

September 4, 2012

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 4, 2012**

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

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

Discussion re. Lack of Attendance by Board of Assessors

T. Creamer stated his dissatisfaction, as an individual member of the Board, that no member of the Board of Assessors was in attendance to provide input with respect to their recommendations as it related to the Tax Classifications. He stated that they had been provided ample advance notice of this Public Hearing – nearly a month – and that prior to 2010 and the current make-up of the Board of Assessors, he could find no instance in the minutes, where Board of Assessors members were not present to participate in the Public Hearing. He further stated that the absence of the entire Board was inexcusable.

MOTION: To recess the public hearing until two members of the Board of Assessors can attend, by P. Gimas.
2nd: T. Creamer
Vote: Two in favor; M. Redetzke, M. Dowling and M. Blanchard opposed.

The motion failed.

Tax Classification Public Hearing

M. Blanchard read the legal ad into the record. William Mitchell, Principal Assessor, appeared before the Board and made a Powerpoint presentation on tax classification. He provided an overview of the revaluation and classification process, the tax rate, the levy limit calculations, overrides and debt exclusion, new growth trends, the savings or cost impact of splitting the tax rate, the Open Space Discount, the Residential Discount, Other Residential Exemptions, the Small Commercial Exemption, the Commercial Exemption, and the Board of Assessors recommendation: 1) Vote to adopt a Single Tax Rate; 2) Vote not to adopt the Open Space Discount; 3) Vote not to adopt the Residential Exemption; 4) Vote not to adopt the Small Commercial Exemption.

MOTION: To recess the tax classification hearing, by T. Creamer.
2nd: M. Blanchard

Vote: All in favor.

New Liquor License for Brush It Off

M. Blanchard read the public hearing notice into the record. Attorney Michael Julien and Denise Morgan appeared before the Board.

MOTION: To close the public hearing, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: To grant a Wine and Malt Liquor License to Brush It Off, LLC at 559 Main Street, Tuesday through Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., with Denise Morgan as Manager, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: M. Redetzke

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To reopen the tax classification hearing, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

P. Gimas spoke to the tax rate comparison and the need for projects. M. Blanchard discussed the tax bill comparison and the cost of worthy projects. M. Dowling expressed pride in the new school project, and said that she supports retaining the single tax rate, and the recommendation of the Board of Assessors. She noted that the amount of relief for residents would be greatly outweighed by the burden it would place on businesses as per the data presented. T. Creamer stated that he was philosophically opposed to split tax rates, and has supported single tax rates only since his first year on the Board in 2009, when he voted to return to a single tax rate. He went on to say that with the current challenges faced by many residents within the community and the difficulties he witnesses regularly with senior in particular trying to squeeze every penny in order to pay for prescriptions, food and utilities, that he believed it was necessary to try to deliver some level of relief. He felt that a small shift in the rates to a 1.15 factor would provide some relief to residents, while impacting businesses only marginally. He restated his fundamental objection to split tax rates, but indicated that he felt the current economic situation faced by all too many residents demanded that he waive his philosophical beliefs in favor of doing something pragmatic for residents.

Extensive public input was received.

MOTION: To close the public hearing, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: That the Board not adopt the Open Space Discount, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: That the Board not adopt the Residential Exemption, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: That the Board not adopt the Small Commercial Exemption, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; P. Gimas opposed.

MOTION: To adopt the single tax rate, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: M. Dowling

Vote: Two in favor; T. Creamer, P. Gimas and M. Redetzke opposed.

MOTION: That the Board of Selectmen establish a factor of 1.15 for the split tax rate, by T. Creamer.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Three in favor; M. Dowling and M. Blanchard opposed.

Continuance of the Recreational Trails Master Plan Public Hearing

MOTION: To reopen the Recreational Trails Master Plan Public Hearing, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

Thomas Chamberland, Brandon Goodwin, David Barnicle and Richard Paradise appeared before the Board.

MOTION: To close the public hearing, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

MOTION: To place and support the Recreational Trails Master Plan on the Special Town Meeting warrant this fall, by M. Dowling.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Two in favor; M. Blanchard, M. Redetzke and T. Creamer opposed.

MOTION: To adopt the Recreational Trails Master Plan as revised and use as the Town's long-term vision for trails and bikeways, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: Four in favor; M. Dowling opposed.

MOTION: That the Board further votes that the Recreational Trails Master Plan be submitted to the Board of Selectmen for final review before publication, by T. Creamer.

2nd: M. Blanchard
Vote: All in favor.

Appointment

MOTION: That the Board ratify the Town Administrator's appointment of Tyler Bresse as Part-Time Dispatcher at a rate of \$17.07 per hour, subject to a six month probationary period, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimas
Vote: All in favor.

Name Change for the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor

S. Suhoski informed the Board that Charlene Perkins Cutler had requested the Board's support for the requested amendment to PL 103-449 to change the name of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor to The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor.

MOTION: To approve the change to The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimas
Vote: All in favor.

Designation of Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area

S. Suhoski informed the Board that Michael Fleming of the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation had requested the Board's support for the designation of the Heritage Corridor Forest Legacy Area in south central Massachusetts. He had prepared a response letter to Michael Fleming.

MOTION: That the Board support the letter to Michael Fleming at the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, by M. Blanchard.
2nd: P. Gimas
Vote: All in favor.

Correspondence

M. Blanchard read the correspondence list into the record.

Old Business

P. Gimas noted that the Board had voted to approve a \$1,500 budget for the Government Services Study Committee and inquired how it could be funded. S. Suhoski suggested a reserve fund transfer for the current fiscal year and that a formal budget request could be put forward for Town Meeting approval for FY14.

P. Gimas discussed a prior survey by SRCC regarding affordable housing and stated that no survey was delivered to all residents. M. Blanchard said residents were surveyed according to information she had seen.

P. Gimas asked about the status of Meet the Selectman. M. Redetzke said that she would email the proposed dates to the Board.

M. Blanchard asked about the Insurance Advisory Committee. S. Suhoski said a meeting was scheduled for September 19. He added that the Personnel Committee was seeking a date for a meeting.

M. Blanchard asked about the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission and whether the Board had an appointee or an alternate. S. Suhoski to provide information.

M. Dowling stated that her discussion of a vote relative to the starting hours of the Town Administrator was "not personal." She said she does not want to receive personal emails or opinions from members of the Board.

T. Creamer said that water exception meters will be discussed on September 24 and that he would plan a public hearing for the water regulations.

T. Creamer said the Sturbridge School Committee was meeting on October 4 to discuss polling locations.

T. Creamer submitted proposed Harbormaster regulations for Board review. M. Redetzke will submit her proposal for the October 9 meeting.

M. Blanchard advised that David Barnicle had requested time before the Board. T. Creamer said it had not been scheduled yet.

New Business

M. Dowling brought forward a concern about receiving personal emails.

M. Blanchard advised that the polls for the primary election will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Thursday at Oliver Wight Tavern at Old Sturbridge Village.

P. Gimas asked whether the Economic Development Advisory Committee might come before the Board. T. Creamer said that he will invite EDAC for the meeting of 10/1/12.

MOTION: To adjourn, by M. Blanchard.

2nd: P. Gimas

Vote: All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 p.m.

September 4, 2012

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Knowles

BOS Clerk

Date