

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, March 23, 2021

Hilary Weeks, Rebecca Coletta, and Patrick Williamson were present. Also in attendance: Paula King, Chief Litchfield, Sgt. Miazga, David Kramer, Peter Lapointe, Kate Nevins, Ed Morann, Jack Nelson, Kimberly Longey, Lily Thompson, Matt Stowell, Bob Baker, Tee O'Sullivan, Pleun Bouricius, Joe Sabourin. The meeting, held via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Law, was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes of March 9, 2021 were accepted as submitted: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

FY'22 Police Budget

Three proposals for FY'22 police department salaries presented by Chief Litchfield were discussed at length by Chief Litchfield, Sgt. Miazga, Select Board, Finance Committee, and the Plainfield Police Ad Hoc Working Group. Plainfield citizens also commented. The Chief prefers Budget #1 totaling \$127,657.92 (Budget #2 totals 105,281.28; Budget # 3 totals \$81,350.48). The three proposals seek hourly rates commensurate with those of the Highway Department personnel. Budgets #2 and #3 contain no provision for night and weekend coverage; calls would be answered by state police who would be notified of the Town's vote. State police have a slower response time. Call volume is fairly steady, slowing after 8:00 p.m. Monday - Wednesday and after 10:00 p.m. Thursday - Sunday. Rebecca doesn't support Budgets #1 and #2; she doesn't feel either will pass at Town Meeting. Chief Litchfield requirements reflect changes due to POST legislation effective July 1, 2021. All officers are required to be certified through the Bridge Program. Rebecca moved to support Chief Litchfield's \$25.65 per hour request with an \$85,000 salary budget with the chief to determine officer rates and hours within the budget. The motion was seconded by Patrick who agrees officers are underpaid and added we should concentrate on the number of hours. Other towns don't patrol and some are considering additional hours. Former Chief Joe Sabourin stated there are varied levels of policing. It is a challenge getting qualified officers ready and able to respond to calls. Some officers are working for other towns, but have the ability to bring training services to Plainfield which in turn saves money. The structuring of hours was also discussed. Patrick also described the FY'22 budget as interim; we don't have a clear idea of what the Town needs in terms of policing.

Other discussion centered around regionalization with other towns, slimming the department, the use of volunteers, full time/part time/ per diem, and mutual aid. Lily Thompson added she was unable to access the Plainfield Police Ad Hoc Working Group meeting. Lily has questions concerning comparing the police department with other towns. Kimberly later clarified the group is advisory and has no authority; the group is tasked with information gathering for the Select Board. The motion was defeated as follows: Hilary, no; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, no. A meeting to include the Select Board, two Finance Committee members, Chief Litchfield, and Sgt. Miazga to draft a FY'22 Police Salary budget will be scheduled.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee did not vote on the MTRSD Capital Plan according to David Kramer. David noted the need for capital improvements to district buildings. Articles for improvements to the Mohawk High School/Middle School and for Sanderson are forthcoming. The district will borrow if the projects are approved by member towns with the first assessment to follow in FY'23.

MLP Update

The DPU has extended the date for a Public Hearing with hopes that Charter will withdraw its petition to become a provider in towns that have or are building their own broadband systems.

Articles to establish a Broadband Stabilization Fund (2/3 vote required) and to transfer FY'20 Enterprise Retained Earnings of \$17,542 to the fund have been submitted for the ATM Warrant. The FY'22 Enterprise Fund Budget has been completed. Both Kimberly and Paula are waiting for confirmation of the FY'22 Broadband principal figure from the treasurer.

Animal Control By-law Revision

Revision of the Town's Animal Control by-law is in progress with hopes it will be completed by KP Law Attorney Davis Doneski in time to be included on the ATM Warrant.

IT Grant Update

The revised proposal from NOVUS should be received by week's end. Progress is being made.

Annual Town Meeting Warrant

The following articles will be placed on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Demolition Delay By-law, "Jake Brakes", Animal Control By-law revision, Zoning By-law revisions, FY'20 KP-Law Invoice \$240.50, FY'20 American Pest

Invoice \$95, Broadband Stabilization, Town Fire Escape (add'l funds \$14,600), Highway Garage Roof (add'l funds \$10,600), Hathaway Renovations \$24,600, Paint Town Hall \$25,000, Used Grader Purchase \$120,000, Building at the Compactor \$5,000, MTRSD Capital Projects, and a request to change the Board of Selectmen to Select Board.

Hilary moved to close the Annual Town meeting Warrant to the submission of articles. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

License Renewal

Hilary moved to renew the Club License for the Ashfield Rod & Gun Club, Inc, for 2021. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Correspondence

The MTRSD FY'22 assessments have been certified at: Operating \$906,208, Capital, \$18,550.

The MIIA renewal summary for FY'22 was received.

Notice of the appointment of Anthony Gibb as a Special Police Officer was received.

Copies of the February Police Log and telephone spreadsheet were received.

Other mail was reviewed.

A motion to adjourn was entertained at 8:46 p.m.: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary