

## Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, August 11, 2020

Howard Bronstein, Hilary Weeks, and Rebecca Coletta were in attendance. Also present were Paula King, Sheryl Stanton, Joan Wattman, David Kramer, Kate Nevins, Kimberly Longey, Kara Kitchen, Bob Baker, and Matt Stowell. 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 July 14, 2020 were accepted as submitted.

### MTRSD Superintendent

After introductions were made, Sheryl Stanton, MTRSD Superintendent, addressed plans for the September school openings. A plan for feedback from district employees has been created to assist in planning for the 2020/2021 school year. Three educational models have been submitted to DESE and have been approved. The status of COVID-19 will determine which of those plans will be used. Bob Baker, Finance Committee member, stated Massachusetts schools are funded by property taxes and asked that Superintendent Stanton be cognizant of the burden on towns. The superintendent noted both the Student Opportunity Act and the Rural District School Coalition have resulted in formula changes. The goal is to educate kids. Howard stated he would like to see the state fund 100% of transportation costs. Superintendent Stanton agrees with Finance Committee Chair David Kramer and Bob Baker that schools shouldn't be funded by property taxes. The question being how do we fund education across the Commonwealth equitably between municipal government and education. Education costs out-pace the Proposition 2.5% allowable increase for municipal governments. David Kramer added "going where the money is" i.e. income tax may be a better alternative. Howard added 25 years ago, Michigan was able to change educational funding as a result of a court judgement, Massachusetts, however, was not. School Committee member Kara Kitchen suggested a push to legislators may make a difference. An offer to discuss the issue one on one at state and federal levels was made by Kimberly Longey.

### Storm Review

Howard expressed the unbelievable response by Plainfield emergency personnel during and following storm Isaias. The highway, fire, and police departments

were out all night dealing with downed trees, wires, and other wind damage. He mentioned the radio frequency channel set up by former Fire Chief Thatcher allowing all three departments to communicate directly among themselves. It was also noted that just as several Eversource trucks arrived on the scene they were instructed to leave due to a communication that overtime was not allowed. Kimberly and Brian, Plainfield's MLP team, worked behind the scene with Whip City Fiber to make sure broadband outages would be restored. There was no damage to fiber and no expensive repairs to the Plainfield network. They are also formulating an emergency plan. Howard referenced the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan which is being revised. The aforementioned broadband emergency plan will be reviewed by the MVP team and will be incorporated into the CEMP. Efforts are underway to complete the CEMP by the end of August. Most of the broadband plan was formulated by Brian Hawthorne. Kimberly noted broadband is a necessity and is a public utility.

#### Thatcher Property

Howard has spoken to the Building Commissioner, Treasurer, and Tax Title Attorney Ronald Berenson about damage to the Thatcher house as a result of a tree felled during storm Isaisas. Even if the property is sold there won't be enough revenue to cover the arrears in taxes owed and re-mediation of the damages. It may fall upon the Town to demo the building/buildings. Should that be the case, a Special Town Meeting will be necessary to obtain funding. Bids from demolition contractors and other necessary services will be needed. David Kramer asked what the sale of the property might net. Kimberly suggested there might be a market or used bricks. Rebecca inquired about liability to the Town to which Paula responded "town owned property with buildings must be insured". The property still belongs to the estate.

#### Building Review-COVID-19

The Town Offices are to remain closed with public access by appointment per recommendation of office staff. The Town Hall will be open for early voting and the Primary Election from August 22<sup>nd</sup> through September 1st. The same applies to early voting and the November election. Otherwise the building remains closed. Daivid Kramer strongly feels remote meetings should continue until the Governor deems otherwise.

#### Other Business

The Board received notice of purchase and sale agreements for lots 3 and 4 on Bow Street currently in Chapter 61 from Attorney Richard M. Evans. Howard moved not to exercise the Town's right of first refusal for the lots 3 and 4 on Bow

Street. The motion, seconded by Hilary, was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

The Chapter 61 lien subordination agreement being sought by Joan Wattman will be discussed at the August 25<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Budgetary challenges regarding salaries and other issues were discussed. It was suggested the Select Board be involved in determining compensation for those whom they appoint as well as other budgetary requests that may be brought forward. Kimberly noted the importance and accountability of the process.

Rebecca stated collaboration wouldn't hurt.

The Board received text for a proposed local by-law prohibiting compression engine braking from Matt Stowell.

Howard moved to pay the FY'21 MMA dues in the amount of \$526.00. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

Howard moved to sign an agreement with NOVUS for IT assistance. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

MVP Grant: The engineering consultant is in the process of completing the assessment of the last 20 culverts. The Highway Department plans to replace the Bow Street culvert within two weeks.

The Board will meet on August 26<sup>th</sup> at the Town Offices to review job descriptions and the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

FY'21 state revenues for Chapter 70 and Unrestricted Government Aid will be funded at FY'20 levels.

The FY'21 MTRSD revised budget has been approved by DESE.

William Adams, Cumington, has acknowledged and declined his FY'21 appointment as Municipal Hearing Officer.

Lauren Goldberg acknowledged the FY'21 appointment of KP Law as town counsel.

The Board received a copy of the July report from ACO Kate Nevins. Kate has received the town's Social Media Policy. She has also suggested changes to the local by-laws regarding animal control.

The 2020 Firefighter's Barbecue has been postponed until 2021.

An August 10<sup>th</sup> ABCC Advisory regarding food service and gatherings for licensees selling alcohol for on premises consumption effective August 11<sup>th</sup> has been forwarded to Pub 116.

David Kramer addressed Howard's tenure on the Board acknowledging that it has been a pleasure working with everyone and that Howard will be missed.

Other mail was reviewed.

Motion to adjourn made and seconded at 8:53 p.m. Howard, yes; Hilary, yes;  
Rebecca, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King  
Administrative Secretary