

Town of Princeton, Mass. – March 27, 2017 – 5 PM

Board of Selectmen – Regular Meeting Minutes

Chairman Stan Moss, Edith Morgan, and Jon Fudeman plus TA Nina Nazarian.

5: PM Stan opened BOS meeting in the Town Hall Annex. Advisory Committee members present were John Shipman, Jim O'Coin, Wayne Adams, Bill Lawton, Don Schoeny and Judy Dino. George Handy came in later.

With Edith not arriving until 5:20, Jon F. and Stan voted to authorize the Town Administrator to post the job description and ad, as presented, for Cemetery Superintendent, a temporary position. Nina reported that as of March 20th \$246,382.42 was expended in the Snow & Ice budget. The Board voted expending up to \$30,000 in deficit at its Feb 3rd meeting, and an additional \$10,000 at its March 6th meeting, but additional \$15,000 is expected due to the March 14th storm. Selectmen (2) voted all in favor to spend an additional \$15,000 into deficit for Snow & Ice under M.G.L. c. 44, §31D to address the anticipated additional deficit.

5:10 PM Sarah Custer was in and selectmen noted her resume/application for position as veterans agent for the town. She currently works as a benefits advisor in the Gardner Veterans Center. The Board (2) voted all in favor to appoint Ms. Sarah Custer to Veterans Agent effective March 28, 2017.

Nina reported on the meeting she attended with other town officials from the WRSD communities. Individuals from Rutland, Holden, Sterling and Princeton are now insisting that the district's proposed budget is not sustainable—and there's no relief in sight. John S. complained about the district's constant game of charades, every year offering an overweight budget that gets no support until it gets trimmed. Stan noted the school budget represents 53 percent of the town's total expenditure and that doesn't include T.P. School debt service. Nina explained the technicalities of health insurance advisory committees as compared to public employee committees, which WRSD is subject to.

5:25 PM Stan announced that BOS would meet on April 3, 10 & 18 to set budgets and finalize the warrant. The Advisory Committee holds its public hearing on the warrant on April 24. Nina outlined why she's proposing the town accountant position add five hours to make it 30 hours/week. The finance department is still making improvements as defined by the auditor's report. Jon F. asked about legal counsel budget proposed at about \$45,000, Nina explained that it was due to the addition of pending cable franchise. George Handy pointed out that Town Government budget went up 50 percent in four years and he noted the line items.

5:55 PM Group looked at budget for public safety departments and George H. noted that it was up only six percent over four years. Discussion resumed on Ambulance Readiness Budget and related salaries. Audit report said the ambulance receipts collection needs a lot of work; it's done by a third party billing company. John S. insisted that this issue is never-ending and fire department is not aggressive enough about collections. Nina explained that the fire department does not handle collections, it's their 3rd party billing company, and that the issue is more complex than it appears on the surface. It was noted that insurance companies pay most bills and often at a figure that's less than the invoice. Other issues can result in non-payment by the insurance company which is out of the hands of the fire department and even at times the billing company.

6:15 PM Looking at DPW budget, it was up 20 percent in four years which at five percent per year is not sustainable, according to George. There was much discussion about the annual \$350,000 dedicated to road reconstruction—it's in the operating budget and it should be in

capital improvements. Stan offered that it should be a separate article and voted at ATM as a capital expenditure.

It was noted that library budgets have been well controlled. Health insurance costs are up only six percent in four years, due to the changes in the employee mix that have lowered the town's liability.

6:45 PM Turning to revenue projections, the group noted that new growth projections were only \$20,000. State aid is flat; excise and penalty fees are conservatively low. Levy could be lowered with free cash.

7:10 PM Under capital requests, Nina reported that the backhoe for the Cemetery Dept. and the cruiser for Police Dept. had both been withdrawn as not needed at this time. She also outlined a priority list for building renovations and putting off building improvements until the study being discussed had been completed.

7:15 PM Requests will go out to Sheriff's Dept. to provide labor only for painting and Monty Tech for other tasks. Gauges may be ordered to measure the sinking corner on Bagg Hall. An architect has been enlisted to study Bagg Hall chimney issue but Fire Station #2 has taken priority. Group discussed ways to make funds available from specific accounts. The library's IT upgrade placeholder came with opposing positions. Nina indicated that she would like to add the subject of advertising for an IT Committee to the next agenda. An OPEB discussion is slated for April 10, with a representative from Odyssey. Selectmen discussed setting aside approximately 45 minutes for discussion about Jon's citizen's petition at the next meeting.

8:05 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to appoint Rich Breagy as building inspector and zoning enforcement officer for 18 month term from Tuesday, March 28th.

Selectmen voted all in favor to support the T.A.'s recommendation that the Board wishes the Personnel Policy be revised and that one of those revisions include the Town Administrator having the authority to hire (subject to a ratification process by the Board of Selectmen) and terminate (with just cause) employees currently under the Personnel Policy.

7:42 PM Selectmen voted all in favor to adjourn

Respectfully submitted, Marie Auger, admin.assist.

BOS Referenced Documents: Custer and Breagy resume/application; town budget materials for ATM articles; temporary cemetery superintendent ad/job descript.

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