

Members present: Allen R. Phillips Kevin M. McCormick
 John J. O'Brien Steven J. Quist
 Christopher A. Rucho

Mr. Phillips convened the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Read and Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion Mr. Quist to approve the regular session meeting minutes from March 7, 2012, seconded by Mr. McCormick, all in favor.

Motion Mr. McCormick to approve the executive session meeting minutes from March 7, 2012, seconded by Mr. Quist, all in favor.

Neil Norum Discussion of Veterans Benefits

Neil Norum, Veterans' Agent for the town, joined the Board to explain what a Veterans' Agent does and the benefits for Veterans and their families allowed under State Chapter 115. He reports that 10% of the total population are veterans, 15% of the population are dependents or survivors of veterans and there are 425,000 veterans in the state, 25 million in the United States. His office is located in the Cemetery Department within the Public Works Building and he has regular office hours on Tuesday afternoons in addition to being on call 24-hours a day to respond to veterans and visiting the homes of their widows to explain and file benefits.

Mr. Norum explained that the Veterans' Administration is the second largest cabinet department in the federal government and meets the needs of 25 million veterans and their families. To be eligible you need your DD214 and cannot have been dishonorably discharged. Some of the benefits require 90 days of active service and one day during active war time. Most cases can be handled on the VA website, which is very user friendly and has all the forms. Most of his cases involve pensions, disability compensations, grave stones and bronze markers. In West Boylston this past year there were 63 veterans receiving a total of \$44,000 each month and nine widows receive an additional \$11,600. He displayed a booklet entitled Veterans' Laws and Benefits which outlines benefits for veterans. It covers bonuses, their two cemeteries, one in Agawam and Winchendon and the National Cemetery in Bourne. The education benefit is free tuition at all state colleges; however fees are only waived for the National Guard. Veterans can get one on one assistance at employment career centers, and disabled veterans are eligible for motor vehicle benefits. They are also offered housing services and property tax abatements. Mr. Norum stressed that you have to file for the benefits and you have to ask for them. He goes to the Council on Aging once a month. There are also Soldier Homes in Chelsea and Holyoke which provides services to Veterans with assisted living and nursing home facilities.

Every town or city must have a Veterans' Agent, it is mandated. If you have less than 12,000 population you can have a part-time agent, more than 12,000 you have to have a full-time agent. Need is based on twice the federal poverty level, for two people it is a little over \$29,000 and for one person it is \$1,815 per month. Most of his efforts involve Chapter 115 benefits and he has 14 active Chapter 115 cases. He has been in the position for eight years and the activity has been increasing but all payments are reimbursed by the state at 75%.

Mr. Quist thanked Mr. Norum for the great job and Mr. McCormick asked him how the Board could get him to stay on. Mr. Norum explained that he thinks it is a good time and he wants to do

some other things such as travel. He knows there are some good replacements out there and he will stay on through the end of June. The Board thanked Mr. Norum for his service.

Mindy Esteves – Acceptance of Gift for Flag Pole

This agenda item is for the acceptance of a gift of a flag pole and the agenda package contains the minutes from the March 16, 2011 Selectmen's meeting at which the Board voted to accept the recommendation of the Naming Committee to name the Flag Pole after Bob Cranston and a copy of a check in the amount of \$2,178 from Walter C. Cranston & Son. At that meeting the question was raised as to whether this would need to go before town meeting. The agenda package includes an email from Town Counsel which indicates that town meeting approval is not required. The flag pole will be installed at Goodale Park on the corner of Goodale and Crescent Street.

Motion Mr. McCormick to accept the gift of \$2,178 from Walter C. Cranston & Son for the installation of a flag pole at Goodale Park on the corner of Goodale and Crescent Street, seconded by Mr. Rucho.

Mr. Rucho noted that the dollar amount we discussed was \$1,800. Ms. Esteves, daughter of Mr. Cranston, explained that her mother offered to cover the entire cost. Mr. Rucho questioned who would do the installation. Ms. Esteves believes the DPW might start the work and the installation costs are included in the \$2,178 gift. She noted that Parks Commissioner Steven Blake felt it was better to have the flag company do the installation. They will use a flag that the DPW has left over and they ordered three bricks that will be installed around the base of the pole with Bob Cranston's name, that he gave to the town and why. Mr. Gaumond recommends the Board amend their motion to include the acceptance of the three bricks.

Mr. McCormick withdrew his motion and Mr. Rucho withdrew his second.

Motion Mr. McCormick to accept the gift of \$2,178 from Walter C. Cranston & Son for the installation of a flag pole at Goodale Park on the corner of Goodale and Crescent Street and the three bricks to be located around the pole, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Concurrence on the mid-year evaluation for Police Chief Minnich and vote mid-year increase for the Chief in accordance with his employment contract

Mr. Gaumond explained that when we signed the contract with the Police Chief he had a provision that his raise would be broken up into two parts. The first two years of the contract he did not get a raise. Mr. Gaumond continues to find the Police Chief to be an effective and competent member of the Town's leadership team. He believes that the Chief satisfactorily meets the requirements of the position as it relates to the budgetary and financial administration, supervision, leadership, personnel administration, staff development and training, employee and labor relations and policy interaction and interaction with the Town Administration.

Motion Mr. McCormick to concur with the evaluation and grant the increase in accordance with his employment contract, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

Mr. O'Brien asked when Mr. Gaumond would begin negotiations on a successor contract with the Chief as he noted that the current contract expires on August 31, 2012. Mr. Gaumond intends to begin the process shortly, does not anticipate negotiations to be a problem and he will begin once the budget is finalized.

2. Consider signing Amendment to Agreement for Sanitary Sewer System Contract Operation & Maintenance with Weston & Sampson Services, Inc.

Mr. Gaumond explained that one of the things we have been looking over the last couple of years is our sewer system operations. He has been talking with DPW Director Silvio Baruzzi who pointed out that our current contract with Weston & Sampson will expire on June 31st. He recommends the Selectmen sign an amendment adding an additional year. This amendment has no additional increase in cost.

Motion Mr. McCormick to sign the Amendment to the Agreement for Sanitary Sewer System Contract Operation & Maintenance with Weston & Sampson Services, Inc., seconded by Mr. Quist.

Mr. McCormick would like to review our current sewer operations and get it resolved before the contract expires. Mr. Gaumond indicated that one of Mr. Baruzzi's goals is to begin this review as soon as contract negotiations with the unions are completed. Vote on the motion – all in favor.

3. Acknowledge PILOT from the Department of Conservation & Recreation in the amount of \$618,579.45, a 3% increase over last year

Mr. Gaumond explained that each year the Open Space Implementation Committee asks that when we get out PILOT that we announce it. He noted that there is a provision in the law that this number can never go down. Mr. Phillips asked if the re-val of the property is done every five years. Mr. Gaumond advised that it is ever four years and the whole value has increased. Mr. Phillips recalls it went down a few years ago for a neighboring town, which he believes was Paxton and a watershed protection community. Mr. Gaumond explained that this amount of money is not listed on a PILOT payment. This comes in through the Mass Water Resources Authority from the ratepayers and payments are made through a specific watershed trust account by DCR directly to the municipality. Mr. Phillips pointed out that for years the town has tried to get a PILOT payment for the jail and has been unsuccessful. Mr. Gaumond noted that the crux of the problem is the old county facilities were never required to pay a PILOT. He added that annually Rep. O'Day files legislation to insure that the jail road goes back to the state as well.

4. Consider sending out an RFP for Tivnan Drive Property

Mr. Gaumond explained that in the past we have gone out to bid on this property for any municipal purpose including parks and recreation. Within the last couple of days we have received many requests from solar companies to use about half of the property for a solar project. He asked the Board if they would like him to go out to bid again for that parcel as the last time was over a year ago. If the answer is yes, would they would they like him to develop an RFP for any municipal purpose or for a solar project on that site. If we went out for a solar project there are certain requirements we could put into the RFP. He noted that the Facilities Implementation and Strategic Planning Committee did express an interested in using that property for municipal buildings.

Mr. Phillips questioned why we couldn't send out an RFP for general use and include that same specific language should someone wish to do a solar project as he feels solar could respond for general use as well. Mr. McCormick thought we could specifically tell them that they could build a solar project but we want walking trails, for example. Mr. Gaumond explained that there is rate we could get for the energy made by this and there is the money we would get from the lease of the property. If you make the rate of energy too high the lease payment would be too low or if the lease was too high it would lower the rate of the energy. Mr. Rucho suggested going for general use and have of the uses not limited to a solar project and put the information in with regards to a solar project. We have gone out to bid four times on this project. Mr. O'Brien asked if this would be an appropriate conversation to

have with the Facilities Implementation and Strategic Planning Committee. Mr. Gaumond advised that it is not as the Board is in control of the municipal property, however, you could put it off until after their meeting next Wednesday. Mr. Rucho noted that anything we put on the property we could have it designed that we could use the land for other uses and we could still put up a municipal building. Mr. McCormick pointed out that it is a 34-acre site.

Motion Mr. McCormick to send out an RFP for general use so that we could do anything, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor. Mr. Gaumond noted that there are a lot of incentives today for solar and alternative energy projects.

Town Administrator's Fy13 Budget Presentation

Mr. Gaumond reports that we have \$20,500 in revenues. He provided the Board with a budget that shows what some of the requests and recommendations are as of this moment. He highlighted the departments which have submitted increases larger than average. The first is the Police Department which includes an increase for training, mobile data guarantees, parking tickets and uniforms. Mr. Rucho asked if that includes anything on radios for dispatch. Mr. Gaumond advised that those fall under the Communications Budget. The Fire Department is up due to medications and drugs for the ambulance. Communications does not account for the fact that we are still in discussion with the City of Worcester and may be regionalizing dispatch services. He is meeting with the chiefs on Friday. He will have a better answer as to what we will be doing after that meeting. We had been subsidizing our communications line item through some grants which may no longer exist. The DPW is increasing in the salary and wage line item because we do not have any overtime built in for emergencies and the increase in fuel costs. Mr. Rucho noted a \$75,000 increase in trash. Mr. Gaumond explained that when dissolved the revolving account now the trash budget needs to increase the cost of the CPI index plus the cost of the trash bags. He is working with Mr. Baruzzi on this number. The library has asked for the money to bring them up to the MAR. However, he does not have the ability to do that. Maturing debt and debt services has a little bit of capacity. Under employee benefits, we have a \$100,000 increase in Retirement. He will be meeting with Worcester County Retirement people on the reason for this increase. The good news is a 0% increase in health insurance, which we will achieve either through co-pay changes or carrier change. Today the Insurance Advisory Committee met with a very aggressive proposal issued to the town from a company who would like to provide service to the town. This year we may have no increase in health instance. We are looking at a \$20,622 budget and we have \$20,500, a gap of \$122,000. Mr. Gaumond is certain the deficit will be solved by town meeting.

Mr. Rucho requested a third column which indicates the increase or decrease in the budget. He would also like an analysis on the trash dollar amount for the override as the Finance Director indicated that he would still be able to extract those numbers. Mr. Gaumond will leave the information in the Selectmen's "I" package in the next couple of weeks.

Board Discussion on Updating Performance Evaluation Form for the Town Administrator

Mr. Gaumond explained that the Board asked when we had a light agenda to include this as an item. He emailed the Board six evaluation forms from other communities. He suggested the Board form a subcommittee to work on this and he would be happy to work with the subcommittee. Mr. Phillips suggested the Chairman and the Vice Chairman review the information and bring a recommendation back to the full board for their approval.

Motion Mr. McCormick to designate Mr. Phillips and Mr. O'Brien to review the sample evaluation forms and bring forward an updated form to the full Board for approval, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

MEETINGS, INVITATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Wednesday, March 28th, 7:00 p.m. Facilities Implementation & Strategic Planning Committee Meeting
2. Saturday, March 31st, 11-2 p.m. Wellness Fair at Middle/High School
Mr. Gaumond informed the Board that the winner of the Wellness Logo for our Wellness Program is Matthew Iacovone. His design utilizes the heart imagery to symbolize good health and wellness and the beating heart illustration conveys the need to engage in physical activities which elevate one's at rest heart rate. When viewed as a stethoscope, the same image captures the need for health education, such as routine medical screening, and attentiveness to lifestyle choices to sustain one's physical and mental welfare. The logo will be unveiled at the fair next Saturday, March 31st. He noted that Nancy Lucier and the Wellness Committee have put a lot of time and effort into this fair and he invited the Board to attend.
3. Monday, April 23rd, 1-2:30 p.m. Open House at West Boylston Senior Center honoring Helen Kelley's 100th birthday
4. Announce that the town has received a \$310,000 Regional Storm Water Initiative

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Quist would like to consider holding a public hearing to modify the current town accident policy. He would like to review the policy as it stands and see if we need to make modifications. Mr. Gaumond asked Mr. Quist if he could suggest changes in advance, he could forward them to Town counsel for review as well. The Board requested a copy of the current policy.

With no further business to come before the Board, motion Mr. McCormick at 8:00 p.m. to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Quist, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: April 4, 2012

Nancy E. Lucier, Municipal Assistant

Allen R. Phillips, Chairman

John J. O'Brien, Vice Chairman

Christopher A. Rucho, Clerk

Kevin M. McCormick, Selectman

Steven J. Quist, Selectman