

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, August 25, 2020

Howard Bronstein, Hilary Weeks, and Rebecca Coletta were in attendance. Also present were Paula King, Justin Litchfield, David Alvord, Kimberly Longey, Ed Morann, Patrick Williamson, David Kramer, Bob Baker, James Meehan, Joan Wattman, Matt Stowell, Peter O'Brien, Todd Sienkiewicz, and Carla Trosino-Laramy. The meeting, held via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Law, was called to order at 7:01 p.m. The minutes of August 11, 2020 were accepted as submitted: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

Chapter 61 Subordination Agreement

According to Kate Buttolph, Massachusetts Audubon Society, and Audubon Attorney Ray Lyons, there is no need for the Town to subordinate the Chapter 61 lien to the mortgage.

7:15 p.m. North Central Street and East Main Street Pole Hearings

North Central Street: Eversource Petition #6A030911 requesting permission to install 5 new poles along North Central for the installation of a new circuit for customer reliability. The Tree Warden, Police Chief, and public safety officials are aware of the project. The Highway Superintendent is supportive. Chief David Alvord stated the Public Safety Building is a high priority area vital to the operation of the Town. He asked and was told wire placement would not interfere with public safety operations. Ruth Osgood asked if the stake between the cemetery wall and her driveway indicated a new pole. Carla Trosino-Laramy, Eversource representative, said no and authorized Ruth to remove the stake. The petition will be continued after the following questions from abutters have been resolved:

Matt Stowell: traffic concerns and hourly schedule for work crews and time table for the project.

D. J. Clary: position of pole and/or anchor too close to his driveway. (He will mark pole in question.)

Peter O'Brien: inquired whether the pole near the Rte.116 intersection is a new pole. (He also noted the wood from a tree cut by Eversource has not been removed from his property.)

Kimberly Longey, MLP Manager: asked the Town not be charged for moving fiber optic lines since the Town pays for licenses for pole attachments. (Verizon is not moving their poles for this project.) She would like to have a condition that the Town does not pay to transfer lines from old to new poles added to future projects. Carla will either meet with or contact those to address their questions and concerns. Kimberly will contact Carla by email. Howard will contact Melissa Hancock at Eversource.

East Main Street: Eversource Petition #6A03134 requesting permission to install 1 solely owned pole on East Main Street to install a circuit tie for customer reliability utilizing an existing circuit pole line. This work involves reducing span lengths and to install larger conductors. Said conductors on the new pole would replace the three conductors on the existing pole. Howard moved to approve Eversource Petition #6A03134. Todd Sienkiewicz, 258 East Main Street, expressed concerns about the size of the new equipment and would like to see pictures of what is proposed. Carla agreed to consult with Todd. Howard withdrew the motion to approve pending the resolution of Todd's concerns.

The West Main Street pole hearing was postponed due to improper abutter addresses and will take place on September 8, 2020 at 7:15 p.m.

Fire Department Funding

Chief Alvord approached the Board on behalf of the Volunteer Fire Department to discuss the reimbursement for firefighters and EMS personnel. David noted he has a great crew of 20 members of various ages. He is not seeking to become a paid department, but stated the Town should show support for firefighters. Continuous training requirements in addition to calls is hard on their families. There is only one surrounding town that does not compensate firefighters and EMTs. Chief Alvord, David Kramer, and Howard had conversations with former Chief Thatcher regarding stipends or a property tax break. Various options and costs were discussed as were costs associated with outfitting a firefighter for duty. David Kramer suggested the Select Board should take the lead on this. Hilary is in favor of optional stipends and giving thanks to firefighters; Rebecca indicated a need to study and deliberate as more information is needed. Kimberly believes it is a great proposal, but needs broader conversations with police, fire, and animal control. She offered research salaries/costs relative to public safety from other towns. Other aspects were discussed. Chief Alvord will initiate discussion at a departmental meeting within the next month if the Town will support a proposal. David Kramer supports the idea and looks forward to a proposal. Ed Morann has also had discussions with Chief Alvord.

Police Chief

For the period of July 1st - August 25th, Chief Justin Litchfield reported 88 911 calls, averaging 13 per week. Officers are busy with other calls, as well. State police responded to of 5 calls. Rebecca asked about departmental office hours. Chief Litchfield is not holding office hours due to COVID-19. When asked about his schedule, Chief Litchfield said he is available after 4:30 p.m. Kimberly asked about plans to publish reports about departmental activities. The chief said there are no plans at this time noting negativity towards the police department. Former Chief Wood was willing to do articles, but due to concerns about more negativity is unwilling at this time. Howard reiterated it is inappropriate to ask the chief to report activity in the Plainfield Post. Kimberly Longey stated she is looking for a log, not journalism. Chief Litchfield stated other towns have a trained Public Relations Officer and classes are not currently available. Kimberly said an effort should be made to underscore good services. When asked Chief Litchfield responded the department is required to keep a log. State police have recently responded to 3 out of 5 calls. Residents can call officers and Chief Litchfield directly. Any posting of departmental activities has to be done correctly so as to protect the public in addition to protect the Town from any liability. Data without detail could be posted.

MLP Update

Construction is nearing completion. There several houses that are proving difficult to reach. Certified letters will mailed to inform those who have not elected to have cold drops installed of the September 30, 2020 deadline. New applications will be processed as they come in. All broadband accounts are current with the exception of one that has been delinquent since February. Kimberly is waiting for FY'20 closeout information.

IT Grant

Hilary spoke with Carl Fazzina with questions concerning the IT Grant Agreement with NOVUS. The Google platform is not illegal as long as state guidelines are followed. Ongoing support for the Plainfield upgrades is between \$10,000 and \$15,000 per year. Hilary moved to accept the NOVUS proposal for the IT Grant in the amount of \$33,365. The motion, seconded by Howard was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

MVP Action Grant Update

Highway Superintendent Merton Taylor, Jr. is in the process of ordering the materials for Bow Street culvert. The engineering assessment for 40 culverts is anticipated shortly.

Thatcher Property Update

Building Commissioner Gerald Garner has sent a letter to Arlene Snape, owner of record. If no response Gerry can inspect the buildings. It was noted Chief Alvord initiated a call to Gerry on the night of the storm. Gerry attempted, but was unable to get to Plainfield. Robert Baker asked if the APR for the property has been approved. It has not.

Correspondence

The Board received notice of the approval for the West Street and Line Painting Chapter 90 project requests from MassDOT. Howard noted the highway crew is working on West Street.

The MTRSD Revised FY21 assessments of \$869,851 and assessment of \$19,715 for operating and capital, respectively were received.

FY20 KP Law invoice #122403 dated September 27, 2019 in the amount of \$281.54 was received and requires Special Town Meeting approval for payment. Hilary moved to sign a Resolution in Support of The Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was approved as follows: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

Other mail was reviewed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.: Howard, yes; Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary