

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2015
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Present: Fedor Berndt, Chairman
Elizabeth R. Hunt, Vice-Chair
Robert O'Keefe
Keith Barrows

James M. Kreidler, Jr., Town Manager
Linda A. Daigle, Executive Assistant

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Tax Classification Hearing Report dated Jan. 12, 2015 from the Winchendon Board of Assessors; DOR Bureau of Accounts Classification Tax Allocation (attached)
 - Public Works Director Jan. 7, 2015 request to Board of Selectmen to deficit spend snow and ice accounts (attached)
 - District Local Technical Assistance endorsement letter (filed)
 - Town Manager's Report (attached)
 - Minutes for approval: 11/10/14, 11/24/14, 12/8/14 (filed)
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Chairman Berndt called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. The meeting aired live on local cable access channel 8.

Announce audio/video recording disclosure: When asked, no one announced they would be audio or video recording the meeting this evening.

SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS:

Hunt spoke about the event at the American Legion on January 17th consisting of a bonfire, roast beef dinner and dance. The bonfire and dance are free. The dinner tickets are \$8.00 each. Two hundred seventy-four tickets have been sold. Call if you want to go. It will be a great turnout. It was a wonderful time last year. The event starts at 6:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Speaker's Bureau – Penny Maliska came forward with a series of events she would like to help organize and wanted to tell the Selectmen about it and ask for permission and guidance. She would like to organize a Speaker's Bureau. Her idea is to have four different speakers every Wednesday in March next year here in the auditorium who have a compelling story, an interesting life experience with some people she had in mind who are from Town. She said it operates purely with volunteers and would be an hour and a half total. The event would consist of a half hour for social interaction with snacks and beer and wine perhaps followed by the free style speech and then questions. The cost would be \$5.00 with the funds possibly going back to the town. It gives a chance for Winchendon to look up and out and doesn't cost the town money to do this and it would involve people who maybe haven't volunteered yet or maybe interested in one of these capacities. The Board was excited about the idea and thought it was great. They discussed if alcohol and wine were to be served, a One Day Special Permit, would have to be applied for and would be best through a town sanctioned committee; it could fall under the Cultural Commission. Ms. Maliska has

started creating an organizational chart and sign up for specific tasks. The March events could be broadcast live and also run again on the cable station for those who couldn't make it.

Ms. Maliska had a second idea she offered to the Selectmen regarding a "Citizen of the Year" award. She said it could be awarded to someone with us or posthumously for someone who has passed on to thank people. Anyone could nominate a citizen of the year to the Board throughout the year. The Board could take it upon themselves to narrow it down to four finalists and at Town Meeting take a secret vote. It would be gracious for some people to be able to thank others for the things that they are contributing. It would be an honor just to be nominated. There are a lot good things in Winchendon and this would be a way to shine a light on it. The Board asked the Town Manager to bring this to the attention of the Town Moderator for his consideration.

TAX CLASSIFICATION HEARING:

Chairman Berndt read the public hearing notice into the record at 6:17 p.m. Mr. Harald Scheid, Regional Assessor and Principal Assessor for the Town, Jeff Reynolds Asst. Assessor and Sherri DiPasquale, Clerk in the Assessor's office were present. Mr. Scheid reviewed the handout they supplied that detailed the steps in setting the tax rate and information about the levy, property assessments and recommendations made by the Assessors. Mr. Scheid said the yearlong process of evaluating property in town has been certified with the Dept. of Revenue (DOR). In previous years, the Town has adopted a single tax rate to be levied across all classes of property, residents, commercial and industrial. This is the purpose of this hearing tonight. The levy or tax dollars going to be raised to support the town's budget will be \$10,303,121 which is up from last year being \$9,768,280. The increase of levy will result in modest increases in tax bills. He reported on new growth revenues which is what can be collected over Proposition 2 ½. They haven't seen a lot of building activity this past year and much of the revenue figure relates to the Winchendon solar park. He is hoping with the market stabilizing they will see some real estate development creating growth. Hunt asked if in the next year's report they could show a graph showing a comparison of the growth. Mr. Schied said they do an exercise currently where they do look at historic growth figures and project out where new growth revenue will land for the New Year. They prepare this information for the budget makers. Those numbers will be sent to the Town Manager within the next week or two. He could also share them in the document. It can also be shared at the next meeting by the Town Manager. O'Keefe asked about the timeframe that is used in the evaluations based on past sales. Mr. Reynolds replied calendar years 2012 and 2013. O'Keefe pointed out on the report the evaluation has dropped by 1% and wanted people to understand the figures always go back in the past two years.

Mr. Scheid said Winchendon is a good size town but has a relatively small percentage taxable base in the commercial industrial classes, roughly 10%. He explained what it means and that it is a day and time to encourage commercial and industrial class and it didn't make sense to split a tax rate which could potentially harm the commercial, industrial class. O'Keefe asked about having a lower the tax rate for industrial/commercial class. Mr. Schied said that is not permitted under the statues, but many communities are using TIF agreements to help commercial industrial development.

The Assessor's recommend the Board of Selectmen adopt a single tax rate to be applied to all classes or property in Winchendon. The tax rate would be \$16.72 per thousand. He said this will be offset slightly by lower evaluations. Mr. Reynolds talked about the real estate market remaining soft and used a two year 2012/2013 database saying they moved values only slightly, either flat or on average of a half of a percentage lower. The result is the slight increase to the tax rate. An average single value home valued at \$160,000 will see an increased tax bill of \$107.00.

Mr. Schied explained the last page is a breakdown of the major classes. O'Keefe said whenever you see taxes going up, people like to see why. The Assessors gave a detailed report but he will do it a bit different. The major reason is the Proposition 2 ½ override we all agreed on to give an additional \$300,000 to our school system. The voters approved this at Town Meeting and it was approved at the ballot box. Looking at this report, that is the single largest increase exceeding even the annual 2 ½%.

Hunt thanked them for the thorough information. They are doing a good job and she hasn't heard anything negative, only wishing the office hours were a little bit longer. O'Keefe added he has personally worked well with them communicating with their office via email and also thanked them. Mr. Schied said thank you and gave kudos to his colleagues Jeff and Sherri.

Barrows offered quick highlighted bullet points of the report:

- Override money was already mentioned by Selectman O'Keefe
- Residential evaluations in town amount to \$553,589,666; of that total the tax levy increase through the 2½% is \$244,207
- The tax rate is going from \$15.96 per \$1,000 to \$16.72 per \$1,000 evaluation.
- The average evaluation of a home in Winchendon last year was \$162,436; this year it is \$161,396.
- The average annual tax bill on that assessed value last year was \$2,592; it will now be increasing \$107 to \$2,699.

He explained the classification saying that 90% of the tax assessment is residential and 10% is commercial industrial and personal property so the recommendation to set the tax rate at a factor of one for both residential and commercial makes sense because a higher factor being applied to commercial really doesn't net us all that much or in order to really have an impact on residential values, you would have to raise it so high that it would probably cripple or prohibit businesses looking to locate in Winchendon.

The public was offered a chance to comment. No one came forward and the Public Hearing was closed.

Barrows moved the Board of Selectmen vote in accordance with M.G.L., Ch. 40, Sec. 56, as amended, the percentage of local tax levy which will be borne by each class of real and personal property, relative to setting the Fiscal Year 2015 tax rates and set the Residential Factor at 1.0, with a corresponding Commercial Industry Personal Property shift of 1.0 pending approval of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Hunt seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously. The document was executed. Mr. Schied said tomorrow he will submit the annual tax recap to the DOR and hopes to have approval by the end of next week. Simultaneously, they will be generating the tax billing file. He couldn't give folks a date of issuance of those bills but thought it would be mid to early next week. The Assessors were thanked.

TOWN ACCOUNTANT MONTHLY UPDATE:

Berndt reported the Town Accountant is still sick and will not be in attendance this evening. Hopefully she will be present at the next week. She was wished a speedy recovery.

Snow & Ice Deficit Spending Permission Request from DPW Director John Deline:

DPW Director Deline came forward and stated he needed to request deficit spending for overtime and additional requests for material. He explained the amounts used in the past and what has been spent already. He didn't want to wait until he ran out and was seeking to increase the snow/ice overtime from \$31,000 to \$50,000. In addition the snow/ice materials line item needed to be increased to \$160,000 from \$135,000 to get more salt. He said he will most likely be before them again. He spoke of the recent storms, snow accumulation and high moisture content with the need to melt the ice. Snow is better than what we are getting today.

Hunt liked the statistics he presented and would like to see it put in the budget. She would like to see the budget number be closer to reality. We don't lose the money put in the budget if not used at the end of the year; we can use it the following year. Deline said that would be nice to do that but he would be concerned with getting a couple bodies back working in the Department preferring to have a body to plow and then work in the summer on roads than to subcontract out. He said it's difficult to do with the number of bodies he has. O'Keefe said we discussed this when you were here on Dec. 8th. He had suggested instructing the Town Manager to look at the last five years actual history and put the lowest number in the budget. They had agreed. Kreidler explained the whole idea behind

budgeting snow and ice is different. This is the one thing the legislature allows to deficit spend because of the nature of the beast. The reason it is problematic is once you budget a certain amount, you can never budget less. True, we don't lose it, but we tie it up and it can't be used for another purpose. It doesn't sit in that account at the end of the year. It closes to the equivalent of free cash and available for the next year. It's a toss-up of a good projection and the amount you can reasonably put on the table for that projection against all of your other expenditures you are trying to balance. Barrows moved the Board vote favorable on the request from the DPW Director. Mr. Deline has provided us with adequate information and just cause. He's proven time and again that he demonstrates a fiduciary responsibility around the money and has earned his trust. O'Keefe seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Kreidler pointed out that we are living in a day of social media and everyone knows how much of a benefit it is to have computers and software platforms for communication. As much of a blessing social media can be, it can also lend itself to providing difficulties for us. We've seen some of that last week that he wanted to address, specifically to snow and ice removal as it relates to school cancellation and delays. He mentioned the tricky storm last Friday with a lot of discussion on social media where people are commenting on whether school should be closed or delayed or not and it evolved around whose authority it is to make those calls. An employee posted her belief that the Supt. of Public Works, if it was his decision, would have closed on any given time because it's easier to plow and clear the streets. A suggestion was offered later in that same discussion that on a given day the Supt. of Public Works had advised the Supt. of Schools to close and the Supt. of Schools ignored that advice and kept the schools open or just had a delay instead of closure. Nothing in the employee's comment came even close to what was being suggested by that citizen and created a fire storm. By the time this thing got unraveled, it lent itself to comments like "this is why this Board of Selectmen supporting these employees need to be recalled" or "the type of divisive behavior by the town administration." He knows there is a lot going on and he understands that and there are reasons with some of them being legitimate to have good healthy debate about but this isn't one of them. The employee said what the employee said, not at all what this citizen wrote what they thought they said. It became unfortunate after that. He made it clear to all that John Deline doesn't make the call. The Supt. of Schools, by their own policies in their handbook, makes the call on whether the school is delayed or closed with input from anyone he or she wants to take input from, oftentimes the Supt. of Public Works. It's worked well for us and no reason for this crisis. It's semi-manufactured and unfortunate.

Deline stated a storm like that is a difficult one to call. He checks radar throughout the night to try and determine when his crew gets out on the road. If they are called early, they would get a four hour minimum and he looks to save money as well. That storm arrived quickly, was intense and very cold. The salt didn't work; it wasn't the school's fault. We live in New England. People have to have patience for the DPW crew to cover the town with almost a hundred miles of roads with two lanes. He asked for patience by people and to be safe out there. Mr. Deline was thanked for his work and his crews. John gave credit to his guys. Kreidler referenced the fact that his guys have voluntarily flexed their hours to come in early and leave earlier to save that contract call of a minimum of four hours. They are good, hardworking people and not something you generally see. John said if everyone knew what his workers did for the town, they would be amazed. He is very proud of them; they go above and beyond. He asked people to thank them instead of admonishing them for plowing snow into their driveway because they have no choice. Berndt asked to pass along to his workers that their efforts were appreciated.

Barrows asked about the Accountant's status knowing that she was out last week and had a hospital visit. Kreidler replied she is feeling respiratory distress and diagnosed with pneumonia. She is working and communicating from home electronically. She did come in today and got some things done that were critical but had to go home. She will be fine but too much for her to come to tonight's meeting.

APP OINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS: N/A

PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS, HEARINGS: N/A

NEW BUSINESS:

DLTA Grant Application Endorsement - Planning Agent Tracy Murphy came forward seeking endorsement with her efforts to seek funding through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program through MRPC for the ongoing effort in updating our Master Plan. They secured funding last year from the grant program and the state has again renewed this program. The intent is to update the circulation and transportation chapter of the current Winchendon Master Plan. She reported John Hume of MRPC is now finishing up the Economic Development and Housing chapters. He's been working with the Master Plan Committee that was formed in June last year. It's an ongoing effort, chapter by chapter. Montachusett's role in this is the technical aspect of the update where the Master Plan committee's role in the process is community outreach and visioning and to put the two together and come up with a comprehensive plan that is community driven and substantiated through the technical analysis. She asked if there were any questions. O'Keefe moved to authorize the Chairman to sign the letter of endorsement; Hunt seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Barrows asked if this was the oldest section of the plan that is going to be updated. Tracy said the entire document is dated 2001. She said in 2006 and 2007 it was looked at and more of an update on the implementation portion of the chapters rather than the body itself was done. All the chapters need to be updated. It's being done in a systematic way. This is the third of seven she hopes to get done. She said the Master Plan committee is a great group of people. Berndt thanked Tracy and the group working on the Master Plan. She noted they had a vacancy on the committee.

CDBG Application Informational Session - O'Keefe disclosed he had a conflict with this and will be stepping away from the table. Director of Development, Gerry White, came forward to speak about the CDBG application. He said this is the seventh meeting. There will be more and then will finalize with a split session at a Public Hearing on Feb. 3rd at the Senior Center at 9:30 a.m. and again at the Planning Board meeting at 6:30 p.m. This grant is public based and contributions are taken from the public with public meetings and a plan is formalized. The grant process involves several phases:

- 1) Community Development Strategy - This is a document we put together with these meetings. It's good for three years with this year being the final year. Next year there will be meetings to specifically formulate the Community Development Strategy.
- 2) Target areas - HUD has within the last five years decided they want to target community development projects so that they can see an increase in progress in targeted areas. The target area will be put on the website along with the FY14 income limits. This is also picked out by the public based on the density, the age of the structure, the infrastructure and needs of the community.
- 3) National Objectives - There are three but only two apply with one that addresses an emergency.
 - a. Benefit low to moderate income persons - HUD defines the region of low to moderate income. To meet the objective is to make less than 80% of the median income. We have been combined with Leominster, Fitchburg and Gardner making our median income higher so more of our people qualify for the benefits of these projects. White said for a one person household it is about \$44,500 and then it goes up to about \$6,000 more for a two person family that's working. The income is combined with the people in the household and the number will go higher if there are children making them more eligible. Hunt pointed out that some people don't consider themselves low to moderate income and wanted them to be aware because there are people that deserve it. White said the town as of last year was at 48% low to moderate income but now we are at 41%. That might sound bad but it makes us more eligible to bring more funding to the Town
 - b. Elimination of slum and blight was the second objective.

White said he has to meet one of the National Objectives.

The types of projects that have been mentioned in meetings: housing rehab which has been very successful in Winchendon; Infrastructure projects giving examples of North Vine St., Emerald St., Mechanic St, Logan St., Green, Monroe, Academy and Lincoln Place. Those streets have been done using those grant funds and it didn't cost the town anything. We do them to be full depth reconstruction with a road that will last twenty to thirty years. Also sidewalks have been done.

He's here today to tell them in the meetings they have talked about those projects, housing rehab and some planning. People want to see pocket parks along the way on Central St. Infrastructure is the number one need per the Community Development Strategy he mentioned earlier. Economic Development is number two and Housing is number four. He's still in the process of gathering public input. The majority of the discussions have been the smaller connector roads in downtown district which will have to meet the eligibility requirements. Roads discussed are Pond St., Beech St., Chestnut St., and Walnut St. Those streets are in need of top and drainage. He mentioned the DPW Director is trying to get Central St. on the TIP to fix some of those connectors and it would be good to connect to new infrastructure. There is a huge population to be served in these little connector roads. He asked for people to go on the town's website and call him with their suggestions. Hunt asked if commercial businesses were included saying there are five businesses and Railroad Street is terrible. White said yes you can use commercial areas but you won't meet the need of low to moderate income persons. We had a downtown inventory conducted ten years ago, we are in our ninth year, and our downtown was listed as a slum and blight area based on scoring of buildings, sidewalks and roads. Slum and blight areas automatically meet those national objectives. It might be possible but the application is tough to get approved. He's written two in the last fifteen years and they didn't get approved. That road is estimated at \$875 per linear foot of road and will be expensive. Hunt thought those folks deserved that.

Barrows said you have had seven meetings so far and wanted to know how many he had left. He hoped to have another four or five and will be back to get the Selectmen's blessing at their first meeting in February. The Public Hearing will be early February and he will be back before the Board. The focus seems to be on the roads downtown but if more people come forward with something else, it could change if it meets the criteria. Comments and participation is open and welcomed. He spoke about input from a citizen's group from the Council on Aging who voices their opinions. He does get phone calls and needs the feedback. Letters he sometimes receive are also included in the application. Ten to eleven million dollars have been brought in. Barrows said Railroad St. is definitely worthy but we are not able to check all the boxes to meet the criteria. The application needs to meet criteria to be successful in getting the grant. Barrows asked the amount of dollars that are available with this round of grants. White replied this year we can apply for \$800,000 for one activity or \$900,000 for two activities. White will be back with the completed application the first meeting in February. He asked the Board for any ideas on projects. He thought the direction was going where it should be. Mr. White was thanked for his attendance and presentation.

Kreidler mentioned he received in the mail today from the Dept. of Housing and Community Development, on behalf of the work that Gerry has done, the pre-application for the Economic Fund Grant (EDF). It has met the approval of the State and we are invited back for a more formal application. While there are no guarantees we will get the funds, it is generally a good sign when you're invited after the pre-app to the formal application round. This application Gerry put together represents an opportunity for a private property owner of the RHI building downtown to receive up to \$750,000 to do residential units on the second floor of that building with the commitment from the private owner that the commercial space on the ground floor be done with their budget. If this goes forward and is funded, it is good news for the building and that end of downtown. Mr. White was again thanked.

O'Keefe came back to his seat at 7:55 p.m.

Retiree Health Insurance Discussion – Hunt expressed her thoughts on thinking of the future. She sees retirement at sixty-eight years but hearing talk in the news about retirement until you're seventy-two. We live longer, we're healthier and we will work longer. She wants to make sure when we sit down and look at this that we are prepared

for the future. The Town Manager explained the benefit. Hunt wanted to look at this long term to see if the town would be able to afford this ten years from now. She wants to have this on the list and keep in front so we don't lose sight. O'Keefe said we are not making any decisions now. We need to look at it and we have to look at it at every angle. We don't want to lose employees, police officers, if other communities still cover the retiree insurance benefit. We have to look at everything and suggested they have people come before the Board and find out what the impact might be.

Kreidler offered that some communities have a threshold put in place by a bylaw and something to consider for Town Meeting. There could be a requirement of a certain number of years active service and retire from Winchendon in order to qualify. This doesn't impact anyone here today but sets the mark. Also there has been a lot of ambiguity on who has authority to set the percentage of premium that is paid by the community. We are 50/50. That decision rest solely with the Board of Selectmen as the Chief Executive Office in regards to retirees. He's had a discussion with Selectwoman Hunt about being mindful of grandfathering to protect employees who have been here a period of time that have showed a reasonable commitment to the community.

OLD BUSINESS:

Class II Policy Discussion – Berndt reported the site visit Wednesday morning to Affordable Motors and Nicks Used Cars and Repairs. They had a nice meeting and saw their concerns and they are working on some issues with them. He doesn't have all the details yet but has reached out for guidance and a plan of action to move forward. He doesn't want to chase anyone out but to keep our businesses here but we also want to make the places presentable. They have the same goal. Hunt said she had stopped at the business on Monday wanting to help and it looked really nice. She said whatever you guys did, worked. Berndt said he hopes to have a better plan for them at the next meeting. Kreidler said it was interesting to come to understanding of what he does. He has an appreciation of how the mechanics work, needing to have three bodies to produce one vehicle. He talked about a crusher coming in once or twice a year that's permitted to come in and pick over the things not used, clean up and move out. It was educational for them to be out there and they are hopeful it can be worked out.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

1. Personnel Updates-

a. Health Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC)- Kreidler said the meeting with the IAC is tomorrow not Thursday afternoon to roll out the proposals received for premium based health insurance conversion.

2. Financial Updates-

a. The Deficit Legislation- Kreidler reported the deficit legislation has passed the House as a result of the herculean efforts of Representative Zlotnik and our now Senator Anne Gobi. The bill landed on the Governor's desk and was executed at 6:45pm on his last day in the building. It is now enacted and is law. We are working with the DOR to access the borrowing provided under the bill to offset the deficit in our school and town budgets.

He has been asked by DOR to seek a motion this evening to authorize the borrowing that was provided for in the deficit legislation now that it has passed. He has been in regular contact with the staff at the DOR toward the end of getting this vote and the resulting borrowing underway.

O'Keefe moved pursuant to the affirmative vote of the Special Town Meeting 11/24/14 and pursuant to Senate 2405, the deficit legislation to authorize the Treasurer/Collector to borrow a sum of money but only as authorized by the Commonwealth's Dept. of Revenue Director of the Bureau of Accounts; Barrows seconded.

Kreidler wanted to be clear that not a nickel of that authorization is available to the Town unless approved by the Director of Bureau of Accounts. They have full and complete authorization. This is you authorizing the Treasurer to do what they will allow us. O'Keefe appreciates what the Town Manager said because there is a lot of miss-information on the street. The DOR put together the bill that ultimately was passed. They saw fit to put in an appropriate amount of oversight which is not a dollar is spent without the DOR's approval. People on the street aren't realizing that. The other bit of confusion is people believe this bit of legislation gave more power to our Town Manager. One of the problems we all realized when we went through the Health care issue with the trust fund is nobody was accountable. DOR has said for the period of time we owe money with this deficit legislation, they made the Town Manager responsible. It's not about giving him more power but made him responsible.

By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- b. The FY16 Budget Memo-** Kreidler reported all departments budgets are due by January 22, 2015 by the close of business. He has met with members of the Finance Committee in an effort to improve upon our budget processes. Those cooperative efforts are productive and ongoing. He mentioned the Finance sub-committee has met and discussed the way we build the budget and the nuts and bolts but also how it's presented out publicly. He noted the School Committee is meeting on the 22nd and has told them it would be fair for them to submit their financial items the next day.

3. Project Updates-

- a. Phase 5 North Central Pathway-** Phase 5 of the Bike path project bids was awarded and the work on the project will begin in the spring.

b. Proposed Business-

- i. ONGOING-Salvadore Auto group's proposed Jeep dealership project at the intersection of Rt. 140 and Rt. 12 is scheduled to be before the Planning Board next week. It will be an exceptional gateway business and create new tax base and jobs for the town.
- ii. ONGOING-we have been working with a business, which wishes to remain confidential for now, in an effort at landing them here in town as they seek to expand from another location within the region. They are currently functioning in a 10,000sf space and are looking for a minimum of 30,000sf. Their projection is 20 jobs. They have put in an offer on a property in town.
- iii. NEW- We entertained another prospective business last week. This group is pursuing the adaptive reuse of a currently vacant building in town for their operations. Their initial job creation estimate is 50 new jobs created here in Winchendon. Kreidler said they have three different operations in their business plan that dovetails with one another. They have planned two and three phases beyond this in the future.

Barrows asked if anything further could be shared publicly about this. Kreidler replied that one of the draws was the fact that we are a Right to Farm community. That was the hook that got them in the door.

O'Keefe asked if the Town Manager knew when the CITGO station was going to be opened. Kreidler did not know. Berndt said there were issues with either the project director or contractor being changed out two or three times. Pump pressure tests have been done and maybe they are just waiting for the company to open it. O'Keefe asked about licenses they might need from the Board. Kreidler said none that he is aware of other than just a Business Certificate from the Town Clerk.

Barrows asked for an update on the solar project. Kreidler said the company that bought the company with whom we have an executed lease and Power Purchase Agreement has a master procurement they have done as Sun Edison with a group that's called Power Options. They are now the preferred supplier of Power Options. Sun Edison is now able to bring a deal closer to the deal that we had expected under our original deal and counsel for Sun Edison and the town are on their final revisions of a draft. By the end of this week we should have the last of the comments and be able to get something before you.

O'Keefe asked for an update for the electric bid going out for the citizens. Kreidler reported on the electric aggregation program stating we have had a conference call two weeks ago going over the plan. Colonial Power is the only company that has successfully gone through the process with the DOER so they are familiar with their plan but wanted to make certain of a couple things based on the most recent ruling of the Attorney General's office. We expect in February to go to the Dept. of Public Utilities before a hearing's officer. After that, there is a sixty day comment period and then we'd be live.

- c. Police Station Filed Sub-Bids-** The holidays pushed everyone's schedule back a week so the anticipated meeting for project specification review is next week. Kreidler reported with the expectation with minor modifications to the plan, design and specifications, we'll be back on the street again. The engineer, architect and Project Manager feel confident we will have a project that is bidable and within budget. We will know when we see the bids.

4. Miscellaneous Updates-

- a. Kreidler reported he received a letter from Gov. Baker today announcing an increase of Chapter 90 allotment in the amount of roughly \$225,000 for this current fiscal year. The Governor was true to his campaign promise.

5. Tickler File-

- a. Yard Sale Bylaw-** The Board has copies of several versions of yard sale bylaws for their review and consideration for a proposed bylaw for the annual town meeting.
- b. Multifamily Residential Unit Inspections-** A draft bylaw will be available for their consideration for the annual town meeting.
- c. Retirees Health Insurance -** Kreidler will add this topic to this file for Town Meeting consideration.

Lastly, Kreidler wanted to bring to their attention as it ties in with his earlier comments regarding social media, this one relates more to your Town Accountant Donna Allard. There was some discussion on social media over the last week that culminated just yesterday with an expectation that this matter would be addressed this evening and the expectation that an apology would be coming either from Ms. Allard or the Selectboard for a conversation that took place at the Dec. 17th School Committee meeting that Ms. Allard was invited to attend. Specifically, Ms. Allard reached out to the School Committee because she had ongoing concerns regarding payroll. There were concerns that have lasted the entire time of her tenure and are not insignificant. She was invited by the Vice-Chair who was delegated to handle the matter by the Chair. She went to their meeting along with the Asst. Accountant to address the issues. The entire intent of her being there intended to be proactive, cooperative, collaborative -- working together to make it better. What she said is no different than what she said to you at your meeting, specifically that she believes payroll function would be better served consolidated at Town Hall, streamlined and centralized. Those were the words she used. As part of that discussion, she gave several examples that caused concern. She talked about the fact that there were a couple of cases where an annuity had been paid when it shouldn't have been, funds that would need to be recaptured; where significant amount of sums had been paid out of payroll that shouldn't have been and basic payroll functions like timesheets that you can tie in with payroll so you can verify everyone is

accounted for or not. Those are the three things she highlighted. Unfortunately, most of the attention was the discussion around an amount of money that had been paid erroneously to former employees or retirees that needed to be recouped and brought back to town. In the thirty-four minute meeting, Ms. Allard said not all of the money has been returned, not all recouped. What is heard being fed back through social media and discussion on the street was that Ms. Allard was saying the full amount, \$20,000 was still due and owed to the town. That's not the case. She said not all of it has been returned. What she wasn't clear in saying and could have done a better job in saying was how much money was still outstanding. That probably would have put a lot of this to bed before it happened. But, for whatever reason, the people speaking about this on social media's calculus is, that's not what's happening. What's happened is this has been raised as the battle cry for the most recent example of the egregious behavior of this administration. That the Town Accountant came solely to discuss and embarrass the School Committee about these funds that have been paid and not returned is nothing that can be farther from the truth. Listen to the entire discussion. It's unfortunate. Donna is doing a good job and is working farther across the line than any Accountant he has seen in working with the school side so much so that she has spent days in the business office doing school function business work. It's not that she shouldn't but notable that she has and unfortunate that it has percolated to the point that she intended to embarrass and hurt and you allowed her behavior in that regard so she's bad and you should be recalled. He said it even gets a little bit more twisted as one of the things posted was that the Town Manager on December 17th said that this money hasn't been paid back. He never said that and found out that its routed in a press release by Supt. Dr. Khelfaoui. On social media a woman in town posted that the Town Manager should be fired because of this. He asked Dr. Khelfaoui about this and he said he never said such a thing. He looked at his press release and said he had intended to write Town Accountant not Town Manager and apologized. He said he would issue a corrected press release and sent an email apologizing. He said it's unfortunate that he spent the time chasing that down and that the Superintendent spent the time fixing it when it was an oversight on his part but it became this lightning rod, this flash point in this bigger issue that is going around town. There are legitimate reasons we can disagree on facts and we can argue and maybe behave less well than we should, we're human. We don't need the nonsense of generated crisis.

O'Keefe commented that he wanted to be clear to the Town Manager, to everyone in attendance, to everyone at home, to the Town Accountant, to his fellow Board members that if anyone knows negative news, it should be publicly stated. He is ashamed of the Superintendent that at that very meeting he said this should have been in a closed meeting, non-public meeting. Bad news needs to be said in open public meetings, not behind closed doors. He said if the Town Accountant was here, he would make a motion to continue, whether the School Committee likes it or not, to make all the facts known. He hopes they are all positive; but if negative, they need to be made public even more so. We do not want any more surprises in town. There are people passing around a petition stating our Town Manager failed to tell the Board of Selectmen about the health care issue. All four of us have already stated publicly that we were told. When information is being shared, there are people going around town saying it isn't and now we have a Superintendent that says he doesn't want information shared publicly. He plans on making that motion at the next meeting that he wants the Town Accountant to continue to make it public.

MINUTES:

Monday, November 10, 2014 - Regular Meeting - Hunt moved to accept; Barrows seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Monday, November 24, 2014 -Prior to Special Town Meeting – Barrows moved approval; Hunt seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously

Monday, December 8, 2014 - Regular Meeting – O'Keefe moved to approve; Hunt seconded. By a vote of Hunt aye, O'Keefe aye, Barrows abstain due to not being present and Berndt aye, the minutes were approved.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The Joint Meeting with the School Committee and Finance Committee for February 9th was discussed. The Executive Assistant informed the Board that the Finance Committee had confirmed but she hadn't heard back from the School Committee or the Superintendent as of yet. She will email the new Chairwoman.

AGENDA ITEMS:

ADJOURNMENT: With no Executive Session needed, Hunt moved to adjourn; Barrows seconded. By a roll call vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Daigle
Executive Assistant