



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Board of Selectmen Minutes
January 4, 2017

Attendance: Adam Dolby; Andy Montanaro; William Levakis

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 5:59 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. to Executive Session with a Roll Call Vote

- A. Dolby – Yes
- A. Montanaro - Yes
- B. Levakis – Yes

Re-convened in open session at 6:53 p.m.

ALL BOARDS MEETING

A. Dolby opened the meeting by wishing all present a Happy New Year. He wanted to get everyone together as we start the new year to try to outline some ambitions and mutual goals that we can agree upon to move the town forward. He mentioned the indictments handed down by the grand jury in the case of the former tax collector. He stressed that if any town employee is contacted by the media, they should be referred to A. Ellison, the Town Administrator, and she will direct them to A. Dolby, the Selectboard chair. He indicated that financial controls are being put in place in response to what happened in the past.

A. Dolby indicated that we are moving toward implementing Best Practices to conduct town business. He clarified that the Town Administrator is in charge of the departments and boards that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) supervise, and we all have a standard of responsibility to be responsive to the residents of the town. Some changes have been made in terms of synching hours of the town's financial staff, and asked that hours outside normal town hall business hours are cleared through the Town Administrator for staff who report to the BOS. He wanted to clarify that in no way are they directing the hours of when boards or departments can meet.

A. Dolby discussed the direction the town is going in, stressing mutual goals and ambitions we can jointly agree upon and the need to attract and involve new people in the process of running the town. He stressed the importance of infusing our committees and organizations with new people who bring new ideas.

He formally introduce the new Town Administrator, Angie Ellison. She brings some great ideas and new perspectives from her experiences. A. Ellison expressed that an important goal is that town hall is a

perceived as a receptive place for and to residents getting resolutions. She envisions open communication to move the town forward.

The floor was opened for discussion and brainstorming; Many ideas were presentation.

Hiring Policy - A hiring policy is being drafted, and the BOS is asking for the participation of groups that do not report to the BOS. We are trying to put in place Best Practices to ensure the town is all operating on the same page and want to be sure we limit the town's exposure due to poor hiring practices.

Town Reports – The Town Clerk needs all departmental/commission/board reports turned in by March 15. The budget and warrant needs to be returned no later than April 12. The BOS has committed to getting all budgets to the Finance Committee by the end of January.

Operations Updates

Police – Police Chief Kevin Hennessey reported that the department received 106 calls in 2016. Due to funding cuts in prior years, the number of personnel is down. His goals for the coming year are to add additional officers, get grants, prepare for the spring/summer traffic issues and have the department more active in the community. The department website is coming back online, as well as a Facebook page. He asked for community support during these tough times for police departments.

Officers are performing patrols to reduce speeding. Speed limit signs are being looked at for Nye Brook Road and Otis-Tolland Road.

The recent toy drive by the department turned out well. The toys were delivered to the Huntington Food Pantry and were happily received by the children.

Fire Department – Chief Ed Harvey reported that there were 98 calls in 2016, with zero structure fires and zero injuries or deaths to firefighters. The fire department has been out doing inspections, doing preparedness and preventing fires through cutting brush back to reduce the chances of fire spreading to homes. The department also is involved in recovery, which is helping people who have had an emergency can get back to the 'new normal'. Another important piece is taking care of our firefighters who have responded to an emergency by having stress debriefings.

The Fire Department budget shows capital purchases being greatly underfunded. There is a need to purchase new fire apparatus to replace a piece that is 30-years old. They also need to replace hose and ladders. A grant has been applied for, and they are waiting to hear. In addition, the Fire Station was built in 1900 and is inadequate for a current fire department. The department would also like to get a record management system that operates off a laptop to document calls and store documentation and permits.

The ladder truck has been sold for nearly what we paid for it.

The department is also looking to recruit local people, especially those in town during the day.

Check your smoke detectors!

Highway – So far this winter, we have had 12 to 13 storm events. It will be an expensive year, as we are having frequent snow and ice events. Snow fences were put up on Chester and Gibbs Roads to help with drifting.

The department is outgrowing the current facility. The department assisted the Fire Department during the last storm for an emergency call. Highway monitors the fire and Berkshire dispatch when a call goes out and responds to clear the roads. The department also calls the school superintendent during weather events to update him of the conditions.

Leaves were not blown out of ditches this fall due to being short staffed, so we will see some issues with leaf damming in the spring.

The Highway phone number for reporting problems is (413) 848-1421.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES – The TA is now part of the Emergency Management system and is preparing to become part of the team. She must be appointed by the BOS after completing training.

OLD BUSINESS

MA Turnpike Access – The Turnpike Authority had been contacted regarding opening an exit in Blandford and had not responded. A. Montanaro presented a letter to the Lieutenant Governor for the BOS to sign. The suggestion was made to bring it back to the residents for a vote due to the impact it would have on the town and town services.

Town Audit – An audit was to be performed after the town books were reconciled. The BOS has requested the Town's outside Accountant come before the board for an update and recommendation.

TA 3-Month Review – The Selectmen have received evaluation forms to complete for the TA's 3-month review. Upon completion, the forms will be sent to the Selectmen Secretary to compile and submit to the Selectboard Chair. The consolidated form will become part of the public record.

NEW BUSINESS

Minutes -

MOTION:

To approve the minutes of the Board of Selectmen meeting on December 19, 2016

by A. Dolby

2nd: B. Levakis

Vote: All in favor

Resignations – Two members of the Finance Committee have resigned. A. Dolby wished to thank them for their contribution to the town and all the hard work they have done over the years.

MOTION:

To formally accept the resignations of Tony van Werkhoven and Linda Smith from the Finance Committee and Tony van Werkhoven from the Hilltown Collaborative by A. Dolby

2nd: B. Levakis

Vote: All in favor

Appointment to Council on Aging Board –

MOTION:

To appoint Edna Wilander to the Council on Aging Board to complete the remaining term of the current vacancy and thereafter appoint her to a 3-year term by A. Dolby

2nd: B. Levakis

Vote: All in favor

BOS Meeting Agenda – A. Dolby pointed out that the agenda for the Selectboard meetings has been updated based on input from our legal counsel.

CITIZEN'S FORUM

No discussion

Meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m. to Executive Session.

Submitted by: Sue Streeter, Selectmen Secretary

Adam Dolby – Chair



Andrew Montanaro - Clerk



William Levakis – Member