

Town of Princeton, Mass. – Aug. 2, 2017 – 6 PM

Board of Selectmen – Joint Meeting Minutes w/ Advisory Cmte.

Chair Jon Fudeman, Richard Bisk, Edith Morgan plus TA Nina Nazarian. All present on Advisory Committee: Chair John Shipman, Wayne Adams, George Handy, Bill Lawton Don Schoeny, Jim O'Coin, Judy Dino

6 PM The chairman opened BOS meeting in Town Hall Annex. A large crowd attended owing to the P.C. closing and proposal of new space for COA that requires emergency funding. Nina N. explained that \$12,327. would be needed to cover rent at Post Office Place and related expense for 11 months of FY'18. A Reserve Fund transfer is needed which the Advisory Cmte must approve. Members of both boards asked questions of COA director Linda Farineau. She outlined the options she has researched for useable space for COA operations, including the town's three churches, which tried to help but were constricted by the own schedules for using their spaces. Options at PMLD and 194 Worcester Road were limited. Linda then described the lower-level, rear-entry space at Post Office Place that had all requirements (parking, handicap access, storage, flexible layout, fire codes etc) she needed except a kitchen. Also, Princeton Art Society will rent--from the town--the same space on a coordinated schedule. Particulars are being worked out. The COA and PAS members expressed intention to work in partnership, as they had been at the P.C. building.

6:20 PM The A.C. members voted all in favor to transfer \$12,400 from the Reserve Fund to the COA Expense Account. The selectmen thanked Linda F. and Nina N. for many hours spent sorting this out.

6:25 PM Group discussed memo for general distribution that explains the P.C. closing. Editing suggestions had been received and Richy B. made some final edits. Selectmen voted all in favor to accept the memo as revised and send it out on the website Town News.

6:30 PM Fire Chief John Bennett came in to explain the need for a new Class A fire truck at about \$600,000. It's a four-passenger tanker with 3,000 gal. capacity for rolling water and it's multi-purpose. He explained the ISO rating that insurance companies use to assess fire risk for homeowners—from the best rating at #1 to the worst at #10. He said Princeton is at #7. Given the recent fire at 30 Mountain Road, which tested all his department's resources, he is concerned that our rating might go to #10. He outlined the regulations in recent years that make regular maintenance of fire holes (dry hydrants) a labyrinth of permitting, with local state and federal regs coming into play. Preliminary testing and engineering alone averaged \$18,000 five years ago for the Hickory Drive water hole. He discussed the current status of the vehicle fleet; with an average age of 20 years, they're limping along. The national F.D. average is 7 – 10 years, and he researches good deals in the used-vehicle market all the time, although tanker trucks are a rare find in good condition. He outlined his ultimate goal of getting certified hydrants to as many districts in town as possible, using well-fed, above-ground tanks. These tanks hold 3,500 gal. and need not be visible from roads. Also, Echo Lake in the Wachusett Reservation would be an ideal water source owing to its elevation. It could feed hydrants shooting down Mountain Road to both sides from Echo Lake Road and cover a vast area.

The chief distributed a spreadsheet of all water holes in town, which had been emailed recently to the BoS. He discussed grants which his department receives for equipment, but they don't fund vehicles.

Members of both boards offered suggestions about investing in hydrants rather than vehicles for rolling water, which simply depreciate. The tanks do have a life span but it could be anywhere from 20 – 40 years. The Class A truck was slated to be included on the FY'19 budget and several board members stated that the budget schedule should be followed accordingly. The chief explained that the most important point of a fire is the first 15 minutes, and while he has plans to expand our availability of water, via water holes, hydrant districts, etc., not all areas of town will be within a reasonable distance to the water. Therefore a reliable truck carrying water will be needed.

7:25 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to ask the Adv. Cmte. to report back to the BOS and fire chief on their recommendations regarding a new fire truck and related equipment, at the Aug. 21 joint meeting. John S. stated that he will schedule a meeting of his board with the chief and report back to BOS on Aug. 21. He also said the Adv. Cmte. will schedule a public hearing on Sept. 5 for articles on the Sept. 7 STM warrant.

7:35 PM Bill Holder was in and reported on several road spending projects and their associated costs; the route 31 bridge repair at \$1.2M; culverts etc. Jon F. proposed that Adv. Cmte. could be responsible for capital planning in the future—currently the Collins Center is coming up with a Capital Plan. The Adv. Cmte. will meet at 6 PM on Tuesday, Aug. 8 and at that time will consider taking over capital planning.

Bill H. said the town needs a ‘financial triage’ process and he warned about a possible limit that the town can legally borrow; suggesting a possible \$5M limit. George H. proposed that the Adv. Cmte. serve as clearing house for reports from Collins Center and Facilities Steering Cmte. Selectmen agreed that a draft article requesting funding for the fire truck should be crafted at the Aug. 7 meeting, to be ready even if it is not used.

8 PM Both groups discussed a request from Rutland which asked each WRSD town to submit a letter to the school district insisting on a limit of 2.5 percent increase to the annual school budget—to attempt at making their budget more sustainable. George insisted that the state’s calculation of Princeton’s share of Foundation Budget is the real issue and should be the focus of the district towns. He added that Jeff Wulfson (who met with us in June) is now acting Commissioner and could be an advocate. George noted that in FY18 Princeton paid \$7,747 per student while Rutland paid \$4,089 per student. The groups talked about how student population in the district has diminished in five years but the school staff has not.

Nina suggested scheduling a workshop with both boards to find compromise on the school budget which represents half of the town’s annual costs. Both groups agreed to set a date.

8:15 PM Nina reported that the Princeton Center Mgmt. Cmte is asking about their role going forward—if they should disband. Beth Mellor was in to share information with selectmen forwarded from Preservation Massachusetts about how to properly mothball a building; the document will be emailed. The P.C. Mgmt. Cmte. may be needed to oversee such a project. Phil Gransewicz suggested the town should collect any outstanding rent payments from P.C. tenants, and that there is approximately \$30,000 in P.C. revenue which could be spent on a mothball project. Selectmen will read the document and discuss it at their next meeting.

8:30 PM The groups turned to challenges surrounding building maintenance, code compliance and construction. All agreed to further discuss the concept of a Building Advisory Committee to do short-term planning modeled after the Road Adv. Cmte. Nina pointed out that the concept had been included in the BOS goal-setting sessions last year. She also said there was too little staff to cover the number of buildings the town owns. There was discussion about in-house staff verses using outside contractors, but that can become burdensome with bidding, oversight and management. Beth M. suggested that P.C. Mgmt. Cmte. could be re-created into a Bldg. Adv. Cmte.

8:45 PM Nina announced a list of volunteers and staff who served as fire watch at the P.C. as tenants packed up and moved out in recent days. So far, almost 165 volunteer hours were put in, coordinated by Linda Farineau, who has worked extensive hours on it.

8:55 PM Selectmen agreed to conduct their annual goal-setting retreat at Harrington Farm at 4 PM on Sept. 11, or alternatively Aug. 14 or Sept. 14.

9 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to adjourn

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin. assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Memo for general distribution on P.C. closing; F.D. spreadsheet of all water holes in town; request letter from Rutland; list of volunteers/staff as fire watch at the P.C.

Marie Auger
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
978-464-2100