



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Board of Selectmen, Minutes
May 12, 2015

Attendance: Andy Montanaro, Bill Levakis, and Cara Letendre – Secretary

Open Meeting:

7:05 p.m. Bill meeting opened, provided notice that meeting may be recorded.

Posted Agenda Items:

1. Highway Superintendent: Updates (Mr. Curry in Boston at a meeting)
NOTE: Mr. Montanaro had asked that Mr. Curry speak to him about going out of town to meetings for approval. Mr. Curry did not do that in this case, nor did he receive approval for the meeting he went to 2 weeks ago. Mr. Levakis- Mr. Curry did let me know that he was planning on attending. Mr. Montanaro – would prefer that Mr. Curry focus on finish the potholes before June 30.
 - a. Westfield Auto Parts Invoices: Treasurer and Cara working to resolve past due invoices. Why the Town did not receive the invoices and the amount owed is unclear.
 - b. Mr. Montanaro would like to meet with Mr. Curry and Lisa tomorrow at 5:00 p.m. Cara will schedule. Lisa would like to set-up a regular time to meet with Brad to have questions answered.
 - c. Mr. Montanaro: trying to make adjustment in schedule to get more asphalt on the ground. Mr. Curry is looking into a paver.
 - d. Russell Stage Start Date: still shooting for 6/15/15. About 1-2 weeks of prep work before paving begins. Mr. Young – we have the go-ahead from DEP. However, if we make any changes to the plan we will have to contact DEP.
 - e. Mr. Levakis- would like to get Mr. Curry out of the office to work with the crew more often. Thinking about moving the Highway Office back to the Highway Department. Cara – no access to Broadband, financial officers, less of a presence for residents.
 - f. Treasurer: met with Lisa and are correcting payroll line items. Asked to get Mr. Curry's permission to allow Lisa to meet with Accountant to do journal entries. Suggestion to write line title as well as number on payroll.
 - g. Driveway Culverts: Mr. Levakis, waiting on response from attorney. Discussion regarding using silt barriers when cleaning out culverts. Mr. Levakis will have Highway Superintendent contact Conservation Commission to discuss.
2. Budget Status: Financial Officers and Finance Committee need more time to get questions answered and finish journal entries. Mr. van Werkhoven- intention to have budget status report by the end of the week. Finance Committee will meet next week in a joint meeting with Selectboard. Board asked Cara to send notice to departments that are close to or over budget asking them to meet with the

Selectboard if they anticipate spending and to identify their need. In the case of an emergency the Selectboard and Finance will discuss where to get funding.

- a. Schedule A is not complete, funds held until complete. Should be done this week.
 - b. What do we do if we are over budget on Payroll? May have to go to Special Town Meeting.
3. Tony van Werkhoven- Town Moderator
- a. Based on observation at the Annual Town Meeting, and in particular a Town Meeting years ago, seems like the Moderator has an agenda with the school budget. Mr. van Werkhoven suggested that the Selectboard ask Mr. Hopson to resign. Mr. van Werkhoven feels that Mr. Hopson has not operated unbiased. Mr. Hopson also serves on the Finance Nominating Committee and as a result of an ethics complaint made by Mr. van Werkhoven, Mr. Hopson abstains from voting. Mr. Levakis- He can invoke the order of necessity to vote. Mr. van Werkhoven- disagree based on findings of Ethics Committee.
 - b. Mr. Cousinea- Mr. Hopson did offer to step aside when the school budget was discussed and no one asked him to do so.
 - c. Mr. van Werkhoven- just expressing feelings that there is an agenda displayed with the facilitation of the meeting, not suggesting that the meeting should have gone and differently. Feels that the role as moderator has ethical issues.
 - d. Mr. Montanaro: acknowledge that if he was moderator he would have biases, as would most people. Mr. Hopson has every right to make opinions known and make arguments for or against any position held. Suggest that Mr. van Werkhoven be prepared to have someone step in when discussing the school budget.
 - e. Mr. van Werkhoven- a few years ago one of the Finance Committee members had a minority report which recommended fully funding the school budget. The Moderator gave that report ample time and the Finance Committee was not given time to retort. Mr. Hopson- Mr. van Werkhoven was given time to do a presentation beforehand and was stopped during the retort because the audience objected that he was calling out names from the audit report.
 1. Mr. Hopson: I don't speak in support of the budget as moderator but if I step down then I can do so from the floor.
4. School Budget Vote: Tony van Werkhoven- at the Annual Town Meeting we voted an amount for the School Budget that is less than the amount of the assessment given to the Finance Committee by the School Committee, thus (Mr. van Werkhoven) believes that the Town voted down the budget. It seems that the Gateway administration is advertising that it passed.
- a. Mr. Montanaro: the School Committee submitted to each town a figure/assessment and our final vote at Town Meeting was less than the number given, I understand that this means Blandford voted the budget down. Mr. Levakis agreed. Suggestion to check with Town Council.
 - b. Mr. Hopson- correct, we did not vote the amount for the school budget from the Treasury. It is now the Selectboard's decision if we get the mitigation money to revise the assessment and hold a town meeting. However, don't have to as essentially past the assessment

with the number that was revised on the floor. The budget failed if we don't receive the \$635,000 in mitigation funding.

- c. Mr. van Werkhoven- the School Committee needs to re-issue the assessments based on the new facts.
 - d. Mr. Hopson- Treasurer will re-certify the amount as the School Committee already voted to accept the re-assessment.
 - e. Mrs. Crane- hope that the Selectboard noted the overwhelming support for the school budget at the Town Meeting. Blandford is traditionally very supportive of the school budget. Wondered if the Selectboard and Finance Committee realize that they are out of step with what the residents want by voting against the School Budget.
 - f. Mrs. Garfield- When the School Committee representatives met with the Finance Committee prior to the Town Meeting Mr. van Werkhoven asked why we need the district when we can farm our kids out to other districts. Mr. van Werkhoven denied saying this, he had suggested that the 6 remaining Towns address the financial issues through the School Committee. He had made the point that Gateway now has less than 900 students and concerned about the relatively large overhead. He had asked if it would make sense to consider consolidating with another school district or dividing our district, not suggesting sending our kids to other schools.
 - g. Mrs. Garfield- Why break apart a school that is working so well and is a magnet for people to move here? This has been an exceptional year and the numbers go up and down. To break apart the system does not make any sense and is not long range planning.
 - h. Mr. Hopson: please note that the State's minimum assessment went up, and the budget went down.
 - i. Mrs. Crane- hoped that knowing about the challenging year we have ahead people would be more patient and willing to roll with the punches.
 - j. Mr. Levakis- Yes, Blandford has been supportive of the School budget but it is a different situation this year and spending as tightened up. The Selectboard and Finance Committee are aware of the budget concerns in town and have concerns about the School budget. We aren't against Gateway, we are just concerned about how to pay for it. We are also concerned with the possibility of other towns pulling out of the district and where that would leave us.
 - k. Accountant- one town left the district and this will continually affect Blandford. Blandford's assessment will not go down. It comes down to affordability.
 - l. Mr. Hopson- Suggested change to regional agreement to do a rolling average of the assessment so it wouldn't affect some towns so drastically. We have to take a hard look at what the district will look like in five years. Worthington is spending a considerable amount more money to leave the district. It doesn't make sense if we are concerned with finances to talk about leaving as well.
 - m. Mr. van Werkhoven- Look into functions to outsource or share with other school districts.
5. Article 27 Annual Town Meeting Warrant: regarding request to have the School Committee focus on a long range plan for the financial and educational liability.

Mr. van Werkhoven asked that the School Committee representatives present this to the School Committee to begin working on the request.

- a. Mrs. Crane- the School Committee already does everything that was requested in Article 27.
 - b. Mr. Hopson- 10 years ago we looked at where Gateway should be in 10 years and we have met most of those goals. The resolution is one more piece of evidence in support of this.
 - c. Mr. Montanaro- believes that the School Committee is putting the best effort in and that this resolution is not a new concept. Is there a 10 year financial plan as well as an educational plan? Would like to see road markers along the way to acknowledge accomplishments. Not the intention to be an adversarial request. If the School Committee is already doing these things then applaud their efforts and suggests that they advertise better.
 1. Mr. Hopson- Gateway is one of the school systems in the state whose budget has essentially lower than it was ten years ago. It is not the goal of the School Committee to track a financial plan.
 - d. Mr. van Werkhoven- conclusion that there is a natural tension between the School Committee whose goal is to provide the best education and the Finance Committee and Selectboard who are concerned in a broader sense about how to pay the Town's bills.
 1. Mrs. Garfield- the School Committee is conscientious of money as we are tax payers as well.
6. Water Commissioners DOT Response Letter: Mr. Levakis is setting up a meeting with Peter Niles (DOT Engineer) to discuss the weight load distribution with the new water line on the North Street bridge.
 7. Minutes: Mr. Montanaro motion to approve minutes from May 5, 2015, Mr. Levakis second, unanimous vote.

Old Business:

1. Town Administrator- Mr. Montanaro submitted steps to take to hire a Town Administrator. See attached.
 - a. Board agreed that the position will be 20-25 hrs per/week and the candidate must be flexible to attend board meetings in the evening.
 - b. Would like to form a committee to review applicants and refer a finalist to the Board.
 - c. Discussed level of education required. Is there a certification program? Mr. Levakis will follow-up.
 - d. Mr. Hopson suggested setting rate standards and give them to the selection committee to use on a score card.
 - e. Granville just went through the process. Mr. Montanaro will contact to review their job description and ask about the process they used. Possibly get some contacts.
2. Regional Accounting MOU- Cara send to Counsel for review.
3. Hotbox- Southwick has a hotbox as well. Possibly touch base with them in regards to training.

New Business:

1. Leach Fields- Mr. Young Conservation needs to be cc'd regarding leach fields. He will follow-up with Board of Health.

2. North Blandford Road Fence- complaints from neighbors that a fence being put up on North Blandford Road is too close to the road. Highway will take a look.
3. Welcome Committee Report- see attached, list of vendors who donated goods and/or coupons. 9 baskets have been delivered thus far.
4. Tree Warden- Mr. Montanaro would like to have the new Tree Warden remove some dead wood in Watson Park. Discussion as to when elected officials start term. Cara will follow-up.

9:30 p.m. Mr. Montanaro motion to adjourn, Mr. Levakis second, unanimous vote.
Submitted by: Cara Letendre

William Levakis

Andy Montanaro