



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
SELECTBOARD

Blandford Town Hall
1 Russell Stage Road Suite 1
Blandford, MA 01008

**TOWN OF BLANDFORD
JOINT MEETING OF
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
AND
FINANCE COMMITTEE
April 8, 2019**

OPEN SESSION 7:00 pm

C. Letendre, Chairman; ~~**E. McVey**~~, Clerk absent; **W. Levakis**, Member; **J. Garcia**, Interim Town Administrator; **Janet Lombardo**, Finance Chairman; **Julie Ball**, Finance Member in attendance.

Meeting called to order at 7:04 pm Meeting is recorded.

1. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

a. Examination of the meeting minutes of the Board of Selectmen meeting April 1, 2019

MOTION: **C. Letendre** made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the Board of Selectmen meeting of April 1, 2019 with the Finance Committee as written.

B. Levakis Seconded

All in Favor

2.*AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

None

3. ACTION ITEM:

a. Review Tax Recapitulation and Tax Enforcement Policies

MOTION: **C. Letendre** made a motion to accept the Tax Recapitulation and Tax Enforcement year-end closing financial policies as amended.

B. Levakis Seconded

All in Favor

b. Approve the Wording for the Town Clerk Change on the Warrant

Mary Kronholm suggested the Board of Selectmen change the wording on the ballot for the Annual Town Meeting regarding the possible change to the Town Clerk position to read 'to see if the Town will vote to have the elected Town Clerk become an appointed Town Clerk'. Mary stated the working came directly from MA General Law.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the wording of the ballot question for the appointment of the Town Clerk.

**B. Levakis Seconded
All in Favor**

The Town Clerk also suggested to the Board of Selectmen that we remove the article in the annual town meeting warrant that seeks a vote to change the Town Seal. She explained that she accepts the use of the new Town Seal (which is really the old Town Seal but in color) upon appropriate request and approval of use. She explained that having such an article in the warrant is unnecessary.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PRIOR MEETINGS

a. Ongoing Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrants

The Selectboard, Finance Committee and Town Administrator discussed the final changes to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant for May 6, 2019.

b. Ongoing Review of Proposed FY20 budget

The Selectboard, Finance Committee and Town Administrator discussed the final changes to the FY19/20 Budget proposal to be presented at the Special Town Meeting on May 6, 2019.

c. Municipal Light Board Update – P. Langmore

C. Letendre invited Peter Langmore to give the BOS an update on Broadband. He noted that the committee met with Westfield Gas & Electric April 8, 2019. Mr. Langmore requested help from the Finance Committee, the BOS and the TA to establish the fees that will be charged for broadband to town residents. A resident asked if the people who pre-paid Wired West would be getting their money back. Peter reported that this will not happen automatically. There is a letter that he will print that will be available to residents at the town meeting to be filled out and sent to the company for these refunds.

d. Dehumidifiers for Basement – B. Levakis

C. Letendre recommended we wait until the new basement floors are poured. B. Levakis talked about the basement needing a new sump pump and 2 dehumidifiers. This has been tabled until April 22, 2019 BOS meeting in order to do more research.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Road Improvement Strategy Presentation – Rene Senecal, Highway Superintendent

Solar Company Issues: The Highway Superintendent joined the BOS to discuss his plans in dealing with the solar companies in order to hold them to their contract with the town. C. Letendre requested that Rene keep the Conservation Commission up to date on these on-going issues with these companies.

Road Repair Issues: The Town Administrator introduced Rene's plan to improve our roads stating that he believes these ideas are good and hopes that the town can find the financing for these projects.

North Blandford Road: Rene talked about the problems on North Blandford Road stating there have been two tree removal companies working on tree removal in town. He spoke of the fact that these companies are making 'deals' with residents asking if they want the wood. If a resident says yes, the tree removal company leaves the wood. When the resident doesn't clean it up, then the town DPW ends up cleaning up the mess. Rene called Eversource and had a meeting with both tree removal companies. He told all involved that these trees should be removed and the ditches cleaned by the tree removal

companies as they are the ones making money off of Eversource. This should eliminate some of the ditch problems we are experiencing.

North Road: He mentioned the North Street problems which he states falls under District #1 MA Maintenance and is the responsibility of the MA Department of Transportation; they own the road. The State already has the funds to re-do that road. The State has agreed to get going on this problem very soon as it needs to be done by the State's fiscal year end.

Russell Stage Road: Rene has requested that an engineer come out to go over the repair work recently done on Russell Stage Road. He believes there is about 2/10 of a mile on this road that should be completely re-done. He reported many, many problems on the road and has contacted Palmer Paving. Rene assured the BOS and residents that this will cost the town nothing.

Hampshire County Bid: Rene stated that he will be using Hampshire County Bid for his collective purchasing. Other bid companies charge the town for membership; Hampshire County bid does not. This company is a collective purchasing company authorized by the state of MA.

Non-Paved Roads: He spoke of working on a non-paved road plan right now as they are in desperate need of materials and requested \$15,000 more for materials to deal with the worst of these roads. He told the BOS he needs it ASAP so Highway can get stone material to make a better base on these roads going forward.

Paved Roads: Birch Hill Road and South Road both need an extensive amount of work. North Blandford Road can be repaired by the town DPW. Other roads in need of repair are Huntington Road, Herrick Road, Sunset Road, Kaolin Road, Glasgow Road and Wyman Road. He is recommending that Sunset, Kaolin, Glasgow and Wyman be done all at once instead of one at a time in order to save time a great deal of money. B. Levakis recommended dealing with the old water lines at the same time. Rene will connect with the Water Commission.

Road Financing: The BOS, TA and Highway talked about financing for these projects. Rene recommended getting a low-interest road bond. He is putting together pricing for non-paved roads stating that much of this will be handled by the Town's DPW. The Selectboard is recommending that as much of this as possible be done at once to save money and time. Rene stated this Town is in road-survival mode at this time which needs to change. Rene Senecal and Joshua Garcia will have a conversation with the Treasurer and revisit this at the May 6, 2019 BOS meeting.

6. OTHER BUSINESS, IF ANY:

a. Retiree Insurance Process – J. Garcia

Garcia reported that a retiree (a former employee of the Town) reached out and is seeking to establish a payment arrangement with a town to cover the retiree's portion of the health insurance arrangement. Within the current arrangement, the retiree's Retirement Board pays 70% of the retiree's insurance and the Town pays the difference. Recently, the retiree has frozen its retirement pension and is seeking to establish a new arrangement in which the retiree covers the 70% out of pocket rather than the Retirement Board. Garcia explained to the Board of Selectmen that we have no policy at the moment to honor such a change and is concerned about establishing a new past practice. Garcia is consulting with Town Counsel on the matter and will report back to the Board of Selectmen on the result of Town Counsel

recommendation. B. Levakis voiced his opinion against this practice. C. Letendre recommended it be reviewed by Town Counsel.

b. Garcia and Levakis – Legislative Briefing in Springfield

J. Garcia shared the details of the legislative briefing in Springfield that he and Bill Levakis attended recently. They met with the Western MA Director of the Governor’s Office who noted that there is a lot of talk about the progress Blandford is making, specifically with the sharing of police forces with the Town of Chester. The Director mentioned he would like to have a regional round-table discussion in our region with the 6 local towns. He also spoke about another local town hall and how they store their records.

c. Garcia and Levakis Visited the Town of South Hadley

Garcia shared the details of his meeting with Bill Levakis and the Town Administrator of South Hadley. They reviewed their public records filing system. The Town contracts with King Info and has a sophisticated method for filing public records. Garcia made an appointment with a representative of King Infor who looks forward to visit Blandford this coming Friday to discuss any recommended system for Blandford.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:05 pm

**NOTE: Agenda may include items not reasonably expected 48 hours before the meeting. At any point, this meeting may go into executive session if the Board of Selectmen find it warranted.

Submitted by: Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Cara Letendre, Chairman

Eric McVey, Clerk

William Levakis, Member