**Selectboard Meeting Minutes April 7, 2025 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

**Call to Order**: Rick LaPierre called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Andrew Baker, Tricia Yacovone-Biagi, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Andrew to approve the minutes of March 24. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Franklin Regional Transportation Authority:** The Advisory Board met on March 20. Jeff Singleton of Montague was elected as Clerk of the Board. Two donated, used but good, buses from a regional transit authority in PA were accepted. A solar project for the maintenance and operations facility is ready to go out to bid. A $932,000 Mass Grant was received to electrify buses and get 3 EVs. The free fares on the fixed route and the on-demand bus program have been extended through October. The trial of weekend service on fixed routes began in January and will be evaluated in July. A new grant funded by the “Med Aide” program is being developed for mobility challenged residents. The next meeting is May 15.

**Mohawk Trail Regional School District Personnel Negotiations Subcommittee:** Executive session meetings with the Unit B - Paraprofessional’s Team are in progress and will continue frequently until negotiations are complete.

**Police Services Advisory Committee:** Thenext meeting will be April 16.

**P.V. Veterans Services Advisory Board:** Next meeting October 7.

**MVP:** The MVP Action Grant application for Dragon Brook: A Climate Resilient Watershed was submitted on April 3. It's a two-year project with a $396,440 budget.

**Emergency Management:** Tom Williams spoke with Dan Nietsche, FRCOG Emergency Management Program Manager, regarding how best to proceed with updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is due for an update this year (target date for final approval by FEMA is January 12, 2026). He agreed that hiring a consultant to guide us through the update may be a bit overkill, and with a bit of extra effort we can complete the update ourselves. Dan suggested taking FEMA Emergency Management Institute online courses to help.Tom has completed one of the two suggested courses and is halfway through the second online course already. Tom is working on a plan for how to involve the necessary people to update the Hazard Mitigation Plan and will propose it to the Board soon.

**Town Hall:** Town Hall staff members are preparing for Annual Town Meeting and the town election. A bid for a generator has been submitted.

**Highway Department** – Andrew reported that the crew is cleaning up winter debris. Superintendent Jeff Johnston is contracting for line painting and the cleaning out of sub-drains on Colrain-Shelburne Road. Remaining funds from the MassWorks grant are being spent on rip-rap, loam, and fabric to stabilize bank erosion. The one-ton truck will need new rocker panels, if the Selectboard and Finance Committee decide not to replace the truck. More bids are being sought for the large Western Star Dump truck. A quote was received for a cab and chassis. Jeff is waiting for a quote on the bed. The two candidates for the highway laborer position will demonstrate their equipment handling skills on April 17.

**Senior Center**: A $2,563 grant has been secured for the West County Caregiver Program.

**Appointments with Finance Committee Members:**

**5:45 pm Representative Natalie Blais RE: Annual Visit** – Natalie tries to meet with the Selectboards of each of the 17 towns she represents, on an annual basis, to learn of their needs and wants. Tricia mentioned that the MVP program had made good changes in the application process but it was still overwhelming for small towns and pits them against each other, fighting for funding. She wondered if the state could step in an assist with engineering plans, etc. Another concern was regionalization. Tricia wondered if the state could make it easier for towns to stop duplicating their efforts. Andrew wondered if, considering what is happening on the Federal level, what would be the impact on education and transportation. He also mentioned Shelburne’s infrastructure projects, Bardwell’s Ferry Bridge and the need for a replacement bridge over Dragon Brook. The latter is a small project, but too big for the town to handle without help. Andrew also mentioned the Memorial Hall renovation project. He appreciated the budget earmark, but it still needs the Governor’s approval. Another upcoming project that will need financial assistance is the upgrade to the sewer district pumping station. Natalie mentioned that Terry was great at keeping the legislators up to date on projects. Natalie said that Federal cuts are especially problematic for rural communities and the Commonwealth cannot replace those cuts. She said everyone is carefully watching what’s happening at the Federal level and doing what can be done at the state level.

**Old Business:**

**Highway Laborer Position**– Two applicants were interviewed. Both will now move on to a second interview where they will be asked to operate various pieces of highway equipment.

**Cowell Gym Director Position – Two Applications Received –** Typically, the Rec Committee would do the interviews and make a recommendation to the Board. Since there are currently only three members on the Rec Committee, the Board was asked if they would like to change that procedure and attend the interviews or hold a joint meeting. Since the Rec Committee has not asked for assistance, it was felt that the committee should do its own work.

**Proposed Use of Housing Trust Funds for Development of Tax Title Properties** (Megan McDonough) – Andrew is hoping for a warrant article to get funds for the development of the town’s tax title properties. Rick said that according to a Conservation Commission person, all three of the lots could have wetlands issues, which would require Con Com intervention and perhaps DEP involvement. Andrew said Habitat for Humanity has interest only in the Mechanic Street property. Andrew has approached a wetlands consultant who will look at the Mechanic Street property. The next step would be an environmental assessment to consider any environmental hazards. Then an RFP would need to be developed to hand over the property to an eligible non-profit organization, and finally, a site plan would need to be presented to the ZBA. Megan McDonough of Habitat, said there were not a lot of non-profits who do single house projects and she thought Habitat would be the only bidder. Both Rick and Tricia said this process suddenly seems rushed and thought some steps could have been taken in the past year, not just weeks before Town Meeting. Andrew said financial resources are needed in order to take steps forward and if there was a deal-breaker at some point, the process would stop. A motion was put forth by Andrew to earmark up to $10,000 to continue exploring pre-development questions for 49 Mechanic Street and the process will begin by contacting the Conservation Commission. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**New** **Business:**

**Norman Beebe, Recreation Chair RE: Request to Earmark Cowell Fees Reserved for Appropriation** (John Walsh) – Norman requested $21,000 from the Cowell User Fees Account to be earmarked for outdoor court renovation. Cowell Director John Walsh had also requested $40,500 for Phase 2 of the Cowell capital improvements. Terry had hoped to be able to use $20,000 from the user fees to offset the amount that would need to be taken from the Housing Trust Funds for the project. John thought there might be a second Cowell fund. Terry will check on that. Phase 2 would include electrical work, the gym floor, the tab room, and the bleachers. John thought the electrical work might be able to be deferred for another year. Rick felt the Cowell improvements were a capital expense and the funds should come from Stabilization. Terry said the housing trust funds have typically been earmarked for CDBG eligible projects (Phase 1 of the project was paid for using housing trust funds). Andrew said he shared the concern about spending the trust fund money. If the funding is approved who will follow up on the project and be clerk of the works? John said he would follow up on the electrical work and the tab room, even after he retires, but the court repairs would need to be monitored by someone else. When the Board next meets with the Finance Committee it will have to be decided what work can be afforded and how to finance it.

**Robert Szafran, Senior Center Transportation Coordinator RE: Retirement** – Robert is stepping down from his position on May 3. His retirement was acknowledged and he was thanked for his service.

**Stantec Consulting Services RE: Bardwells Ferry Bridge Project** – An informational letter regarding the bridge project was received. It said that one lane would be kept open during construction. Tricia asked if that meant for bicycles and pedestrians as well as vehicles. She also asked about the timeline and whether timbers would be used for the decking. Timbers will be used to maintain the historic character of the bridge. Rotting of the deck was not an issue, said Andrew. The problem was the abutment on the Conway side. Andrew said he supported the project as presented. Tricia’s questions will be passed on to Stantec for answers.

**Town Hall Stand-by Generator Proposal – Current Electric** – A quote of $9,995 to add a generator to the pre-wired Town Hall, has been received from Current Electric. The project is small enough that it does not require bidding. Terry suggested using ARPA funds which must be spent by December 31. She suggested taking $5,315 from the Cowell Gym Improvement line and $4,680 from the Pocket Park. Both of those projects would still have enough funds remaining. Andrew asked about a portable generator that could be brought to Town Hall. That generator has not been tested at Town Hall. Rick said there were multiple needs for the portable generator and thought it prudent to get a standby generator for Town Hall. A motion was made by Andrew to fund the Town Hall generator using $9,995 from ARPA funds. This was seconded by Tricia. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Doug March, VFW Post 8503 RE: Request to Appoint Joseph Moynihan as Veteran’s Graves Officer** – The position has not been advertised. Mr. Moynihan is a resident of Buckland. There had previously been a decision to allow non-residents to serve in appointed positions, within limits. A motion was put forth by Tricia to appoint Joseph Moynihan as Veterans Graves Officer. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Dara LaPlante, Accountant RE: Request to Authorize Transfer from Reserve Account** – The request is to transfer $1,041.10 from the Reserve Account to the Interest Expense Account to cover the interest expense for the Old Greenfield Road project. A motion was made by Tricia, seconded by Andrew, to approve the request to transfer $1,041.10 from the Reserve Account to the Interest Expense Account. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Any Other Business:**

**Warrant Wording Clarification** – Terry said that Andrew’s plan to ask for “up to” $10,000 for funds to develop tax title properties is not allowed on Town Meeting warrants. Terry will check with DLS but a specific dollar amount must be requested and if it isn’t all used, the remainder goes back to Free Cash.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on April 14, with the Finance Committee. The next regular meeting will be on April 22 at BSE, following the Special Town Meeting.

**Correspondence:**

**Juli Moreno, Senior Center Director RE: Michael Shea, Van Driver** – Juli informed the Board that Michael, an on-demand van driver, will no longer be able to work due to health reasons. His retirement was acknowledged and the Board wished him all the best.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment**: At 7:48 pm a motion was made by Tricia to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary