

M. Blanchard asked whether the CDBG application had been filed. S. Suhoski informed the Board that it had been filed, and was well written.

M. Dowling announced the Chabot Family Fund at the Southbridge Savings Bank, and requested contributions toward it.

M. Dowling suggested support for local businesses.

T. Creamer said that regarding the Route 131 drainage issue, Greg Morse, DPW Director, issued an email response, and the state had made repairs.

T. Creamer said that regarding conservation restrictions, the Town should complete its obligations. He suggested that a goal for the Town Administrator be to complete the conservation restrictions, including the Riverlands.

T. Creamer announced that the Selectmen submit their evaluations of the Town Administrator to T. Creamer by December 31, 2011.

New Business

M. Dowling discussed the language contained in a handout regarding the Tantasqua Regional School Committee article. T. Creamer discussed the regional school agreement, and said that he would support a situation that resulted in equity for the Board of Selectmen in terms of voting numbers and provided a spreadsheet to all members outlining that the Sturbridge Board of Selectmen is the only Executive Branch in the District that is at a distinct disadvantage in terms of voting numbers during joint appointments. He stated that the politicizing of the most recent process by two members of the Tantasqua Regional School Committee, followed by a series of personal attacks against the candidate and one member of the Board, demonstrates that personal political ideologies – though inappropriate in a local appointment – cannot be ruled out in

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the future and that equity would at least provide a better opportunity to neutralize politics in the process.

MOTION: To offer public thanks at the Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting for the seniors, by M. Dowling.

2nd: M. Blanchard

Vote: All in favor.

A.Ellison noted that the traffic on Burgess School Road constitutes a safety issue. It was the consensus of the Board that the Traffic Safety Committee, Police Chief and DPW Director be informed of the traffic concern.

Ask the Selectmen/Citizens' Forum

Carol Childress discussed conservation restrictions, and asked the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator to get updates regarding the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife offer for a conservation restriction at the Shepard parcel. She requested that the Town Administrator and Conservation Agent contact Brandon Kibbe at the Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife regarding a conservation restriction plan with the kayak launch, etc. M. Dowling asked about the impact on hunting. C. Childress said that it would likely not prevent hunting, but that no firearms should be discharged within the range of the roadway.

MOTION: To adjourn, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimás

Vote: All in favor

The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date