

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD
SELECTMEN'S MINUTES
TOWN HALL, SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

MINUTES OF August 3, 2010

SPECIAL SESSION

Chairman Rudy Heller called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Other members present: James W. Allen and Peter O'Connell.

Camera Operator: None

Press: Ruth Lyons

Public: Donna Lafleur, EMS Chief; Peter Martell, Fire Chief; Douglas Blood, Interim Police Chief; Herbert Chaffee, Highway Superintendent; Bruce Clarke, Water Dept. Superintendent; Cindy Thompson, Secretary for Highway Department and Board of Health; James Dunbar, Treasurer; Lois Moores, Tax Collector; Philip Peirce, Chair of Assessors; Lawrence Von Cott of Xibexa.

Agenda Business:

1. CSX BRIDGE RECONSTRUCTION

The purpose of the bridge reconstruction over the CSX railroad tracks (under Fiskdale Road aka Route 148) is so that CSX can run double-stacked cars.

Mr. Heller reported that correspondence had received from ETL the company that will be doing the work on bridge. This correspondence brought up many more questions and he had drafted a response which had been sent to all of the heads of Brookfield's safety departments. Mr. Heller felt this could be the Town's opportunity to say "if you're going to work on the bridge, you also have to work on the intersection". He referred to the intersection of Pleasant, Mill, River, Upper River Streets and Fiskdale Road at the bridge.

Mr. Allen felt the intersection is a safety issue; he was concerned with the sidewalks and felt the contractors or CSX should provide some engineering designs.

Mr. O'Connell said that they haven't answered all of Brookfield's questions; they gave no dates or estimates of times that the road would be closed. There was no reference in the letter as to how the emergency vehicles would cross the area.

There was much discussion of whether or not the bridge would be closed for emergency vehicles, would the river bridge also be done at this time. The concern over the “blind spot” between the two bridges was again voiced.

Chief Martell said that if the contractors have someone there 24/7 then there should still be the option of emergency vehicles crossing the railroad tracks. Concern was also expressed about volunteer EMS and fire personnel getting to their stations.

Chief Blood said that the majority of the police calls are to the three mobile home parks that are on the opposite side of the river and they would need access.

The question arose as to whether or not there was some prior agreement with the town when the bridge was constructed previously and Cindy Thompson said she would research the Selectmen’s minutes from the 1990’s for references to the bridge.

Bruce Clarke said that the water main is already several feet below ground level and with this bridge reconstruction; it will be two more feet down.

After more discussion, it was agreed that the Selectmen would send a response this week, expressing the Town’s concerns again and asking for another meeting before construction begins. The Selectmen offered to review the letter with the Safety officers but they said to proceed with the letter. Mr. Heller will revise his draft and send out the letter this week.

2. **PROPOSAL TO HIRE EXTERNAL HELP FOR TAX COLLECTOR AND TREASURER IN TAX TAKING PROCESS**

Mr. O’Connell reported having called a representative of Municipal Management Associates (MMA) who answered his many questions and impressed him. He said he was in favor of hiring MMA. Their proposal was much more detailed than that received from Town Counsel, Kopelman and Paige who had given only a general rate.

Lois Moores said that the use of MMA would expedite the process of collecting the back taxes and that all costs would come from the Tax Title account. The Town would front the costs which would then be paid by the property owner. This money would go into the General Fund.

Mr. Allen asked if the Board did not contract with a firm for this help, what would be the impact on the employees (Tax Collector and Treasurer). Jim Dunbar said that the additional work load, including letters, telephone calls, etc. would mean that their regular duties would be delayed and they would need additional help to keep up-to-date and meet deadlines.

Mr. Heller noted that the Lakeside Campground property would be excluded from the process as it is being handled by Kopelman & Paige.

Phil Peirce, said that there would be minimal impact on the Board of Assessors.

In the discussion of the costs and how this would be met, Mr. O'Connell suggested setting a ceiling on the number of properties given to the tax title company. Mrs. Moores said that this won't have to be done every year once the backlog is taken care of. Mr. O'Connell added that the FY 2010 tax bills should not be added unless they are already delinquent in a prior year(s). The Board should exempt all those who have only missed one payment but they could be added at a later date if they do not respond to outreach from the Tax Collector.

Mr. Allen expressed his support of MMA's proposal. Mr. O'Connell suggested the responsibility for collecting a not-to-exceed 100 accounts be transferred to MMA.

Mr. Allen moved to enter into a contract with Municipal Management Associates in Fiscal Year 2011 for tax collection, with the understanding that the Town be vigilant to ensure that spending not exceed \$10,000; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

It was noted that there should be an addition to the annual budget for collection of delinquent taxes.

Other:

3. LOCK/DROP BOX

Ms. Neylon, Administrative Assistant, reported on her research with Mrs. Moores, Tax Collector. They learned that other towns have a variety of lock or drop boxes. Some are inside the building and some are outside. Some are mounted to the building, some are free standing. Some boxes are metal and some are wood. All have a limited key access and they would recommend that only the Tax Collector and Town Clerk have a key and the responsibility to check and empty the box. A spare key would be kept in the locked key box so that, if necessary, the Administrative Assistant can check the box.

Lois said that she prefers an inside box, mounted to the wall just outside her office entrance. The benefit of the box would be for dated payments and would "stop the clock".

The Selectmen agreed that the Custodian should build the box and authorized the purchase of the necessary supplies to build and lock the box. It should be properly labeled and advertised to the public.

Agenda Business:

4. TAX COLLECTOR BACK UP

The Board asked Mrs. Moores how she was progressing with training back up for her office. She said that her assistant, Nancy Lee Finney, still only worked four hours per week for her but they have re-arranged responsibilities and she spends that time now working on Lois' computer, becoming more familiar with the program, etc.

Mrs. Moores said that the Department of Revenue (DOR) is not a true back up for her office but are an excellent resource if there is a question.

Mrs. Finney is not bonded but she is covered under the Town's blanket liability policy when she collects taxes.

5. COMPUTER REPLACEMENTS, ETC.

Mr. Lawrence Von Cott (Larry), of Xibexa, and who maintains and repairs all of the Town's computer equipment, was present to discuss the Selectmen's plans for computer replacement and back up.

The Board had authorized him to back up all municipal computers by the end of July; he had begun (Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Collector's Assistant) but this was so time-consuming that he consulted with the Administrative Assistant who told him to stop until they could discuss the problem with the Selectmen.

Larry said that a server with all computers hooked to it would be the best option but it was probably too costly for the Town. He suggested the Town outsource electronic communication.

Some of the points that came out of the resulting discussion:

- Some departments have more than one computer, not linked;
- The Assessors have a peer-to-peer system (share a network); should have a server-controlled environment;
- Too many locations for one server to handle all in a cost-effective way. Initial concentration should be limited to Town Hall computers. (Town Hall, Police Station, Fire/EMS, Highway, Library);
- Larry recommended a NASD (Network Attached Storage Device)

Purchase of Computers:

Discussion of the purchase of new computers; it was determined that the computer used by the Tax Collector is currently the most vulnerable.

- Purchase of new computers may result in purchase of new hardware (printers) for some of the computers;
- Larry will run a test on the hard drive of Collector's computer;
- Would a printed copy of the information on her second (the older) computer be helpful?

Mr. O'Connell moved to authorize the immediate purchase of a new computer for the Tax Collector's office; Mr. Allen seconded; so voted. Mr. Von Cott will make his recommendation and the computer will be ordered.

Mr. O'Connell moved that Mr. Von Cott and Mrs. Moores be charged with determining the best solution of what to do with the data on Windows 98 computer; the oldest computer will be "wiped clean" in preparation for disposal; the newer will be "cleaned" for use by another town board, total cost not-to-exceed \$1,500; Mr. Allen seconded; so voted.

The Board discussed a standard for purchase of all future computers and printers and what should be included in the proposal for procurement. It was determined that Mr. Heller will work with Mr. Von Cott on a plan of how to move forward. Mr. O'Connell wants to include the Information Technology people at Tantasqua Regional School System in the discussion.

It was agreed that there should be a full incremented back up done on each computer and that each day thereafter; this should go to an external storage device. No action was taken on this.

The subject will return to the September 1st agenda.

Computer Policy:

Mr. Heller had been charged with merging the Town's current computer policy with that recommended by Mr. Von Cott and by Town Counsel. He presented his notes on this merging. Mr. O'Connell suggested that the Board first agree on their vision and then discuss the policy changes. Each will review Mr. Heller's proposed changes and this will return to the agenda.

6. COUNCIL ON AGING GRANT DOCUMENTS

Mr. O'Connell moved to authorize the Chairman to sign the State grant documents for the Council on Aging; Mr. Allen seconded; so voted.

7. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) CLOSE OUT**

Mr. William Scanlan, contracted by Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to process the close out documents for the Fiscal Year 2007 CDBG grant that was administered by Mr. Timothy Hansen formerly of CMRPC, sent to the Board a letter to be signed relative to the close out.

Mr. Allen moved to authorize the Chairman to sign the letter and forward it to the appropriate person' Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

There was then some discussion of the town's recent audit of this grant (conducted by Thomas Scanlon Associates) and how this could affect future grants. Mr. O'Connell asked if it was usual to receive a draft of the audit. He had many questions and the other Board members agreed he should call and get his answers.

8. **THANK YOU LETTERS**

Police Chief Search Committee Applicants

Mr. O'Connell presented a draft letter which he proposed be sent to the four individuals who had requested appointment but were not chosen. The board agreed that letters should be sent to David Bourdeau, John (Jay) Ferrarone, Cheryl Fisher, and Joseph Murray.

South Pond (Jeppson) Beach

All agreed that thank you letters should also be sent to those who cleaned up the beach at South Pond to make it ready for summer swimming. Mr. Heller will create the list of workers for the Administrative Assistant.

9. **BROWNFIELD PHASE I RESULTS – FINNEY PROPERTY**

Mr. O'Connell reported a conversation indicating that the Phase I results of the Brownfield survey of the Richard and Nancy Lee Finney property on Post Road had been completed. Mr. Foss, a representative of Fuss & O'Neill, said the report would be sent to CMRPC who had contracted the study and they would recommend funding for a Phase II study. It is expected that the abutting Hope property, would be included. Mr. Foss would like to come to a Selectmen's meeting. Mr. Heller moved that Mr. O'Connell contact Mr. Foss to set up such a meeting; Mr. Allen seconded; so voted.

10. **PROPOSED WRTA BUS SHELTER**

This was passed over in favor of the August 10th agenda.

Before the Selectmen entertained adjournment, Mr. Allen asked the Board to consider the fact that the Town of Warren had received a total of \$900,000 in CDBG funding for three projects including a Senior Center. He said that Brookfield is the only one of the Brookfields without a Senior Center.

ADJOURNMENT:

At about 12:00 noon, Mr. O'Connell moved to enter into Executive Session citing Exemption #3 and 6 (given below) and to return to open Session only for the purpose of adjournment; Mr. Allen seconded; so voted with Mr. Heller voting aye; Mr. Allen voting aye; and Mr. O'Connell voting aye.

Exception Three - "To discuss strategy relating to collective bargaining or to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the governmental body, to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel, to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel."

Exception Six - "To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property, if such discussions may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the governmental body and a person, firm or corporation."

At about 12:370 pm, the Board returned to Open Session; Mr. Allen moved to adjourn the meeting; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna L. Neylon, Administrative Assistant

Date approved by Board: _____