

Town of Princeton, Mass. – January 9, 2017 – 5 PM BOARD OF SELECTMEN – Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairman Stan Moss, Edith Morgan with Jon Fudeman present; and TA Nina Nazarian.

5 PM Stan opened meeting in the Town Hall Annex. Board welcomed Brian Podesta, from Millbury, as the new IT part-time staff support person. He shared his resume and outlined his background in IT networks and hardware since 1980s—currently works PT for Mass. Library systems. Jon F. was interested in security with threats from hacking, malware etc., and talked about the town's need for a new accounting system which is planned. Stan mentioned IT funding to be used to manage a firewall and looking at voice-over internet protocol (VOIP). Brian admitted he was not a database/software expert.

Selectmen voted all in favor to appoint Brian Podesta for the part-time IT Coordinator position at \$32.01/hour effective Jan. 24, 2017.

A new Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for Fieldstone Farm was solicited and the best interest rate came from Greenfield Coop Bank at .96%. Selectmen voted all in favor to accept that bid for a BAN totaling \$166,667. To mature on Jan. 12, 2018. Total interest cost is \$1,595.56. Jon F. explained "laddering" for two years which could save a few hundred dollars. Nina will investigate that possibility, but indicated that it was likely too late in the process as the note came due very soon (i.e. the sale/bid had already occurred, etc.).

Selectmen voted all in favor to accept a letter of resignation from Karen Greenwood, effective February 3, 2017 who is retiring as the local veterans agent. Nina noted the position has been posted.

The board then voted all in favor to accept the minutes of Dec. 27, Jan. 3 & Jan. 4.

5:15 PM Colleen Abrams came in for Wachusett Greenways and the Central Mass. Rail Trail, which runs from Sterling Center to South Barre through West Boylston, Oakham and Wachusett towns except for Princeton and Paxton. Her group currently lists 800 members and runs on volunteer labor plus donations. They spend \$8,000/year on Porta-Johns. Holden and Sterling have contributed up to \$1,500/year and some towns provide help from DPW staff. The group is formally asking all eight towns to contribute \$1,000/year since many residents use the trail or volunteer. Edith suggested pushing instead for more private donations as the town is fighting for dollars. Jon F. suggested \$500. Colleen noted that she would be back in a year to try again.

Selectmen voted all in favor to donate \$500 to WG on the May 2017 ATM warrant, as a special article or a line item.

5:30 PM Board voted all in favor to recess the BOS meeting and open the PBMLP meeting
SEE SEPARATE MINUTES

5:45 PM PBMLP voted all in favor to adjourn and reopen BOS meeting.

Edith announced that she wished to meet with Dave Hilton and Facilities Committee members to discuss needs at all buildings.

5:50 PM Brian Allen from PMLD was in and read aloud his reply to Jon's ATM warrant article proposal in regard to autonomy of the light plant—letter had been distributed to selectmen the previous day. He cited legal counsel's explanation and case law that deems any MLP as an independent business, under MGL Chapt. 164 and subject to the Dept. of Public Utilities. He outlined how he is still repairing fiscal and perceptual damage from the WiFi and wind turbine projects which never met expectations and cost ratepayers an extra \$.05/kwh. He pointed out that the actual cost to customers of supplying electricity is in line with surrounding communities.

He insisted that all actions by staff and PMLD Commissioners are transparent and his department has an open-door policy.

Jon F. pointed out that in his view, the procedure for financing the original windmill project was done with no due diligence and was capital spending approved by a few board members. He stated that a weakness of the audit reports is the failure to consolidate an overview of all municipal debt.

Brian A. explained that the only thing that town government shares with PBMLP is the federal tax-exempt number—there are no other ties. Discussion then turned to the PBMLP use of a regional coop which as a subsidiary of the MLP works as a borrowing organization. PMLD Chairman Jim Whitman noted that the department's debt is generating income, unlike the town's debt for open space purchases and infrastructure repair. Also, he stressed that Princeton is the 2nd-highest in the state when it comes to "green energy" and was #1 for many years. He said that green energy simply costs more, but citizens favor it and have shown their commitment in the past.

6:20 PM Resident Phil Gransewicz questioned Brian and Jim about solar arrays at individual households, and why PMLD doesn't buy-back excess power, if 'green' is the goal. Brian explained that they only want to purchase energy at wholesale, and that solar buy-back simply costs too much.

6:30 PM Stan presented ideas for warrant articles for ATM and suggested one to sunset the PBMLP, assuming there is a successful cable franchise in the works. Edith noted that the 5-member board will still be needed after the ATM for some make-ready final tasks—then the PBMLP can be disbanded. Group agreed that an article could be worded to that effect.

He also suggested an article enabling the sale of town-owned real estate and adding profits to the Infrastructure Stabilization Account. More discussion would be needed on this if the Board wishes to move forward.

Jon F. pointed out his proposal for two articles addressing the Advisory Committee—one to make them appointed by three individuals or bodies instead of only the BOS, and another enabling statute to give them broader financial oversight. He cited a model from the Town of Amherst but Stan proposed that they have adequate oversight opportunity as per town bylaw's charge.

Edith warned that these issues are veering from the goals which selectmen have set and going off in different directions won't get anything done.

6:45 PM Nina explained an IT grant the town is seeking, to determine feasibility of regionalization and to assess the town's systems. Town is eligible for such a grant as a capital plan and process—up to \$20,000, and she will pursue. Under HR, there was \$5,000 appropriated at ATM for a compensation and classification study, but it appears that such studies can cost up to \$23,000. There is a chance the state might switch \$18,000 from another HR grant to fund the C&C study. Group discussed using the Collins Center as well as scaling down the cost for a C&C. Stan noted this task should be addressed as periodic spending. Board is hoping to get the study in place before the ATM final budget.

7:05 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to authorize the TA to enter into contacts with the state with regard to a grant for the C&C, which will likely be 100 percent reimbursed up to \$18,000. Nina mentioned to the Board that the Treasurer/Collector informed her about a shortage in cash during the start of the year when there were multiple payments due (WRSD Assessment, Route 140 Reconstruction project, and Worcester Regional Retirement System Assessment). Due to cash flow issues, namely payments due over \$2 million, the Treasurer was not able to make the early payment on the Regional Retirement Assessment, and as a result, there is an additional cost of \$4,000 which was not originally budgeted.

Jon F. brought up the vote taken by the Board in its recent meeting regarding Records Access Officers (RAO), and the Board voted, to revise their vote to appoint the Town Clerk as the Super RAO, and to authorize the Nina Nazarian, Town Administrator, and the Town Clerk to jointly appoint other RAO's.

Discussing the issue of following up on BOS decisions and votes taken, Nina suggested a spreadsheet be created listing all votes by meeting dates, for easy access. Marie will follow up starting with 2017 actions.

Jon F. wants to call a meeting with experts to consider the Worcester Regional Retirement System, naming Kevin Blanchette, retirement board chairman; Parker Ellsmore for OPEB and Tony Roselli, auditor. He also stated that he will be responding to a post—just to get the facts out—on social media from Phil Gransewicz concerning numbers for repairs on Bagg Hall and P.C. and said he would identify only as a resident and not a select board member. Group discussed Open Meeting Law and Jon was encouraged to contact state Ethics Commission or call the AG's office for 'attorney of the day' help.

7:30 PM Stan moved and Jon seconded to go into executive session, and not return to regular session: in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, §21: A. Exemption Three – To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel – fire chief. In roll call Edith voted "Aye," Jon voted "Aye" and Stan voted "Aye."

SEE SEPARATE MINUTES

8:07 PM Selectmen adjourned from executive session

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin.assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Brian Podesta resume; Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) for Fieldstone Farm; letter of resignation from Karen Greenwood; letter from Brian Allen from PMLD

Marie Auger
Administrative Assistant
Planning Department
978-464-2100