

# BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

December 16, 2013

Temporary Town Hall, 3 Milford Street

Nipmuc High School, 90 Pleasant Street

Chairman James Brochu; Selectman Robert J. Fleming; Selectman Kenneth Picard; Town Manager, Blythe C. Robinson; Executive Assistant, Sandra Hakala.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm. Chairman Brochu opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

The Selectmen continued their discussion on the Leadership Strategic Plan and began with the S.W.O.T analysis that Selectman Picard had prepared. They then focused on the Strategic themes by each giving their input.

Selectmen Picard will have a final draft prepared for the next workshop scheduled for January 7<sup>th</sup>.

At the end of the workshop Selectmen Fleming disclosed to the other members of the Board that Timothy Mahoney has requested a letter of recommendation from him and asked if they had any objection. They did not.

**Motion #1:** At 6:51PM Chairman Brochu motioned to recess the regular meeting for 5 minutes and reconvene at Nipmuc High School.

Poll taken: James Brochu, aye Robert Fleming aye, Kenneth Picard, aye.

## **MINUTES**

**Motion #2:** Motion made by Selectman Picard to approve as submitted the December 3, 2013 Regular Session Meeting Minutes.

Second: Selectman Fleming, Unanimous: Chairman Brochu

## **INVITED GUESTS**

### **Board of Assessor's – Tax Classification Hearing**

The Board of Assessor's Charlie Marsden, Teresa Ambrosino, and Glenn Fowler were all present. Chairman Marsden opened the public meeting and reviewed the recap sheet with the Board of Selectmen. The Assessors recommended the Town maintain a single tax rate (16.95) for all residential, commercial, industrial and personal classifications. The previous tax rate had been set at \$16.72 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Chairman Marsden said, though the tax rate typically decreases when property values go up, the town approved a budget that led to the increase.

Chairman Marsden and Selectman Fleming agreed that the tax rate is dependent on what people in town vote which is set at the annual town meeting. Chairman Marsden thanked the Town

Accountant, Town Clerk, Treasurer/Collector and Mrs. Tardy for their help and support in the preparations that were needed for the tax rate setting process.

**Motion #3:** Motion made by Selectman Fleming to approve a single tax rate of \$16.95 per \$1,000 of assessed value for the Town of Upton.

Second: Selectman Picard, Unanimous: Chairman Brochu

### **MANAGER'S REPORT**

John Robertson, Chair of the Library Trustees has requested space in the Risteen building that will be vacated by the Board of Health and Code Enforcement/Conservation when Town Hall is finished early next fall. The Town Manager will reach out to other potential users to see if there are any other requests that may come forward before making a final decision.

A request to modify the number of affordable units from what is in place today from 25% to 20% from the attorney's office representing the Upton Inn to the State Office of Housing and Economic Development was received. The decision on this request rests with the State.

Work on Town Hall continues; the ledge removal work is almost done, approximately 60% of the attic framing is done and will be finished this week, crews are also starting to install duct work in the attic and stone deliveries for the basement should start coming next week. National Grid has been contacted to get the new power pole installed and coordination with Nstar on the gas main to the building is ongoing. The water line connection and possible replacing a couple sections of asbestos cement pipe in Warren Street as part of this project if it can be done within budget is under consideration.

After extensive analysis the Town will switch cell phone carriers from Sprint to a combination of both Verizon and AT&T. No single carrier could meet the diverse needs of some of our departments effectively. Sprint never followed through with upgrades to the new tower in town and their service is not acceptable.

The Personnel Board met and reviewed the comparative salary data being gathered to compare Upton's rates of pay to employees with 18 other communities. The Board will look at both external data and the internal rating process as part of the development of a new compensation plan. The Board provided feedback to the consultant that they believe Upton should remain a competitive employer with its outcome to be paying somewhere between the average of all towns and the 75th percentile. The Board next meets again in early January to look at a draft plan with this parameter in mind.

The Town Manager attended a Massachusetts Manager's meeting this week at which Geoff Beckwith gave an overview of what the town might anticipate in the budget process this year. He told us that State revenues were anticipated to be up about 3.5% but in fact it is running more like 4 – 5 %. Due to that and the fact that it will be an election year MMA would anticipate that local aid will be increased for next year.

Public Works is addressing start up issues with Tata and Howard designers of the well field. They will make adjustments because the amount of output is not as expected. Refinement of this process is the responsibility of the engineering firm.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Discuss Library Capital Budget Plan**

Director Matthew Bachtold was joined by members of the Library Board of Trustees John Robertson, Chair, Linda White, John Minnucci, Fran Gustman, and Judith Goodman to discuss interest in pursuing a new Library facility in the future. Application to the State for a planning grant that would require funds in next year's budget is the first step. Director Bachtold outlined the Library Facility Improvement Plan;

#### **"Need for improved Facilities:**

- 1) Current square footage is inadequate to meet demand for library services. Our current space is 2,500 square feet. Upton should have a minimum 8,000 square feet of library space. (1-3 square feet per resident).
- 2) Knowlton-Risteen Building has chronic maintenance issues, from roof leaks to aging heating systems. Every year we spend town funds on emergency repairs.
- 3) Current Library facility is not ADA-compliant.

#### **Planning and Design starts the process:**

- 1) 2 year planning process to assess the needs of the community and evaluate options for an improved facility
- 2) State grant program taking applications now, will fund 2/3rds of planning cost
- 3) Estimated cost for planning phase: \$60,000
- 4) Overseen by Library Feasibility Committee – Trustees, Town Employees and Residents.

#### **Options to be Evaluated:**

- 1) Renovation of Knowlton-Risteen Building
- 2) Purchase and Renovation of Holy Angels Church
- 3) New construction with State Construction Grant
- 4) New construction without State Grant
- 5) Various sites for new construction

#### **Construction / Renovation – Maybe in FY19?**

- 1) Feasibility Committee will select best option
- 2) Planning and Design process will provide cost estimates and all information needed to apply for State Construction Grant
- 3) A very rough estimate for site work plus construction / renovation is \$5 million.

#### **Planning and Design Grant:**

- 1) Application Due Jan 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014
- 2) Feasibility Committee formed after grant awarded
- 3) Town meeting needs to authorize grant acceptance by May 16, 2014, and needs to appropriate matching funds (\$20,000) by January, 2015.
- 4) 20 grant awards, 34 applicants – what happens if Upton is not selected?

133 5) Letter of support from Town Officials would be helpful.”

134  
135 The Selectmen thanked the Trustees for keeping the options open to allow broader consideration  
136 and solutions with the problems they have identified.

137  
138 Discuss Recreation Capital Plan

139 Chairman Gazoorian reviewed the capital projects for recreation planned for next year. These  
140 projects are located at Kiwanis Beach and are anticipated to be funded with CPA dollars and  
141 although would have no impact on the general fund will give the Selectmen a good sense of what  
142 will be included on the warrant articles in the spring.

143  
144 The repairs slated for the tennis court will cost approximately 47-48 K and a parking lot that will  
145 be handicap accessible to be located on the backside of the field will support parking for 25-30  
146 cars.

147  
148 Motion to approve South Street Earth Removal Permit

149 The Selectmen although prepared to consider the final agreement which specified the holidays  
150 on which hauling would not be allowed, and adds a requirement that the pit operator have a staff  
151 person at the gate each morning to control truck traffic to ensure that trucks do not leave the pit  
152 while a bus is en route so that they aren't on the road simultaneously did not. The Trustees in a  
153 letter submitted earlier in the day requested the withdrawal of the renewal of their Excess Earth  
154 Removal Permit.

155  
156 **Motion #4:** Motion made by Selectman Fleming to accept without prejudice to withdraw South  
157 Street Realty Trust's application for a permit to remove gravel from the pit located on South  
158 Street.

159  
160 Second: Selectman Picard, Unanimous: Chairman Brochu

161  
162 The Town Manager reminded the Selectmen that through her conversations with Town Counsel  
163 should the Trust wish to apply for a new permit in the future, or as the result of a sale of the  
164 property another party intends to operate a similar operation SSRT or a new owner will be  
165 required to apply for a new permit and the Town would undertake a new process to negotiate the  
166 permit. She also made them aware that depending on the length of time that the pit is inactive, it  
167 may lose its protected status as a prior non-conforming use under the zoning by-law.

168  
169 Motion to Appoint COA Director

170 The Town Manager wholeheartedly recommended that Ms. Janice Nowicki be appointed as  
171 Upton's next Council on Aging Director waiving the 15-day waiting period to begin her duties  
172 on January 6th.

173  
174 **Motion #5:** Motion made by Selectman Fleming to appoint Janice Nowicki to the position of  
175 Council on Aging Director waiving the 15-day waiting period.

176  
177 Second: Selectman Picard, Unanimous: Chairman Brochu

179 Discuss Town Manager's Performance Evaluation

180 The Selectmen will complete their section of the appraisal and submit it to the Chair. Chairman  
181 Brochu will provide the compilation to the Board at a workshop on January 7<sup>th</sup> for discussion.

183 Discuss Request from Board of Health – Animal Control Officer Vaccination

184 This discussion was tabled by the Chair.

186 Review Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Report

187 The Selectmen reviewed the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Report for the period of  
188 June 30, 2013. This report is done every three years to determine the Town's obligation and  
189 project it for the following two years. The report shows that our outstanding obligation is  
190 \$4,180,000 and the annual required contribution has gone up from \$467,198 to \$520,000. This is  
191 consistent with the number of employees and retirees we have, and health insurance costs have  
192 also risen over the past three years. If the Town were able to pre-fund the obligation, the amount  
193 has increased to \$290,000 as compared to \$270,530 in 2010.

194  
195 The Selectmen recognized that the Town needs to substantially increase the fund to meet the  
196 obligations and will have it on their radar during budget considerations with the Finance  
197 Committee.

199 **BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S ACTION PLAN REVIEW**

201 The Selectmen will have a final draft at their next meeting and will send it out to various  
202 departments and publish on the website for residents.

204 **RECOGNITION**

206 Selectmen Picard made mention of the excellent athletic programs in the Town and schools that  
207 provide Upton's youth with good sportsmanship, self-esteem and team spirit.

209 **MEETING LOOK AHEAD TOPICS**

211 Discuss Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to clarify the cemetery plan.  
212 Appoint Veteran's Director

214 **ADJOURN MEETING**

216 **Motion #11:** At 8:26pm motion was made by Selectman Picard to adjourn the regular meeting.

218 Second: Selectman Fleming, Unanimous: Chairman Brochu.

220 Respectfully submitted,

222 Sandra Hakala, Executive Assistant