



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Board of Selectmen, Minutes
December 21, 2015

Attendance: Adam Dolby, Andrew Montanaro, William Levakis and Cara Letendre - Secretary

Open Meeting:

7:01 p.m. Mr. Dolby called meeting to order, provided notice that meeting may be recorded.

New Business:

1. School Committee:

- a. Mr. Montanaro - Mrs. Garfield, was the letter addressed to DESE from the School Committee dated November 24, 2015 discussed and reviewed by the School Committee prior to being sent?
 - i. Mrs. Garfield- we briefly discussed the fact that we had to respond to DESE to state our position. We did not review or approve the letter.
 - ii. Mr. Montanaro- is Mrs. Crane authorized as the Chair of the School Committee to sign a letter from the School Committee that has not been reviewed and approved?
 1. Mr. Hopson- yes, she is authorized as the spokesperson.
 - iii. Mr. van Werkhoven- it is a failure on the part of the School Committee to manage the district not the other way around.
 - iv. Mrs. Garfield- you are overstating our powers. It's a Board of Director sort of responsibility.
 - v. Mr. van Werkhoven- no one reviewed the statistics in the letter with the Finance Committee before sending it.
 - vi. Mr. Hopson- We did not review Blandford's letter to DESE.
 - vii. Mr. Montanaro- Our letter was more general, it was not full of statistics. We did cc the School Committee.
- b. Mr. Montanaro: the information in the letter regarding Blandford is inaccurate. Do you agree with and approve what was written? Does the School Committee endorse the letter?
 - i. Mrs. Garfield- yes, we are endorsing what was written in the letter.
 - ii. Mr. Montanaro- the letter states that we are claiming an 8.4% increase is more than we can afford. By using the word "claiming" it implies that we are stretching the truth.
 - iii. Mrs. Garfield- we thought that when we got the mitigation funding we would have a budget and it was biting when it didn't pass. It

felt bitter for the School Committee. It is now in the hands of DESE.

- iv. Mr. Montanaro- on page 9 of the letter on the financial outline with respect to the amount of money Blandford has in free cash and stabilization, the number listed, \$466,000, is significantly wrong. It suggests we have plenty of money available and that we can afford the 8.4% increase when in fact we have no free cash and our Stabilization account has \$202,000, of which we have \$5,000 in the bank.
 1. Mr. Hopson- we got those numbers off of the DOR website. They are not made up numbers, they are from a certified source.
 2. Mr. Montanaro- They are wrong. In some of the accounts listed we have never had the amounts that are posted. DOR does their own calculations. It doesn't mean we can spend it or that we have it in the bank.
- v. Mr. Montanaro- the School Committee represents the children and residents of this Town in school matters and if the Town votes that they can't afford the assessment that the school proposed three times, I would expect that our School Committee representatives represent us in that fashion. What do we have to change to have the School Committee representatives be more collaborative in meeting the needs of the Town and represent us?
 1. Mrs. Garfield- we do represent the Town and the district as a whole. We ensure that the district is following the mission statement to educate all of the children in the system. Back in February when Worthington left, we went to the Blandford Finance Committee and had the door slammed in our face. We were told to find another system. We waited for mitigation funding so we didn't have to disrupt the education in the schools. We wanted to push the budget through for this reason. We needed support, this was the one year we needed help.
 2. Mr. Montanaro- the 6.7% increase we voted was not helping out? We approved 6.7% increase even though our levy limit is 2.5% for the whole Town.
 3. Mr. Hopson - but of that amount \$80,000 was a minimum requirement.
 4. Mrs. Garfield - thank you for the 6.7% but it's been an extraordinary year.
 5. Mr. Montanaro- do you think that 8.4% increase is a reasonable increase?
 6. Mrs. Garfield- can the Town afford it? Just for this year? Next year we are restructuring the budget.
 7. Mr. Dolby- what cuts have been proposed from the February budget to now?

8. Mr. Hopson- none
 9. Mr. Dolby- in reality, it's not that we haven't worked with the School Committee, it's that we didn't give the School Committee what they demanded.
 10. Mr. Hopson: is it reasonable to expect that the Town's assessment will go up 2.5% each year? We would like to have a 5 year rolling average so none of the towns have such a large increase.
 11. Mr. Dolby- we could argue statistics, but the Town voted overwhelmingly in terms of what we could afford and then this letter goes out to DESE from the School Committee suggesting that they increase the budget over the 1/12th. After three no votes from the Town, the position from our School Committee representatives is "the Town needs to adjust"? If any other department demanded more, it would not happen. The School Committee is another component of the Town.
 12. Mr. Hopson- the handouts given out at the store prior to the Special Town Meeting were statistically inaccurate.
 13. Mr. Dolby- My view of the School Committee Representatives is that they help manage the school system with the information provided by voters of the Town. It is a supervisory function of the district. Otherwise if they are all advocating for the same thing, there is no supervision. the cuts on the teachers side are not the only cuts to be made.
 14. Mr. Hopson- the administrative budget has the most cuts in the last five years.
- vi. Mr. Hopson- One issue is communication. We are not arguing that the Town is not in fiscal constraints, they need to prove it and we feel they haven't done so. Towns haven't made a detailed enough case so School Committee is aware of the dire straits. Where is Blandford's 5 year plan? To create a way to move forward we need to start sharing those details.
1. Mr. Dolby - We've been working towards a capitol plan. We lack the staff to put together a 5 year plan. We are also digging out of a lot of debt from mismanagement. We have communicated some but not enough.
 2. Mr. Montanaro- off the top of my head I could list millions of dollars in necessary Town projects and loans and equipment needed etc. I support enhanced communication. It is the School Committee's job to support the children and their education but there are limits to the resources available and they have to acknowledge them and work within those means.

3. Mrs. Garfield- we are all volunteers and we are being demonized. We have heard the Town. Does the Town listen to us? We are responding to the Town's needs with next year's budget. The School Committee sets goals and objectives for the districts, updates policies, evaluates the Superintendent, reviews and recommends the budget and ensures the school is following the mission. We assess this through presentations, statistics, test scores, reviews by the leadership team.
 4. Mr. Dolby- how do you measure against other school districts?
 5. Mrs. Garfield- we review a number of evaluations. Two of our schools went from a level 3 to a 2 this year and our High School remains a level 1.
 6. Mr. Hopson - we have to measure from our school in the past, we can't compare to other schools.
- vii. Mr. Dolby- there has been frustration all the way around trying to work through this in ways that are constructive. Working towards next year, what happened this year, can't happen again. We can't feel like the School Committee has no care for where our Towns are today. Coming into this meeting I was going to ask you to resign. It appeared as though you could not care less, you have not recommended or argued for any cuts in the budget when the Town clearly stated that we can't afford it.
1. Mrs. Garfield- Are you upset we are asking for part of the money Worthington is not paying for? Because that is what we are currently in a lawsuit regarding.
 2. Mr. Hopson - The Town hasn't proved it. The School Committee's responsibility is to the children of the district, it is not their responsibility to look at alternative options.
 3. Mr. Dolby- they were elected by Blandford to represent us. We don't want the end result to divide the Town. We need the School Committee to work with the Town instead of the Town just caving to their demands. We have always said we would give as much money as we could and still try to run a municipality. If the Selectboard can help with what the budget process needs to look like we absolutely will.
 4. Mr. van Werkhoven- the Finance Committee met with the School Committee three times and we explained what we can afford.
- viii. Mr. Montanaro- in the last page of the letter to DESE the School Committee is asking for an increase in the budget over the 1/12th. Are you in support of this?
1. Mrs. Garfield- there has been an influx in the Special Needs budget so we do need the money.

2. Mr. Montanaro- the problem is not past us. We still have to close our books and set the tax rate. The bottom line is we have to manage with what we have.
2. Special Town Employees: regarding vote to enable Town employees to work in more than one position.
 - a. M&M Site Services (Mark Boomsma) was hired as a contractor, as the lowest bidder, for the Water Department. Mr. Boomsma filed an ethics statement with the Town Clerk. As Mr. Boomsma also works for the Highway Department the Selectboard would need to vote that he become a Special Town Employee to hold both positions.
 - i. Mr. Dolby- ask the Water Department to make a case to appoint Mr. Boomsma as a Special Town Employee. I am not opposed, I would just like some convincing from the Water Commissioners.
 - ii. Mr. Montanaro- the provision of the law is intended to help small towns when there are no viable options.
 - b. Discussed other Town employees that hold two positions. Table vote while do more research.
3. Minutes: Mr. Dolby motion to accept minutes of December 14, 2015, Mr. Montanaro second, unanimous vote.
4. Police Cruiser: Chief Hennessey submitted a request to the Selectboard to submit a closed bid for \$3,000 for a used 2010 Crown Victoria cruiser from Otis to replace the Crown Victoria we currently own. Plan to sell the old cruiser to replace some of the funding.
 - a. Mr. Montanaro- we have the money in the Capitol account.
 - b. Mr. Montanaro motion to allow Chief Hennessey to place a bid for the Otis Crown Victoria police cruiser for \$3,000, Mr. Dolby second, unanimous vote.

Old Business:

1. Mr. Cousineau: attended the Wired West meeting, left handout for the Selectboard to read.
 - a. Mr. Dolby- will draft a letter of support for Wired West to MBI as other towns have.
2. Town Clerk: asked that the narratives in the town report include how the budget money was spent.

8:45 Mr. Dolby motion to adjourn, Mr. Montanaro second, unanimous vote.

Submitted by:
Cara Letendre

Adam Dolby - Chair

Andrew Montanaro - Clerk

William Levakis - Member