**Selectboard Meeting Minutes May 19, 2025 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

**Call to Order**: Rick LaPierre called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Andrew Baker (arrived late), Tricia Yacovone-Biagi, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Tricia to approve the minutes of May 5, as amended. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 2-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Town Hall –** Feedback was received from residents who had trouble hearing at Town Meeting. People will be encouraged to use the microphones. More than 160 transfer station mirror tags have been distributed. A policy needs to be made about how to handle complaints about disposing of non-household trash. Tax payments are coming in steadily. There are still 183 accounts that have not been paid. The transition from the town administered Senior Center to the new West County Senior Services District will be happening at the end of this fiscal year.

**Senior Services District –** Sylvia Smith will the be the senior services liaison to the Selectboard. The budget or FY’26 was passed in all three member towns. The new district will start operations on July 1. Liability insurance is in place, an accounting firm has been hired, a treasurer is in place, the lease is being renegotiated, and insurance and retirement plans are being transferred. A program called Wheels of Friendship will be providing rides to the Center. A brochure for caregivers is being developed. The Center received an anonymous, unrestricted donation of $10,000.

**Emergency Management –** An emergency management display table was set up at Town Meeting. EMD Tom Williams is studying the hazard mitigation plan for needed updates. Tom is working on a MOU with Trinity Church.

**MVP–** A $170,000 DER culvert replacement grant application has been submitted. Tricia attended the Resilient Deerfield Watershed meeting. They have an MVP grant to develop a regional flood model and are seeking public comment concerning conditions and concerns in the watershed.

**Highway Department –** The crew has been working on drainage. It was discovered that a culvert on Old Greenfield Road was sending water on to private property. Warner Brothers will be coming to fix the problem and redirect the water appropriately. Residents have complained about potholes. The crew is aware and will be working on that. There are three new applications for the laborer position.

**Previous Minutes –** Andrew had not arrived when the May 5 minutes were approved. He had some amendments he would like reflected in these minutes. In regard to Buckland not sharing the capital costs of shared projects, he felt the answer in the minutes was to a question he had not asked. Andrew pointed out that Buckland had other sources of funding for capital projects and it was not necessary for the funds to come from CPA sources. In regard to the tax title properties Andrew felt the numbers shared were prior property values He had questioned those values. Also, Andrew felt the questions about whether the lots were buildable and whether there was enough frontage, were purely speculative at this point.

**Mohawk Trail Regional School District Personnel Negotiations Subcommittee**: Executive session meetings with the Unit B - Paraprofessional’s Team are still in progress. The meetings of the subcommittee are often weekly. It is hoped the negotiations will be resolved by May 27.

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

**Franklin Regional Transportation Authority Advisory Board:** The annual meeting was set for May15 but a quorum was not available. The meeting has been rescheduled for May 29, when the budget will be discussed.

**P.V. Veterans Services Advisory Board:** The next meeting will be October 7. Inventory from the previous Veteran’s service officer has been brought to Town Hall. Those materials will be taken care of.

**Appointments:**

**6:00 pm Public Hearing RE: Dragon Brook Bridge Replacement Project** – The hearing was opened by Rick at 6 pm. Jeff Johnston said the hearing was required as part of an application for a $1 million MassWorks grant. He felt this hearing was premature since engineering needs to be done first. He has applied for a Small Bridge Grant to help pay for engineering. If that grant is awarded it will take a year to get the work done. Jeff thinks the bridge is not repairable but he doesn’t know for sure. The bridge may be going from a 16-foot arched bridge to a full bridge. Jeff could not give a timeline at this point but it will be a year or two. A new bridge will need to meet Mass stream crossing standards and be able to withstand 50 to100-year storms. The Small Bridge Grant phase one could be up to $100,000. Phase two could be up to $500,000. Jeff could apply for phase two but he won’t know the full cost until the engineering work is done. The town may need to apply for a second MassWorks grant.

Terry Caldwell is the nearest abutter to the bridge. She runs a home-based business and is concerned that having to wait for years to get a new bridge could harm her business. She was also concerned about traffic during construction. Jeff said all that would be discussed during the engineering phase and there would be no actual construction until 2027. Terry Caldwell assumed if the bridge were to be made wider they might need some of her property. Rick explained that nothing would happen without more public hearings. Terry Caldwell also mentioned that the area floods during storms. Tricia said if the MVP grant come through it would involve Dragon Brook and its flooding. Abutter Sue Surner said she needed access to her barn and couldn’t lose access to her lower driveway. Jeff responded that the project would work around the needs of residents. Andrew recalled that when a bridge was replaced om Brook Road a new span was laid over the failing arch. He didn’t know if that might be an option. Terry Caldwell expressed concern about heavy loads going over the temporary bridge and hoped the bridge would not be damaged. Another neighbor, Sue Bishop wanted to be kept informed of the project. Rick assured everyone that abutters would be kept informed. The hearing was closed at 6:16 pm.

**Old Business:**

**Town-Owned Tax Title Properties** – Tricia felt there needed to be a group working on this and the Planning Board seemed to be the logical choice. She has spoken with both John Wheeler and Faith Williams. She feels the community needs to be involved in deciding what to do with the properties. Tricia also clarified that the property values she used in her presentation at the last meeting were the current values, not past or future values. Andrew said he would welcome the Planning Board’s involvement in researching the properties but the ultimate decisions are still up to the Selectboard.

**Town Hall Generator Installation – Propane Hookup** – The generator has been installed. The next step is to hook up the propane. A couple of quotes have been received. A new tank would hold the propane for the first floor. Currently a large tank behind the building holds the propane for the second floor. The propane vendor suggested using the large tank and making a “T” at the building with a meter on both sides to create two separate accounts for the first and second floors. Andrew mentioned that the theater heating/cooling system may need replacing in the next few years and he’s not sure what a new system might be.

**Highway Laborer Position – Schedule Interviews** – Following a discussion it was decided to hold the interviews next week on Friday afternoon.

**Cowell Gym Director Position** – The Rec Committee interviewed two candidates for the position and recommended hiring Clay Connor. A motion was put forth by Tricia, seconded by Andrew, to accept the recommendation of the Recreation Committee to hire Clay Connor as the next Cowell Gym Director. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Annual Town Meeting Recap** – All articles passed except the one requesting more funding for the Mechanic Street property. Tricia said it might have been better to have something in writing describing why budgets increased. Terry said that was already in the works for next year. Andrew thought it might be better to have a pre-town meeting meeting to answer questions.

**New** **Business:**

**Mary Lou Gallup RE: Community Preservation Committee At Large Member** – The CPC Chair had recommended the appointment of Mary Lou. A motion was made by Tricia, seconded by Andrew to appoint Mary Lou Gallup as an at-large member of the CPC. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Allison Gage RE: Assistance with Green Communities Program** – Andrew presented a motion to decline the offer presented by the FRCOG to assist the Town with a future green Communities application that would include the Mohawk Trail Regional High School and Buckland Shelburne Elementary. Members of the Board agreed that the Town had their own list of energy efficiency improvements to explore without taking on buildings owned by the School District. Tricia seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Town Hall Repair Proposals**

* **Fire Equipment Inc. $2,094.34 – (5) Smoke/Heat Detectors** – Andrew presented a motion to accept the proposal submitted by Fire Equipment, Inc.to address deficiencies at Town Hall. Tricia seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0-0
* **Climates by Pomeroy $5,288.00 – Heat Pump Compressor Replacement –** Andrew presented a motion to accept the proposal submitted by Climates by Pomeroy for the repair of the heat pump system at Town Hall. Tricia seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**John Wheeler, Planning Board RE: Recommending Susan Durkee as Admin Assist** – The Planning Board had recommended that Susan Durkee be hired as their new Administrative Assistant. She was recently appointed to be the assistant to the CPC, so her information is available. Terry said the town’s personnel policies require that the position be advertised for a week or that an internal posting be done for two weeks. It was decided to advertise it on the town website as well as posting it internally. The time requirements will be fulfilled in time for the next board meeting.

**Any Other Business:**

**Memorial Day Parade** – A motion was made by Andrew, seconded by Tricia, to approve a parade permit for the annual Memorial Day Parade. Roll call vote: Tricia – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Memorial Hall Renovation** – Highland Seating will be working on removing the old theater seats from May 28 to May 30. A dumpster is needed and Andrew asked if several parking spaces, near Town Hall, could be reserved for the dumpster. The dumpster would be placed across the parking spaces, it would not be blocking the sidewalk, the handicap ramp, or the handicap parking space. Jeff Johnston will put up signs ahead of time explaining that the spaces will be reserved from May 28 to 30. The police will be notified.

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting will be on June 2, via Zoom.

**Correspondence:**

**Joseph Giard, Transfer Station Attendant RE: Pending Retirement June 28, 2025** – Joe has been the attendant for 18 years. His retirement was acknowledged with sincere thanks.

**Maureen Pike Sewer Commissioners Clerk RE: Resignation** – Maureen had announced her resignation following 49 years of service to the town in several different roles. The Board thanked her and expressed regret at her departure and offered best wishes.

**Mark Rabinsky RE: Mass Energy Technical Assistance Grant$15,000 – 623 Mohawk Trail Municipal Building** – Correspondence had been received announcing that the grant application was successful. This will be used for a study on how to improve the green condition of the police/municipal building.

**Public Comment:**

As this was Tricia’s last Selectboard meeting, Rick offered his heartfelt thanks to her, noting he appreciated how well prepared she always was and her attention to detail. “You have been a pleasure to work with,” he said. Andrew echoed Rick’s comments, saying that working with Tricia had been a pleasure and that he expected to see her at meetings in her role as MVP Coordinator. Tricia thanked everyone for the privilege of serving on the Board and said it had been an honor. She said she hoped she had met peoples’ expectations and urged everyone to build a culture of resilience by doing acts of kindness and goodwill.

**Adjournment**: At 6:50 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