

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2015
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Present:

Michael Barbaro, Chairman
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chair
Audrey LaBrie
Amy Salter
Austin Cyganiewicz

Bernard Lynch, Acting Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Draft Special Town Meeting Warrant of June 30, 2015

Chairman Barbaro called the meeting to order at 7:01 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.

SELECTMEN COMMENTS:

LaBrie asked to have comments section although not on the agenda. She talked about the Summer Solstice this weekend and encouraged her Board members to attend. She brought up the Board of Selectmen Policies and Procedures again and would like to address them at their next meeting with things that have come up recently. Also the new Charter and Bylaw Review Committee has met and they will be beginning their review next month and as a Board there was a lot of talk over the last six to eight months about the role of the Board of Selectmen and Town Management and especially if we are going to go out and start a search for a permanent Town Manager. They as a Board need to get squared away on what they are going to want, what they expect sooner than later. It will be on the agenda for next week.

Anderson agreed that they definitely have to look at some of their policies and change them sooner than later. She asked about the Summer Solstice saying for those in charge to reach out to them if they would like them to March. They'd be happy to.

Barbaro introduced and welcomed the new Acting Town Manager Bernie Lynch adding he has heard nothing but pleasant surprises. Lynch thanked him and said it is a pleasure to be here and has enjoyed meeting the people he has met. He reported some substantial progress happening noting addressing the Special Education matter the first day he was here. He and Sheryl Wright, the Financial person he brought with him to help out, worked with the Accounting office and made some great strides in clearing up the transportation issue and addressing the FY15 budget situation and already starting to make some progress on FY16 needing some adjustments that will probably happen in the Fall. He plans on setting up a strategy that the Town will benefit by.

LaBrie moved to recess for six minutes; Salter seconded. By a vote of all aye, the meeting recessed at 7:06 p.m. and reconvened back to open session at 7:12 p.m.

Barbaro asked LaBrie what some of the policies were that she was looking at. LaBrie mentioned she wasn't prepared but brought up what came to her mind:

- Public Comment as a part of their meetings
- The role of the BoS and their position in town government. The Charter as it stands now gives the Town Manager in that position a lot of control, a lot of say of what goes on. There has been a lot of discussion over the last six to eight months about the Board taking a more active participation. She felt they owed it to everyone and to themselves to take a look at it and take a look at the parts of the Policies and Procedures that pertained to their involvement and also the Charter. She's not looking for anything specific for next week but to just start a discussion so that it continues on. Barbaro agreed to look at their procedures and also look at the Charter and what suggestion they may want to forward to the Charter Committee. He thought the Finance Committee should also forward their thoughts they might have wanting their role to be more involved. LaBrie noted the committee has ten months finishing up next May at Annual Town Meeting.
- Anderson added that Public Comments is very important to her to hear what people think before making a vote on something valuing their input and wanting them to be heard. Cyganiewicz suggested the Board each review Roberts Rules of Order as their own policy states they are to follow it and it details how the agendas are to be followed with the procedures in it. A lot of the times the way the agenda moves is because of Roberts Rules of Order. We can't change Roberts Rules of Order but we can change how we are to follow it.

Anderson commented they needed to start right away with a Search Committee for a permanent Town Manager and asked those interested to send a letter of interest to serve on that committee. She said it might be inappropriate for a board member to serve on the committee according to Mr. Lynch and that the community needs to buy in to this. Barbaro informed her it is listed on the agenda for next week.

Salter agreed on a policy change regarding Public Comments and how it fits into the agenda and not fair it's at the first part of the agenda but wasn't sure how to go about changing it. Barbaro talked about the agenda being posted for the public so they know what is going to be talked about. She would like to see more public comment after discussion on a topic. Barbaro said they would have more public comment if that is what the Board agrees upon.

NEW BUSINESS:

Draft Special Town Meeting Warrant of June 30, 2015: Review, Finalize and Post:

Barbaro announced the Special Education Transportation issue has been resolved and the warrants have been signed and the vendors have been paid. The issue has been resolved quickly and gave kudos to Acting Town Manager Mr. Lynch and his team. LaBrie said she has been asked by constituents where that money was found. Mr. Lynch said at the outset that his background is a Manager with some great strength in municipal finance but that he is not an accountant and relies on other people that can work the books. He said one of the reasons he was adamant about bringing Ms. Wright with him on this assignment was that she has tremendous experience with Munis working with it for 15-20 years and she has tremendous experience in closing books and taking care of all the necessary accounting aspects of municipal finance. She worked with Town Accountant Donna Allard and was able to identify a number of encumbrances that were not necessary; in fact bills had already been paid or encumbrances that were no longer needed. Using the tools that Munis has that she is familiar with, they were able to identify them and close them out freeing up the money to actually make those payments. Lynch said that led them to the next priority getting ready to close out the books for FY15. They knew some Department

expenses were going to come up that would be problematic. One of them is Veteran's benefits with many communities having this problem because there has been an uptick of Veterans coming on to the rolls. That deficit looked to be close to \$100,000. He pointed out that he is using round numbers now with the actuals not being known until after June 30th. The unemployment account is a little higher than \$80,000. That too is a problem for the town. The snow and ice deficit is \$220,000 but they are expecting a reimbursement from FEMA next year about \$37,000 to \$38,000 leaving a deficit still of about \$190,000. He would like to close that gap so it doesn't have to be raised in FY16. Right now FY16 is about \$63,000 out of balance. The Dept. of Revenue is aware of this, we are aware of it but it could change getting better or it could get worse as we get into the fiscal year. Using tools that Munis has and combing through the FY15 budget, we have realized about \$275,000 in health insurance premiums not necessary to be spent on health insurance. They will be up to date on health insurance and will have that excess in that account. If you take that \$275,000, give or take, and put towards the Veteran's benefits, the unemployment and hopefully about \$100,000 of the snow and ice deficit, we will still have a snow and ice deficit but a more manageable one. The elephant in the room though is the Health Insurance Trust fund that everyone is aware of. That still is money owed to claims that are still coming in under the old self insurance plan in the several hundred dollar range that needs to be worked on. They are looking at their options on how to recommend the town move forward but it doesn't have to happen right now. There is time to figure that out. This is good news not having deficits that would have to be carried over to the next year and either borrow under the special legislation or hit the stabilization fund for this amount. He prefers to do it now and get it done. He realizes its summer but we need to get people to come to this Special Town Meeting on June 30 and vote to get this matter resolved.

Barbaro asked about the forecasted \$400,000 deficit in the health insurance trust fund. Lynch confirmed it is somewhere between \$300,000 to \$400,000.

Lynch said he has been working with departments to see what kind of changes could be made, where money could be saved but also ensuring services are protected. LaBrie asked about the health insurance working deposit and if we would be getting it back. Lynch said he couldn't say anything about that at this point. What they will be doing and he has reached out to the Finance Committee where this falls under the Town Manager's responsibility to undertake some analysis of that. He has worked with a group for twenty-five years who are best in the state in doing an audit and provide consulting services to track that money down. He wants to make sure the re-insurance that the Town had bought actually has paid for the claims that it was supposed to have covered making sure that every dime the Town should get, will get. Also there is a working deposit that is there to cover claims that come in that can hit that.

Barbaro read the third article on the Special Town Meeting warrant submitted by a citizen which seeks to increase the members of the Charter Review Committee from five to nine.

The Special Town Meeting Warrant articles will be reviewed and voted recommendations will take place at their meeting next week on June 23rd.

Cyganiewicz moved to finalize the warrant; Salter seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

LaBrie moved to post the warrant; Salter seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

LaBrie asked to just correct the two titles of Mr. Lynch, one being the Interim Town Manager and the other the Acting Town Manager to both being the official Acting Town Manager. It was agreed.

ADJOURNMENT – With no further business needed, LaBrie moved to adjourn, Salter seconded. By a vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Daigle
Executive Assistant