

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2016

The regular meeting for the Board of Selectmen convened at 7:00 p.m. in the public meeting room in the Town Office Building at 110 Main Street. In attendance were Dr. Richard M. Smith, John R. Morrell, and Edward S. Harrison. Also present were Town Administrator Evan Brassard and the media.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:

The acceptance of the meeting minutes for February 9, 2016 and March 8, 2016 – executive sessions were tabled.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to accept the meeting minutes for March 8, 2016 – open session. Dr. Smith seconded and it was so VOTED. Mr. Morrell abstained from voting as he was not in attendance for that meeting.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to accept the meeting minutes for March 22, 2016 – open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was so VOTED. Dr. Smith abstained from voting as he was not in attendance for that meeting.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to accept the meeting minutes for April 8, 2016 – open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Monson Fire Department Transfer Policy Discussion:

Fire Chief Laurent McDonald approached the Board of Selectmen and briefly went over his policy on staffing inter-facility transfer requests.

Chief McDonald explained if no off duty or call personnel respond to the request for coverage, the on-duty crew will take the call. Monday through Friday, the Chief and Deputy Chief may provide back-up with the second ambulance when available. If the Chief, or Deputy Chief, aren't available for a second call, Central Dispatch will be instructed to tone out for the appropriate number of EMT's. If there isn't a crew available in-house when the on-duty crew leaves for the transfer the crew will inform dispatch they will need to tone out for another crew if an emergency ambulance call is received while they are out. If a crew is not available, Central Dispatch will request mutual aid from the closest appropriate mutual aid service to the incident address.

Chief McDonald further explained, if an ambulance is out of service, in order to ensure the Town is not without emergency ambulance service, the requesting facility will be informed we aren't able to perform the transfer. The exception will be if the patient is a Monson resident and an ambulance service subscriber, the on duty crew will perform the transfer.

Mr. Morrell said Chief McDonald did an excellent job drafting this policy. The Board of Selectmen agreed they are in support of it.

Chief McDonald noted his staff is very good about following the department policies.

Baystate Mary Lane Resolution:

Mr. Brassard noted the Board of Selectmen had the Baystate Mary Lane resolution in front of them, and explained a few meetings ago the Board of Selectmen agreed to lend our support to the Town of Ware with their endeavor to try to keep Baystate Health from pulling services out of Mary Lane Hospital in Ware.

Dr. Smith read the resolution into the record. Mr. Harrison made a motion to sign it. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Nexamp Solar PILOT Agreement:

Mr. Brassard said this is the facility going up on East Hill Road. This has gone to and passed, at Town Meeting. This is the finalization of the PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes) agreement with Nexamp. This agreement is for \$12,500 per megawatt, and it's a little over a two megawatt facility with a 1% escalator over twenty years, so we will end up making \$30,000 to \$35,000 annually plus some bonus payments which all totaled equals \$750,000 to the town over twenty years. This money, which is recurring income over the next twenty years, goes into the General Fund Account.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to approve the agreement as written and described. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Finance Committee Budget Discussion:

School Superintendent Cheryl Clarke and Finance Committee members Kurt Kaiser and Peter Fimognari approached the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Clarke said she presented the budget to the Finance Committee two weeks ago, and gave an overview of what was discussed. Ms. Clarke stated the Schools really wanted to keep all the program initiative they brought back, and maintain the enrollment and encourage growth in

town. Over the past couple of years, they have brought back a lot of programs such as art, music, Spanish, a lot of additional courses at the High School, beefing up the technology hardware, software and infrastructure, and an additional pre-school class. Ms. Clarke noted they were hit hard this year with SPED (special education) costs of over \$300,000 and contractual increases of over \$200,000 for a total of \$500,000; and they got that figure down to a gap of about \$427,000. The operational budget for the School was \$10,965,000. School Choice dollars were used to help fill \$100,000 of the short fall.

Ms. Clarke said Town Administrator Evan Brassard, Town Accountant Mary Lauria, the Finance Committee, and herself, have been working on this and have gotten the proposed number, to be appropriated for the School budget, down to \$10,820,000 so they are within about \$145,000 and she feels with School Choice and so on, they can make that work. Ms. Clarke said they are very thankful to everyone in getting them closer to that number.

Dr. Smith asked about enrollment. Ms. Clarke responded enrollment is stabilized for the first time in several years at about 1,050 to 1,100. The Pathfinder number had a big jump about three years ago with about 45 students, and this year there are about 25 to 28 students who have applied so far. Currently, Monson has fifty-one School Choice students, and she just accepted four more this week, and they haven't advertised yet. Ms. Clarke said they receive \$5,000 for each School Choice student, and they are up to \$255,000 total so far.

Mr. Morrell said Ms. Clarke has been diligent in the Monson School Department in keeping the budget way down and over the last several years gone out of her way to cooperate with all the town departments and he certainly appreciates it.

Mr. Morrell said the Monson School system is about \$193.00 per student above net school spending; Pathfinder is \$2,642 above net school spending, which is a significant difference. Mr. Morrell felt there needs to be a discussion with the Town Managers and Town administrators from each town in the Pathfinder district to try to get that figure down, or to get a new agreement, to make things a little bit fairer.

Mr. Kaiser said at a previous Finance Committee meeting, a member noted Pathfinder is over net school spending and over the past ten years Pathfinder's over net school spending budget has been exceeded by 20%, and this has been a constant thing at 20%. Mr. Kaiser said the Finance Committee is aware of it and has already started having discussions with Mr. Brassard about it. Mr. Kaiser also noted he knows there are other Town Managers and school departments involved who are concerned as well and felt it was time to start to push that ball.

Dr. Smith felt it isn't fair that we are keeping our schools at or very near net school spending and Pathfinder is 20% above.

Mr. Brassard gave an overview of how they reached the new figure of \$10,820,000 for the School Department by noting they looked at the electricity line item for the School Dept. and found they could save about \$ 50,000. The teacher position is about a \$35,000 saving. They moved \$60,000 out of the operational school budget and into the capital side of the house, which is funded through Free Cash, due to some one-time technology purchases of laptop carts for the classrooms, to bring the figure down to where it would work. Also about \$307,000 of Free Cash was used; \$100,000 of that off-sets Pathfinder, about \$142,000 goes to the School, and the remainder is Capital purchases on the Town municipal side.

Mr. Brassard noted the rule of thumb is to spend no more than one third of the Free Cash and this is just about one third, as we had about \$930,000 in Free Cash. The Town made a deal at the last Selectmen's meeting to bring in about \$100,000 in Free Cash through a Net Metering agreement, plus the PILOT just signed by the Selectmen tonight that has some bonus payments. Therefore, we are doing a good job at generating more revenue into the Free Cash Account and not just depleting it, and Mr. Brassard is hopeful by the Town Meeting in the fall to be back where we were.

Dr. Smith said right now we are looking at a shortfall of \$21,000 and Mr. Brassard responded that is correct.

Mr. Kaiser went over the developing of the budget and where we are.

Mr. Fimognari said most of the work was one by Mr. Brassard and the department heads, in agreeing and working out the budget numbers.

Mr. Kaiser said the four heavy hitters who handled most of the necessary reduction were the School Department, the Police Department, the Highway Department, and the Fire Department. They did increase the budget for the Fire Department to allow them to increase their staffing and to have more EMT's full-time. Mr. Kaiser noted maintaining public safety is one of the Finance Committee's priorities, and they found money in some of the Fire Department accounts that could be shuffled around. Mr. Kaiser said they also pretty much eliminated everyone's over level service requests with the exception of the Fire Department and the ambulance. Mr. Kaiser went on to say, in the meantime they found the AFSCME contract was negotiated and that's been covered, so they feel to come down to \$21,000 out of

\$21 million is nothing, and feels by the time the final numbers come in, that's going to go away too.

Mr. Brassard said the Finance Committee did an excellent job with setting out the priorities in the budget process and noted, the reason we were able to add the additional paramedic to stay with the upgrade we started three years ago, is due to Chief McDonald's diligence on making sure we're growing the revenue so we can use the ambulance reserve receipts account which captures all of that revenue to then turn back around to fund the additional position.

Dr. Smith thanked everyone and all the department heads for doing an excellent job.

Closing of Annual Town Meeting Warrant:

Mr. Harrison read page one into the record and made a motion to approve articles 1 through 11 be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Morrell read page two into the record.

Dr. Smith read page three into the record. Mr. Harrison made a motion to approve articles 12 through 16 be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Harrison read page four into the record and made a motion to approve articles 17 through 22 be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith read page five into the record. Mr. Harrison made a motion to approve articles 23 through 27 be placed on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Dr. Smith seconded and it was so VOTED. Mr. Morrell abstained from voting as two of the articles pertain to the Highway Department.

Mr. Morrell discussed adding thirty parking spaces at Veteran's Field and noted there are pro's and con's both ways, but felt off-street parking needs to be added. Mr. Morrell said he has spoken with the Police Chief and the Parks and Recreation Superintendent who both agreed with him. Mr. Morrell worries about children running across State Street to get to and from the field, and with cars parked on both sides of the road during baseball games and recreational activities it's hard for drivers to watch for children darting out into the street, and it's also hard for emergency vehicles to get through. It was noted the master plan from Pioneer Valley

Planning Commission doesn't show additional parking. Mr. Harrison said he would like to see a diagram. Mr. Morrell said he will get a diagram and said the area for the additional parking has been staked out.

Dr. Smith suggested inviting Police Chief Stephen Kozloski, Park and Recreation Superintendent Timothy Pascale, and Town Planner Dan Laroche in to the next Selectmen's meeting to discuss this and to have a layout of the proposed additional parking spaces. Mr. Morrell said he would like to keep the request on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, and if the Board feels it can't be done due to a conflict with the new playground equipment on the Master Plan, he will pass over the article.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to close the Annual Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Closing of Special Town Meeting Warrant:

Mr. Harrison read page one into the record and made a motion to approve articles 1 through 5 be placed on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith read page two into the record. Mr. Harrison made a motion to place articles 6 through 15 on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Dr. Smith seconded and it was so VOTED. Mr. Morrell abstained from voting as the Highway Department had an article request.

Mr. Morrell read page three into the record. Mr. Harrison made a motion to place articles 16 through 19 on the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to close the Special Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

AFSCME Contract Approval:

Mr. Brassard said the contract was ratified on March 31st and all that is left is for the Board to vote on it and sign it.

Mr. Brassard noted the major changes in the contract are the implementation of the salary and classification study, a 2% COLA for fiscals 2017 and 2018, an increase in clothing allowance to \$400, an implementation of a clothing allowance for the dispatchers, and the schedule for the dispatchers to a 4 and 2 instead of the current 5 and 2. There is also a new provision for new

hire employees to have two weeks of vacation after the 90 days, where currently it takes them one year to be approved for one week, and this isn't helping to attract qualified employees.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to approve the AFSCME contract as written and described by Mr. Brassard. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Correspondence was read and completed.

In New Business to Come Before the Board of Selectmen:

- Mr. Brassard said Fire Chief Laurent McDonald is requesting a temporary promotion of Sean Reynolds to the rank of Acting Lieutenant effective immediately through June 30, 2017 as one lieutenant is on medical leave and another is on military leave.

Mr. Harrison made a motion to appoint Sean Reynolds as an acting Lieutenant effective immediately through June 30, 2017. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

At 8:34 p.m., Mr. Harrison made a motion to adjourn from open session to go into executive session to discuss strategy with respect to non-union personnel, pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (2) and collective bargaining or litigation pursuant to M.G.L. c. 30A, Section 21 (3), not to return to open session. Mr. Morrell seconded and it was unanimously VOTED.

Edward S. Harrison, Clerk