

**Town of Brookfield
Selectmen's Meeting
Town Hall, Selectmen's Office
Tuesday, January 10, 2012**

Mr. O'Connell called the meeting to order at 9:02 am led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Other members present: Stephen J. Comtois II. Rudy Heller was on vacation.

Camera Operator: None

Press: None

Public: Donald Taft, Town Accountant, Betty Benoit, Police Chief Mike Blanchard, Highway Superintendent Herb Chaffee, Tax Collector Brenda McElroy

Note: The minutes of this meeting reflect the order of the printed agenda NOT the order of the actual meeting.

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:

Mr. Comtois moved to ratify the below listed warrants; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Payroll Warrant for 12/27/11: \$190,474.76

Expense Warrant for 1/03/12: \$38,494.54

Motor Vehicle & Trailer Excise Abatement Warrants for 1/03/12: \$498.84 (2011) and \$726.88 (2008, 2009 and 2011)

Payroll Warrant for 1/10/12: \$172,287.35

APPROVAL OF SELECTMEN'S MINUTES:

This was passed over until the January 17th meeting.

MONTHLY REPORTS & MINUTES OF OTHER DEPARTMENTS:

Mr. Comtois move to acknowledge receipt of the below-listed monthly reports and minutes; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Banister Common & Mall: 11/7/11

EMS: December, 2011

Historical Commission: 11/10/11

Fire: December, 2011

Brownfield Steering Committee: 12/15/11

Municipal Facilities Planning Committee: 12/19/11

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were read by Chairman O'Connell including a reminder for the food pantry, an emergency medical list, brush burning season and the schedule for the 2012 Annual Town Elections.

Public Access Period:

Donald Taft attended the meeting to call the Board's attention to and ask the Board's support for actions being taken by the QQLA (Quaboag, Quacumquasit Lake Association) regarding the Spencer Waste Water Treatment Plant whose operating permit is about to expire. The QQLA is taking steps that they believe will ensure the health of residents. They have hired an environmental lawyer and a sanitary engineer. Their primary concerns are of the phosphorous and nitrogen discharge that promotes plant growth, that there is water being lost through the system somewhere, and that two to five times per year, the storm water bypass goes directly into the Cranberry Brook which feeds into the Seven Mile River.

Agenda:

1. MEETINGS WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS

Town Accountant: Betty Benoit, Town Accountant, attended the meeting to discuss the status of free cash, 2011 "turn backs", "budget concerns", etc.

She said that the Tax Collector "is going to be short in paying her clerk" and only has enough for about four more payrolls. Apparently some calculating errors were made at about the time of the Special Town meeting in November. She explained that she routinely talks with department heads if she notices something unusual in their account balances.

Betty gave the Board a draft handout of balances in the 2011 accounts and said it shows very close budgeting. When she sends the financial statements to the Department of Revenue (DOR) and Free Cash is certified, this information will be part of the balance sheet. She further said that she needs July and August reconciled before she can schedule the auditors but, on the whole, the Town is in good shape.

She will send a revenue report to the Board.

Police Department: Police Chief Michael Blanchard attended to discuss part-time hiring. He explained that he posted the part-time position and received 57 applicants; this with the help of Sergeant Pariseau was narrowed to four individuals for interview purposes. Of the four applicants, one withdrew; he is undecided about two but may take one. He may also take the one from the batch and re-advertise. He pointed out to the Board that one former patrolman wants to come back as a part-time officer and that he has interviewed him. No decision has yet been made.

He has received three resignations: Nicholas Abair, Ryan Kelly, and Kevin Tucker. Chief Blanchard explained each officer personal reasons for leaving, none of which reflect negatively upon the department.

When asked, Chief Blanchard did say that yes, he did think that the initial hiring rate was too low but that it shouldn't be changed for the current fiscal year. In the budget that he recently submitted he proposed that the rates be \$15/hr (FY 13 and increase by \$.25 for each year for five years.

The Board then discussed with the Chief the Conservation Commission's request for rules/by-laws to regulate people on the ice covered ponds. Chief Blanchard will do more research with the Department of Environmental

Protection and the Conservation Commission and come back to the Board with his recommendation as to the need for additional rules/by-laws relative to the ponds.

There have been some instances of breaking and entering in the Town recently and the department is working those cases. There have been no further instances of vandalism on the Town Common.

Tax Collector: Brenda McElroy, Collector, attended to give the Selectmen an update on actions relative to certain tax title properties. A particular property owner who owes over \$30,000 wants to make an agreement with the Town. There was some discussion of one section of the “**Policy and Procedure for the Collection of Delinquent Taxes for the Town of Brookfield**” where it was unclear as to the amount of the first payment. Following discussion, Mr. Comtois moved to add the word “20%” so that the questionable sentence would read: “In a Tax Payment Plan, the taxpayer agrees to (1) keep up-to-date on any new tax bill, (2) make a 20% first payment on delinquent taxes, fees, and interest and (3) make regular payments that pay off back taxes, interest, and fees within two years.”; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted.

Mr. O’Connell asked Brenda if she could submit a quarterly report of tax delinquencies (real estate and excise) and she said that she would be willing to do this.

Highway Department: Herb Chaffee, Highway Superintendent gave an update on the clean up from the recent storms and indicated that he would like the Board to request permission to request an additional \$25,000 in deficit spending. He explained that “the man in the bucket truck is finding many more hangers from the storm than expected” making more work and the need for the additional funding.

Mr. Comtois moved to seek the DOR approval to deficit spend an additional \$25,000 making the total \$75,000 for the storm; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted.

CIC Grant Application (Community Innovation Challenge): Mr. O’Connell requested the Board’s authority to send a letter of support for this grant application. Mr. Comtois so moved; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted.

Status of Highway Expense Account: Mr. Chaffee advised that Board that his current balance in this account is \$16,469 and it is usually around \$25,000 at this time of the year. He said he would try to make it through with the current balance but due to the extensive storms, more than normal maintenance of equipment has been needed.

2. FY 13 BUDGET FOLLOW-UP/DISCUSSION

The Board reviewed a draft schedule for joint meetings between the Selectmen and the Advisory Committee. The schedule has been approved by Gerald Johnson, Chairman for the Advisory Committee. Mr. Comtois moved to approve

the schedule giving the Administrative Assistant authority to revise the schedule as necessary; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

Nearly all of the budgets have been received and Mr. O'Connell reported that Mr. Michael Breuer of the Advisory Committee intends to have the spread sheet ready for review at least two weeks prior to the first joint meeting which is scheduled for February 9th.

3. **CHARTER CONTRACT PROCESS**

This was passed over.

4. **APPOINTMENTS: (HISTORIC RECORDS PRESERVATION COMMITTEE) (LOCAL CABLE ACCESS COMMITTEE)**

This was passed over until the January 17th meeting.

5. **REQUEST FROM CIPC TO PURCHASE FINANCIAL PLANNING HANDBOOK**

A request to purchase this Handbook was received from the Capital Improvement Planning Committee and briefly discussed at the Board's last meeting. Since then it was determined that the Handbooks will cost \$99 each, plus shipping. After discussion, Mr. Comtois moved to authorize the purchase of one Handbook; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

6. **COOLEY HILL RESERVOIR UPDATE**

Only the Massachusetts Audubon has replied with a serious tentative interest in purchasing this property. An e-mail was received from Opacum Trust that they would discuss the matter at their January 5th meeting and let us know. Ms. Neylon is following up with them.

7. **APPROVE CIC GRANT APPLICATION**

This regional grant application, which has been worked on by Herb Chaffee, Lucinda Thompson, Rudy Heller and Peter O'Connell, must be submitted by the end of the day on January 17th. It is anticipated that we will make the deadline.

8. **DRAFT: CHARGE FOR THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**

This was passed over until the January 17th meeting.

9. **RESIGNATION: MUNICIPAL FACILITIES PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Mr. Comtois moved to accept with regret Bruce Clarke's resignation from this committee; Mr. O'Connell seconded; so voted.

10. **REPORT: BROWNFIELD STEERING COMMITTEE**

Donna Neylon, member of the Brownfield Steering Committee for the Mill Street project, gave the following schedule of upcoming events for the committee and its engineering company, Fuss & O'Neill (F&O). She explained that the committee agreed that any company that intended to bid on the project must attend the pre-bid meeting:

- **Wednesday, February 1st** – our advertisement to be in the Central Register; bid specifications available on the Town's website (or from F&O by request only).
- **Tuesday, February 21st, 10:30 am** at the Highway Garage, 56 Mill Street – mandatory pre-bid meeting
- **Thursday, February 23rd** (snow date for mandatory pre-bid meeting – time/location the same).
- **Tuesday, February 28th** – all questions not asked at the pre-bid meeting by prospective bidders are due at F&O.
- **Thursday, March 1st** – F&O to issue their response to bidder questions in the form of an addendum.
- **Thursday, March 8th** – bids due by 1:00 pm and will be opened in the Banquet Room of the Town Hall.

Bid documents will be on the Town's website, with 4 hard copies to be printed (Town Hall, Highway Department, Water Department, DEP). If a bidder wants a hard copy, they can contact F&O and pay them.

Correspondence:

There was none.

Other (these items came in after the agenda was posted):

11. **THANK YOU NOTE FROM BROOKFIELD ECUMENICAL FOOD PANTRY**

Receipt was acknowledged.

12. **GASBE PROPOSES 5-YEAR FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

This was passed over until the January 17th agenda.

13. MMA ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING – AUTHORIZATION TO VOTE & AGENDA BOOKLET

Mr. O’Connell entertained a motion to authorize Selectman Heller to vote at the MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) Annual Meeting; Mr. Comtois so moved; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted. The agenda for the meeting will be forwarded to Mr. Heller who will be the only Brookfield Selectman attending.

14. MEETING W/NATIONAL GRID RE: UPDATED CRITICAL FACILITIES LIST & ASSOCIATED CONTACT INFORMATION - TODAY

This meeting is this afternoon but none of the Selectmen will be able to attend. However, both the Fire and Police Chief will attend along with the Highway Superintendent and Lucinda Thompson who will be representing both the Highway and the Board of Health.

15. QUABOAG RIVER BRIDGE PROJECT – RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Mr. O’Connell reviewed recent correspondence from the State indicating there are several “unknown” property owners that may abut this property and several properties where owners are known that also abut. The State recommends that we begin the title searches on these properties as quickly as possible. Mr. O’Connell entertained a motion to authorize Kopelman & Paige to do the necessary title searches; Mr. Comtois so moved; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted.

ADJOURNMENT:

At 11:27 pm, Mr. O’Connell entertained a motion to adjourn; Mr. Comtois so moved; Mr. O’Connell seconded; so voted.

Respectfully submitted

Donna L. Neylon, Administrative Assistant

Approved: January 31, 2012