

Members present: Kevin M. McCormick Christopher Rucho  
John W. Hadley  
Members absent: Michael J. Kittredge, Jr.  
Siobhan M. Bohnson

Mr. McCormick convened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**Read and Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meetings**

Motion Mr. Hadley to approve the regular session meeting minutes from October 15, 2014, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

Motion Mr. Hadley to approve the regular session meeting minutes from October 20, 2014, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Vote to approve Kevin LaClaire as seasonal snow plow drivers for town vehicles, subject to successful pre-employment testing

Motion Mr. Rucho to approve the hiring, seconded by Mr. Hadley, all in favor.

2. Vote to approve the hiring of Janet Fotiadis, West Boylston as fractional-time Van Driver for the Council on Aging effective November 10, 2014 at Step 1 of Grade 2, \$12.74 an hour

Motion Mr. Hadley to approve the hiring, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

3. Consider signing letter in support of solar energy

The Board received a request from Environment Massachusetts who are asking all the Boards of Selectmen across the state to sign a letter in support of solar energy projects.

Motion Mr. Hadley for the Board to sign the letter of support, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor. The letter will be prepared for the Chairman's signature.

**Public Hearing: Re, Classification Hearing in Conformity with M.G.L.Ch 40, §56 to Establish Local Property Tax Rate or Rates for Fiscal Year 2015**

Mr. McCormick opened the public hearing and read the following notice. Notice is hereby given that the West Boylston Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, November 5, 2014, at 7:05 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room of the municipal offices located on 140 Worcester Street, in conformity with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 56 for the purpose of holding a Tax Classification Hearing so as to establish the local property tax rate or rates to be assessed to each of the following classes of property for fiscal year 2015, the period from July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015: residential property, open-space property, commercial property, and industrial property. All interested persons, groups, and agencies are invited to attend and participate. Kevin M. McCormick, Chairman, Board of Selectmen, advertised on October 22 & 29, 2014.

Harald Scheid, the town's principal assessor, joined the Board to talk them through the process of the tax classification hearing. He distributed a handout outlining tax rate options and advised that we are looking to raise \$15,282,415 which will give us a single tax rate of \$18.34. The law does allow you to shift the burden by 50% and that option would result in a \$27.51 rate for commercial property and a \$15.81 rate for residential customers. The Board of Assessors affirmed their past position and recommend that the Selectmen adopt a residential factor of 1.0. Mr. Hadley, noted that as a member of

the Economic Development Task Force they always recommend a residential tax rate. The current tax rate is \$17.66. Mr. Rucho agrees with Mr. Hadley and recommends we stay with a single rate. The Board opened the floor up to audience questions. Pat Crowley asked about the 4% increase in the rate and questioned the property value used. Mr. Scheid explained that in each of the last seven years they have reduced assessed values in response to the depressed market. It now slowing and the tax levy drives the tax rate. Last year we had a bit of excess levy capacity and it is being drawn down.

Motion Mr. Hadley to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

Motion Mr. Rucho to adopt a residential factor of 1.0, seconded by Mr. Hadley, all in favor.

### **Finance Director Michael Daley**

#### **1. Debt Management Presentation**

Finance Director Michael Daley joined the Board and presented a power point presentation on our Debt Management and the Long-Range Capital Plan which will be posted on the town's website. He explained that the debt we want to discuss has a history. It is broken down by funds for financial statements. We use the debt market and we get rated. He displayed our ten-year history. In 2008 it was our peak year. In the General Fund the burden peaked in 2008. The state subsidizes us for the two school projects and that will go away. Our net exempt debt service peaked in 2008-2009. The General Fund has a gross debt services included in the Proposition 2-1/2 cap and outside the Proposition 2-1/2 cap. It has come to the point to try to capture the roll off. When we voted the town hall project we said we would not put an additional burden on the people with taxes for the building. We are paying \$600,000 a year for debt service and over the next few years that will start to come off quickly. The debt service, as a percentage of the General Fund budget is just below 3%. The long term debt trends are all down. The total cost is down 12% from a 2008 high of \$3 million. The General Fund net debt is down 39%. The new ESCO project is funded via a lease/purchase agreement and it will pay for itself and generate bonuses into the operating budget. The new town hall, we promised no new tax impact and we continue to pay this down or we could add new projects to it.

Non-exempt debt will drop from current level of \$175,425 to \$156,550 in FY18. We talked about a new senior center and you are currently paying rent and that could flow into the debt service. The police station facility could be managed in with the town hall and we could bond outside and inside the levy. We think we could continue to manage this at the \$600,000 level. We need to keep in mind what else is in the queue. We are at a point of asking ourselves what is an adequate debt level. We are at about \$600,000 and it is less than 3%. Mr. Daley thinks we are at a point where we are doing good things and if we want to move forward with those two projects we can figure a way to get it done. We are in good shape managing our debt level. Mr. Gaumond noted that we do not have a debt level policy within our financial policies and it may be something we want to work on. Mr. Rucho asked how our town compares with similar sized towns. Mr. Daley explained that it is really hard to do a valid benchmark. You can go onto the DOR website to look at information. He looks at budget and population. They do not tell the level of debt. They measure long-term debt outstanding with equalized valuation (EQV). When you look at that West Boylston has a factor of 1.4, the lowest in the chart is .46, Middleton and the highest is 3.32, Douglas. We are in the middle of the pack and thinks we can manage at this level and do the two projects without any real headaches. If you have projects you want to do you can lock in on a good low rate. Mr. Crowley asked if we looked into the unused 2-1/2 and could it be used for non-exempt debt. We had unused capacity last year, it will be in this year's budget. Mr. Daley advised that it is in the operating budget. We had \$5,252.19 in excess capacity from last year and to set a tax rate we had to leave it on the table. Mr. Rucho commented that our assessed

values will remain the same and the rate will go up 4%. Mr. Daley explained that the levy is going up more than 2-1/2% because of growth and the excess levy not spent last year was spent this year. Some peoples tax bills are going up and some will go down because their assessed value went down. If you commit to a policy of keeping a certain amount of debt in the levy it is something you should discuss as well. You could do both projects one with a debt exclusion and one without. There is an opportunity to capture this which may not exist a year or two out. Mr. McCormick suggested having Mr. Gaumond work on a policy for this. Mr. Daley thinks the Board should be more aggressive with the two projects. He is proposing to pay down \$100,000 on the town hall note.

**2. Vote on town hall ban as recommended by the Finance Director**

Motion Mr. Hadley to approve the sale of a \$1,900,000 General Obligation Bond Anticipation Note of the Town dated November 21, 2014, and payable November 20, 2015, to Eastern Bank at par plus a premium of \$12,145.17, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor.

**3. Sewer finances discussion**

Mr. Daley noted that the last time we got together we adjusted the sewer rates. With sewers, the more consumption, the more revenue and the more expenses for the treatment. We had 1800 users in 2008 and we are now at 2,041. Except for commercial, they are very stable and flat. Things have been flat with consumption and user growth. The West Boylston Water District sells water and we use that to bill our sewage. We have developed our customer base of 2,041 users. People use water when it is hot and dry, things are busy during the summer. On a more repeated basis we have consumption over 30 million gallons. He does not expect we are going to see larger growth on users or consumption. The balance sheet cash has been stable, we are at 3.9 million in unapportioned betterments for commercial, down from \$6 million to \$4 million. Receivables are in good shape and cash is in good shape. Liabilities have shrunk considerable and everything is good there. In retained earnings we are building good fund equity, we have over \$2 million of prepaid betterments to go towards debt service. Our balance sheet is looking quite nice. He does not see anything that says we need to worry about the rates right now. In FY15 we low balled the revenue we put on the recap sheet. We put in \$1.2 million, used \$1.3 million and used some retained earnings to balance the budget. There is nothing stressing our expenditure side and he doesn't think we need to worry about a rate change. We are where we are going to be in customer growth, trends are flat, balance sheet is in good shape and operating budget is in good shape. We need to focus on what is coming down the pike on operating costs with our partners in Rutland, Holden, Worcester and the Upper Blackstone Treatment Facility. We do not have a lot of control over those costs. We need to have a good handle on what is going on with Worcester and the Upper Blackstone. That is the focus and the challenge. The unknown is outside of our knowledge base right now.

**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S GOAL UPDATE**

Mr. Gaumond advised that we are at the end of the Town Administrator's evaluation year. We had a slightly delayed process this year.

Goal #1 - Build a new Police Station. We have reviewed previous studies and preliminary drawings were presented in October. The next step would be to seek funds to design a building and bring it forward to the taxpayers.

Goal #2 - Strengthen relationship with the Housing Authority. Mr. Gaumond coordinated a meeting with the Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Task Force and the Selectmen and the Selectmen did authorize us to begin the process of moving forward and send a letter to DHCD.

Goal #3 - Explore options for a senior center. FISP met with the Council on Aging and they are considering their options including a reconsideration of the Bethlehem Baptist Church.

Goal #4 - Improve business relations to attract new businesses and to support existing ones. Mr. Gaumond met with the Economic Development Task Force and they offered the following suggestions. They include work with MASSDOT and our state legislators to talk about sidewalk improvements on Rte. 12. We discussed this with the legislators when they came in. Identify vacant properties in the Industrial Park and assist in the marketing of these properties. We continue to monitor the available parcels and promote as we can. Develop an informational sheet highlighting the strengths of the town and develop a welcome packet for new businesses. He will be working with the building inspector on this over the winter. Work to establish façade grants for building improvements. When we applied for a façade grant we were not successful as we do not typically meet the criteria. He has been working with Rosemary Scrivens and she informed him there are no such grants available outside of Community Development Block Grants. Mr. Gaumond suggested creating a line item for something like this and perhaps using Free Cash as a funding source. Consider the adoption of 43D Permitting in West Boylston was another suggestion. Should the Board wish to pursue this further we will send this to the land use boards to seek their recommendations and move forward. We could work on this during the winter. Another suggestion was consider joining the Wachusett Chamber, and we did join. Consider modification to the Site Plan Review Process. Mr. Gaumond will look for direction from the Board on this. Schedule a meeting with the West Boylston Business Association. Absent an active Association he would recommend a stakeholders meeting and he will schedule something in this building some time this winter.

Goal #5 - Explore financial management options. We previously finalized this last year, however, we should begin the process of planning what the town should do after the 18-month contract with FAA expires. He would like the Board to have a conversation on whether we should go out to bid or hire a town accountant. The last time we went out to bid we did get other bidders. We will discuss this after the first of the calendar year.

Mr. Rucho noted that the Economic Development Task Force is looking at having another Meeting with business owners like they did a couple of years ago.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Discussion of Intermunicipal Agreement for Emergency Communication & Dispatch Services**

The agenda package includes a memo from Mr. Gaumond regarding this agenda item. We have been working on the regional dispatch initiative for a number of years and received three separate state grants to study regional dispatch. We began five years ago with the Town of Rutland for a 13-town super regional dispatch and it never came to be. Then we talked to the City of Worcester, and then we were approached by Holden. The Board voted to change the course of action and pursue an arrangement with Holden. The agenda includes a draft Intermunicipal Agreement authorizing the town to move forward with Holden and Princeton. Princeton previously signed an agreement with Holden. We still have a little bit of work to do on connectivity of the system with Holden. A copy of the feasibility study is also included in the agenda. One section speaks to the radios. This will cover computer monitors but it does not include new radios needed to implement the project. Once we sign the agreement we can use it as leverage for funds from the state 911 grant. We may be able to acquire equipment for FY16 and put in for 911 funds for FY17. The timing is very important. It will be one

and half years after we sign the agreement, which has been reviewed by Mr. Gaumond, town counsel and the two chiefs. They recommend the Board sign the agreement, which was amended to minus the jail population. Mr. Hadley asked if it will impact the design for the police station going forward. Mr. Gaumond advised that it would be something that would be in play. Chief Minnich commented that the affect would be that we would not be looking for multiple dispatch centers. Mr. Rucho asked about the cost. Mr. Gaumond stated that we believe it will be less than what we currently pay and it would be savings for the town going down this road. We currently pay \$259,000 and we will be paying Holden \$120,000. It is a savings and it is a better service. It will also give us flexibility when times are busy.

Motion Mr. Hadley for the Board to sign the Intermunicipal Agreement for Emergency Communication & Dispatch Services, seconded by Mr. Rucho, all in favor. Mr. Gaumond noted that for the last few years he asked the Board to provide him with goal suggestions for the Police and Fire Chiefs and he couldn't be happier with the work from both the Chiefs on this important project.

2. Review comments on preliminary subdivision plan for Nuha Circle

We received notice from the Planning Board and the plans have been sent out to all the departments in town. The agenda contains comments from the Fire Department, which he will forward to the Planning Board. Mr. Gaumond left the DOW Director's comments on their chairs.

6. Update on electronic sign

Mr. Gaumond would like guidance from the Board as to what the next step should be. The agenda includes three quotes and the prices are all within a couple of thousand dollars of each other. Mr. McCormick was contacted by Ms. Bohnson before she left and she was interested in being here for this vote. Mr. Hadley sated that the first quote from Conor Sign didn't have Watchfire, Sunshine gave a quote and the third company provided information but no price. Mr. Gaumond advised that he did call them. Mr. Hadley feels we need to go with full color and Watchfire. He knows Ms. Bohnson was worried about the brick base and we could do that later. He thinks we should negotiate with Sunshine Sign. We have \$19,000, if we wait two weeks we will never get it done before winter.

Motion Mr. Hadley to negotiate with Sunshine Sign, seconded by Mr. Rucho. Mr. McCormick would rather see the project stay in town with Conor Sign. He does a lot of things and pays taxes. He would prefer negotiating with Conor Sign. Mr. Hadley did speak with Conor Sign and he doesn't think he can match that sign. Mr. McCormick pointed out that we do not have to take the lowest bidder.

Vote on the motion – Messrs. Hadley and Rucho yes; Mr. McCormick no. Mr. Gaumond will talk with Sunshine and if any member of the Board would like to be involved he welcomes their input. Mr. Rucho noted that there is still a big unknown on how we are going to change the sign. What we were told is you need a computer with a line of sight to the sign.

7. As allowed under M.G.L. c 138, §15, effective October 23, 2014, approve request from Wachusett Wine & Spirit open on Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

Although the Board, as the licensing authority, has to be asked, this is an automatic approval.

Motion Mr. Rucho to acknowledge the request, seconded by Mr. Hadley, all in favor.

**MEETINGS, INVITATIONS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

1. Recreation Director Jennifer Breen was recognized by Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce as an unsung hero in the community

Mr. McCormick congratulated Ms. Breen for doing a lot of good work and changing the recreation program.

2. MMA'S 2015 Annual Meeting is scheduled for January 23 & 24, 2015 in Boston
3. The town has been awarded a MassWorks Grant in the amount of \$995,000 for the construction of sidewalks around the school area

Mr. Gaumond stated that this is one of the most exciting things we have to report in recently memory. The state is in the process of preparing award letters with grant sign offs. This will be a massive improvement to our sidewalk infrastructure. Whenever we do a SWOT exercise one of the biggest weaknesses we have is our lack of sidewalks. We completed a Sidewalk Master Plan and our sidewalk infrastructure has been a long-term goal. Two years ago we applied for funds through the Mass Works Program and we were not successful. We talked to DOT about what we needed to do to make our grant application more attractive. We re-tooled and resubmitted and this will allow us to do 7,000 linear feet of sidewalk, including Newton and Goodale Streets and a small section of Crescent Street. Mr. Rucho asked about the next step is. Mr. Gaumond is unable to answer that until he gets the award letter which will explain the process. His understanding is the money is guaranteed and he will keep the board informed.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Nothing this evening

Motion Mr. Rucho at 9:20 p.m. to go into executive session under the provisions of MGL Chapter 30a, Section 21(A), Part 3 to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the fire department if the chairman declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body, seconded by Mr. Hadley. The Chairman declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body and the Board will not be going back into open session. Roll call vote: Mr. Hadley yes, Mr. McCormick yes, Mr. Rucho, yes.

Motion Mr. Hadley at 9:45 p.m. to come out of executive session, seconded by Mr. Rucho. Roll call vote: Mr. Hadley yes, Mr. McCormick yes, Mr. Rucho, yes.

With no further business to come before the Board, motion Mr. Rucho at 9:45 p.m. to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Hadley, all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved: November 19, 2014

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Nancy E. Lucier, Municipal Assistant

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Kevin M. McCormick, Chairman

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John W. Hadley, Vice Chairman

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Christopher A. Rucho, Selectman