

Town of Princeton, Mass. – Nov. 27, 2017 – 7:30 PM Selectboard – Regular Meeting – Town Hall Annex

Present: Chair Jon Fudeman, Richard Bisk, Edith Morgan w/ TA Nina Nazarian. Also Advisory Cmte. members Bill Lawton, Judy Dino, Wayne Adams, George Handy and Chair John Shipman.

Chandler & Ferguson on Ch. 70 funding, etc. 7:30 PM Chairman welcomed state Sen. Harriette Chandler and state Rep. Kim Ferguson, in earlier for office hours. Group shared list of legislative priorities: Chapter 70 funds, including transportation; Grants & funding for capital projects, including but not limited to buildings, roads, fire; infrastructure especially funding for buildings; Legislation which requires extensive permitting/design standards such as road construction and stream crossing standards and installation of water ponds—all requiring environmental permitting.

Ms. Chandler described the ballot initiative for a “millionaire’s tax,” which puts an additional four percent on anything over \$1 million annual income. She warned of a campaign against the proposed tax, and added that she would like to have earmarked for Chapt. 70 Education or it would get lost in the general fund. Also, gains from this new tax may be canceled out if a petition seeking to lower the sales tax gets passed.

Group discussed details of transportation funding, originally promised to regional school systems but state never funded at 100 percent—it’s currently 73 percent. Ms. Chandler pointed out that the most recent Foundation Budget was crafted in 1993, by Boston-area legislators who knew little about regional schools. She also lauded WRSD for its wonderful programs and cooperative spirit.

Ms. Ferguson noted details from the state auditor’s report for education which suggested the same goals as those regional school districts seek, such as funding transportation. She also described efforts of Mass. Assoc. of Regional Schools (MARS) and Mass. Municipal Assoc. (MMA) toward funding education in towns. Ms. Chandler recommended regional school districts band together to lobby and suggested establishing a commission to look at the regional schools Foundation Budget. WRSD would lobby though/with MARS and the town would lobby through MMA. Richy expressed concern about the large inequities in the required minimum local contribution to the WRSD. Princeton pays \$2200 more per pupil than the average in the district.

Jon noted that funding formulas for municipalities based on real estate values don’t reflect cash flow. George Handy warned that changing the Foundation Budget changes everything for everyone—when you change one you change all. He also pointed out the drop in student enrollment as lower birth rates have resulted in the total students at WRSD now at 6800 from 7100 a few years ago, adding that overhead costs stay the same. Also, state revenues tighten as earned income credit increases from 10 – 15 percent. He felt the minimum local contribution won’t change with any change in the Foundation Budget.

MBI reimbursement update 8:10 PM Jon described how state promised to fund make-ready in the underserved towns which are developing broadband. Princeton pressed ahead and funded its own make-ready (with about \$940,000 paid to date; will ultimately be) which made a cable TV franchise possible. The state Governor’s Office guaranteed 96 percent coverage in any towns that will use Charter or Comcast. Princeton will pay for the final four percent to make the 100 percent coverage that has always been the goal. Princeton has, over the last year, made two formal written requests and both were rejected, although Peter Larkin at MBI has offered to bring a third request again to his board of directors at MBI, but select board is not

optimistic. It was noted that the state's grant funds for broadband were shifted from MBI to the Dept. of Housing and Community Development last year. There was much discussion about the dollar figures used in the request letter the town had crafted. Chandler and Ferguson offered to coordinate offices and bring the town's request to Larkin, as they had been colleagues in the past. Nina offered to forward past correspondence with Larkin to the senator and representative.

Permitting costs not viable 8:20 PM Richy brought up the third item on the list, noting that the engineering cost for maintaining fire ponds was out of town's budget range due to environmental regulations. He noted that watershed rules were protecting water customers downstream who weren't contributing to the cost of that protection. Also, Highway Dept. has been subject to extensive stream-crossing regulations and standards when repairing culverts and bridges. Richy added that he supported environmental/waterway protection but felt that the costs place an unfair burden on Princeton residents. Those who benefit from the water should pay the costs. Ms. Chandler suggested organizing similar watershed communities burdened with the same costs and taking it up with MMA.

Chandler and Ferguson also offered to help with the grant which the Road Adv. Cmte. is seeking for the Ball Hill Road bridge project. Bill Holder discussed road projects and thanked them for supporting highway projects over the years.

There was more discussion about the details of broadband costs for design and engineering. Chandler and Ferguson left the meeting.

Annual budget time 8:50 PM Jon suggested scheduling time with Adv. Cmte. and department heads after the budget information was all collected and subsequently the info is distributed. Nina noted that the same budget sheets would be used this year. Group agreed to meet with department heads, starting with major ones, on alternating Mondays at 2 PM. John S. asked about tax title properties and how the town should collect on some long overdue real estate taxes or land sales after a foreclosure. Nina reported that a policy or protocol for handling tax title properties will be available after the end of the year, in January.

Cable TV public statement 9:15 PM As the final pole license was signed and everything is now transferred as of Nov. 14, Charter has promised to begin construction on line installation which they say will take 12 months. Nina has waited for a public service announcement/statement from Charter, and board suggested writing it first and then getting approval from them.

It was announced that the Facilities Steering Cmte. will meet tomorrow at 5:30 PM.

Route 140 project Bill Holder gave update on the Route 140 East Princeton upgrade and said an appraiser will meet with landowners starting in early December. If a landowner donates the easement there is no need for an appraisal and town won't have to pay for one, so there's a push for donations.

Mechanics Hall well violation 9:25 PM A deed for use of Mechanics Hall well was found and distributed. It does not appear that the Town has an obligation to 106 Main Street to provide well water. The best option would be to require 106 Main St. owner Dick Stuart to install his own well. A letter was drafted to DEP asking that Mr. Stuart have until July 2018 to drill a new well on his property to provide water for his building. The board voted all in favor to approve sending the letter as presented to DEP. On a related matter, Richy suggested offering voters a chance at ATM to approve selling Mechanics Hall and Jon noted that Mechanics Hall should be looked at as combined property with the Townline building.

Collins Center proposal 9:30 PM The Board received contracts for two projects from the Collins Center. The first was an Organizational Study of Financial Management Functions and second was a Development of More Detailed Annual Budget Document. One of these qualify for funding from the Community Compact grant. The deadline for completion of the work, as stated in the state contract, is June 30, 2018. Jon will request a schedule for the work from Collins

Center. The board voted all in favor to have the T.A. sign the contracts, subject to funding approval.

Classification & Compensation Study Nina will send any updates or results to all parties at the same time as they become available.

Financial Plan Regarding the proposal to create a financial plan for the town, Jon reported that a volunteer group has wheels in motion. The group includes Bill Holder, Wayne Adams, Rick McCowan, Karen Cruise and John Kowaleski, and possibly others. Rick has already collected a lot of data from town public records. Jon noted that the Dept. of Local Services has an extensive data bank for all communities in the commonwealth, all free public record. With some of the group members in the audience, the group agreed to report at a Selectboard meeting only upon request.

Outgoing correspondence 9:50 PM Board voted all in favor to authorize sending the letter supplied by WRSD to legislators urging support for reimbursement of transportation funding, as written. They voted all in favor to approve letter to be sent to MBI with minor modifications, to seek reimbursement for make-ready work already paid for. Group continued discussing the dollar amounts that appear in the letter. The final letter will be forwarded to Chandler and Ferguson who have agreed to communicate with Peter Larkin on the town's behalf. The board voted all in favor to authorize Nina to sign and send letter to DLS to re-allocate grant funding from the original Capital Plan to the two projects by the Collins Center for which contracts were just approved.

Appointments 10:10 PM Board voted all in favor to advertise for a Memorial Day Committee, having not less than 3 members. They voted all in favor to appoint Phil Mighdoll to the Historical Commission as a full member for a term through June 30, 2020.

Correspondence noted Letter from Rep. Kim Ferguson re: new "Early Voting" Law upped costs to towns – now seeking reimbursement from the state; memo from the Treasurer/Collector relating to older deficits in Health Insurance Agency account; a citizen's inquiry about Welcome Wagon; residents of Calamint Hill Road North reported a large sign advertising an unusual real estate project.

Approve minutes Board voted all in favor to approve minutes of November 13.

Adjourn 10:20 PM Selectboard voted all in favor to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin. assist.

Selectboard Referenced Documents: List of legislative priorities; letter to be sent to the MassDEP requesting extension through July 1, 2018; contracts sent by the Collins Center for two projects; Regional School District transportation reimbursement letter supplied by WRSD; reimbursement letter to be sent to the MBI; notice of interest by Phil Mighdoll to serve on the Historical Commission; letter from Rep. Ferguson re: Early Voting Law cost reimbursement; Email by anonymous resident re: Welcome Wagon; Email by Mr. Steve Kessler re: sign on Calamint Hill Road

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