

## Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, May 12, 2020

Howard Bronstein, Winton Pitcoff, and Hilary Weeks were present. Also, in attendance: Paula King, Joan Wattman, Kate Buttolph, Ellen Dupont, Rebecca Coletta.

The meeting, held via conference call consistent with Governor Baker's temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Law, was called to order at 7:01 p.m. The minutes of April 28, 2020 were accepted as submitted: Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes.

### 49 Mountain Street Conservation Restriction Request

The Board opened discussion on a conservation restriction request for approximately 182 acres of land on Mountain Street owned by Joan Wattman to Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc.

Howard pointed out the tax burden on small towns as more land is removed from the tax base. He noted the top 50 tax rates of the 351 Massachusetts cities and towns are in rural areas with significant tax-exempt land. Kate Buttolph, Mass Audubon, stated her opinion that not a lot of revenue is lost from exempt land. She also noted the Town would still receive tax revenue for the house and house lot. Winton added his thoughts on the importance of open land and stated residential development doesn't generate enough revenue to offset the services required. Howard moved to approve the transfer of the property located at 49 Mountain Street referenced in the Conservation Restriction from Joan Wattman to Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc. The motion, seconded by Winton, was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes.

### Inspector of Animals

Howard moved to appoint Kate Nevins as Inspector of Animals through April 30, 2021. The motion, seconded by Hilary, was unanimously approved as follows: Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes. (Casey Dwyer's resignation as Animal Control Officer and Inspector of Animals effective April 27, 2020 was received by the Town Clerk April 27<sup>th</sup>.)

## Board of Health

Board of Health Chair Ellen Dupont informed the Board that contracting with Community Eco Power, LLC (CEP) would save the Town money for “tipping fees” at \$80 per ton as opposed to \$83 per ton with Waste Management. Per recommendation of the Board of Health Howard moved to sign the contract with CEP. The motion, seconded by Winton, was unanimously approved as follows: Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes. (Ellen signed out of the meeting at 7:23 p.m.)

## Caucus and Town Meeting

State legislators are working on town meeting legislation. It is hoped that a plan will be in place by Monday, May 18, 2020 that may include remote participation and/or provisions for social distancing. At this time caucus is slated for May 27, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. with the election and town meeting on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Winton suggested the use of a sound system that would allow attendees to remain in their vehicles and vote with their hands out windows. He also mentioned the possibility of seeking sign-ups for 25-30 voters in advance. The Board discussed holding both the caucus and the town meeting at the pavilion behind the library weather permitting with a good sound system. Borrowing the tent used by the firefighters for the barbecue was suggested.

As the state “reopens” it is anticipated a lot of control will be local.

## Other Business

A Green Communities grant contract extension through June 30, 2021 was signed by the Select Board chair.

MVP Action Grant: The top 20 most vulnerable culverts affected by weather have been detailed on 4 maps. Howard spoke of the wooden bridge that crossed Mill Brook on West Hill Road in the 1970's. The current culvert at that location is 25' below the road surface. He also expressed appreciation for the assistance and detail provided by Highway Superintendent Mert Taylor, Jr. in identifying the culverts. A 90-day (September 30, 2020) extension for the MVP Action Grant has been submitted

MLP: Home installations will resume following guidelines provided by the MLP and approved by the Board of Health. Quotes for insuring the completed broadband network are being sought from MIIA as PURMA has backed out.

## Correspondence

The MTRSD Superintendent Search Committee has narrowed the superintendent search to three finalists: Thad King- currently principal of Murdock High School in Winchendon, MA; Rhonda Stowell Lewis- a Mohawk Regional High School

graduate and principal of Glenwood Elementary and Hiram L. Dorman Elementary in Springfield, MA; Sheryl Stanton- superintendent of Granby (Mass.) School District.

The Board received a letter concerning municipal finance from Senator Hinds. A copy of the Highland Ambulance/EMS quarterly report will be scanned and sent to the Board.

Miscellaneous mail was reviewed.

Motion to adjourn at 7:36 p.m. Howard, yes; Winton, yes; Hilary, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King  
Administrative Secretary