**Selectboard Meeting Minutes May 5, 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 Tricia to approve the minutes of April 22, as amended. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Town Hall –** Final preparations for Annual Town Meeting are being completed. There have been problems with the heat pumps at Town Hall and at Cowell Gym. Tax payments were due on May 1. Joe is finalizing preparations for the annual town election on May 20. A meeting is tentatively set for the week of May 22 to discuss the outcome of the Database Vulnerability Assessment/Cybersecurity Health Check. The Recreation Committee is developing questions and will interview in May or early June for Cowell Gym Director position.

**Emergency Management:**

1. Met with PIO team and discussed:
   * Methods of improving Emergency Management pages of town website, including:
     + Added EM Committee mission statement
     + Added Informational Page, which will be updated on a regular basis in order to keep it fresh
     + Need to replace Covid-19 red banner on first page with emergency notifications. (Idea is to draw residents quickly to EM pages during times of emergency incidents for frequent updates.)
   * Means of increasing sign-ups to Blackboard Emergency Notifications.  (Several ideas discussed.)
   * Increasing resident awareness and education of EM. Ideas included:
     + More participation in local fairs, meetings, etc.
     + Use of local access TV at Mohawk to film EOC training event, EM informational program, our next TTX, etc.
     + Distributing flyers to encourage Blackboard sign-ups and spread the word
     + Continued use of TTN
     + Mass mailings

**MVP / Resilience Coordinator:** An articleabout the MVP Action Grant has been submitted for the May issue of *Two Town News*.Tricia said she isworking with Jeff Johnston on flooding concerns at Colrain-Shelburne RD and highway garage. It is likely that a DER grant with Gill Engineering will be applied for, as it is a no-match opportunity and Gill has been most responsive and optimistic about it. TheGrant is due May 12 at 4 pm. The hope is to apply for funding to cover field data collection, design and engineering, and possibly permitting. This might become a very complicated project due to the length of the culvert, the MA stream crossing standards, and proximity to the beaver pond. If the culvert needs replacing, then there are many more hoops to run through for MASSDOT because of the culvert's length.Frequent discussions and sharing of videos and images with the engineer are taking place to determine the best path forward. Tricia will likely have an update next week so we can meet the deadline.

**Senior Center:** The budget is ready for presentation at Town Meeting. It has already been presented at Town Meetings in Ashfield and Buckland. Legal counsel and accounting for payroll are in place. Retirement and employee insurance are being transferred. There have been no appropriate applicants for the two open driver positions. In the meantime, the center is working with FRTA. The Outreach Coordinator is attending SHINE training.

**Memorial Hall:** Andrew said the final bid for the phase two renovation has been received and a contract has been awarded. A work schedule is being finalized and the work is expected to start in late May. The overall cost of this portion of the renovation is $340,000 and the funding is in hand. The Take A Seat campaign will start on May 10.

**Highway Department:** The crew is removing plows and sanders and are keeping the roadside ditches cleared. They are preparing for grading the town’s seven miles of gravel roads when things dry out. The pole barn has a few leaks. Old Greenfield Road has had one knotweed treatment. A second treatment will be done in late May or June. Erosion on that road is being monitored. Jeff Johnston removed a tree at High and Church Streets. FRCOG bids for materials have opened.

**EMS Regionalization:** On April 22 Rick attended a meeting with selectboard representatives and EMS and EMT representatives from most of the West County towns.  They all agree current emergency medical services are not sustainable and are planning discussions of a regionalization for those services. Shelburne Falls Fire Chief Herb Guyette, Shelburne Fire Chief John Taylor and Shelburne Fire District representative Terry Dun also attended that session. Chief Taylor brought this issue to the Board a year ago and things are starting to move forward.  Pursuing a study grant is the possible next step.

**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, sometime in May.

**Police and Police Services Advisory Committee:** The April meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will be May 21st.

**Franklin Regional Transportation Authority Advisory Board:** The next meeting will be May 15.

**P.V. Veterans Services Advisory Board:** The next meeting will be October 7. Chris Demers, Director of the Veterans Service District sent the third quarter fiscal year updates. About 90 Chapter 115 clients have been recertified, as required. Cemetery flags have been purchased and distributed. Volunteers and staff members will assist in distributing the flags for Memorial Day, if needed.

**Appointments:** None.

**Old Business:**

**Town-Owned Tax Title Properties** – Tricia had prepared a presentation showing that revenue had been lost from the town-owned tax title properties. She had learned that lost revenue and costs had come to $443,141. In FY’25 alone lost taxes were $7,587. This brings the total of lost revenue to $450,728. In addition to the more recently discussed properties on Main Street and Mechanic Street, the town owns properties on South Shelburne Road, Brook Road, and Fiske Mill Road. The town has owned the Brook Road property since 2015. Tricia listed three possible actions. The town could auction the properties. Any unacceptable bids could be rejected. Fees for a tax title attorney or town counsel would need to be paid. The town could use the properties for municipal development of parks, playgrounds, community gardens, etc. Affordable housing, according to the zoning bylaws, would require lots with at least 50 feet of frontage and a municipal sewer connection. None of the town owned properties meet both criteria. Rick said an abutter had asked when the public would get any input on tax title properties. Public opinion should be sought no matter what direction the town might take. Andrew responded that the Mechanic Street property should have a survey done to address the frontage and find out if the lot is buildable. Tricia said she thought that none of the town tax title properties had been surveyed. A survey would cost less than environmental studies. Tricia said she would recommend passing over the warrant article asking for $10,000 for the Mechanic Street property. Rick said the funding is predicated on the town wanting to do this project. Andrew asked Tricia to investigate the other town owned properties to find out if any of them are buildable. Rick suggested that maybe a company like Cowls would be interested in the Brook RD and Fiske Mill lots for timber, while the South Shelburne RD lot might be buildable and used for timber, since it has electricity.

Deb Andrew suggested that the town could auction the lots in such a way as to make them affordable for those who can least afford them.

**Town Hall Generator Installation – Propane Hookup** – The generator has been installed. The next step is to hook up the propane. The town’s propane supplier, Surner, has visited the site and will be providing a quote.

**Highway Laborer Position – Employment Offer Declined** – Jeff Johnston has recommended that the position be re-advertised. Two people had been interviewed. One pulled out prior to the road test. The other was offered the job but declined. It will be re-advertised.

**New** **Business:**

**Building Maintenance** – The idea of having a building maintenance person has been brought up in the past. A person dedicated to maintenance would be preferable to having it done by the highway crew. A copy of Buckland’s building maintenance agreement has been obtained to use as a template. Nothing can be done this year but it could be on the agenda for next year. Andrew mentioned that funds exist in the buildings and grounds account for sidewalk shoveling and lawn mowing. Perhaps those tasks could be combined with handyman-type duties. Terry said that those funds were also used for unforeseen maintenance issues.

**Christopher Curtis RE: Letter of Support for Woodlands Partnership Grant** – The Open Space Committee reviewed a proposed grant which would be used to protect the Deerfield River and its tributaries and then voted to recommend that the Board sign a letter of support for the grant. A motion was made by Tricia to authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for the Woodlands Partnership Grant. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Assignment of Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles** **–** The Board discussed and assigned who would be responsible for moving each of the 39 warrant articles.

**Any Other Business:**

**CPA Funding for Playground Equipment** – Andrew had questioned why Buckland was not contributing to the cost of new playground equipment at BSE, while Shelburne is using its CPA funds for that project. Buckland is not a CPA town so has no CPA funds. Also, Terry had checked and found there is nothing on the Buckland Town Meeting warrant about funding the equipment. Andrew wondered if there was a way for Buckland to partner on capital projects. Tricia said in the future the towns might consider merging since they already share so many services. A series of meetings between the two towns to work out shared issues seemed like a more plausible solution.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on May 19, via Zoom.

**Correspondence:**

**Faye Whitney RE: Resignation as Planning Board Admin Assistant** – A motion was made by Tricia to accept the resignation with regret and much gratitude. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Martha Thurber RE: 2D8T Steering Committee Vote to Recommend Consolidation of Pre-K thru 12th Grade** – No action was needed on this. The letter was simply to keep the Board informed. The steering committee was willing to meet with the Board if requested, but it was felt no meeting was necessary at this time.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment**: At 7:15 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