

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2019

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Harrison made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of November 12, 2019 – open session. Dr. Smith seconded, and it was unanimously VOTED.

Tax Classification Hearing:

Principal Assessor Maryann Wilkinson, approached the Board of Selectmen and gave the attached presentation.

Dr. Smith made a motion to adopt the single tax rate for the Town. Mr. Harrison seconded, and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Smith made a motion to not adopt the residential or small commercial exemption. Mr. Harrison seconded, and it was unanimously VOTED.

K-9 Program:

Police Chief Stephen Kozloski and K-9 Officer David Rondeau approached the Board of Selectmen. Chief Kozloski explained Monson's K-9 Storm, is unfortunately rapidly approaching the end of his career. Storm was obtained in 2012, and since that time, Storm has handled 296 deployments; ranging from article searches, missing person searches, narcotics, mutual aid, etc. In August of 2019 Storm was diagnosed with degenerative myelopathy. This will unfortunately cause Storm's retirement in the not too distant future.

Chief Kozloski said he wanted the opportunity to discuss this with the Selectmen, and to announce it to the public. Chief Kozloski said they are looking at their options with the K-9 program.

Mr. Morrell said he is sorry to hear about Storm, and noted he has been a great asset to the Police Department, especially in our small rural town with a lot of area; we need assistance like that. Mr. Morrell added we appreciate the job he has done and hopes we can continue with the K-9 program. It was noted Storm and his handler also assist other towns when needed.

Chief Kozloski said he would like to move this program forward.

Mr. Morrell said Officer Rondeau has earned the right to continue with the K-9 program.

Chief Kozloski said Storm's rapid decline in his health wasn't anticipated, and wondered if he could receive any financial assistance from the town to keep moving the K-9 program forward. There are some trainings open in the early part of 2020. If we were to miss those training sessions, we would be looking at late summer to early fall/winter of 2020 for the next class. Chief Kozloski said his request is for financial support to keep the program running continuously, so there isn't a lapse of several months.

Mr. Morrell wondered if Hampden County does any preliminary training for K-9's to be used by Police Departments, to help them get off the ground a little bit, or wondered if it's a completely new thing.

Chief Kozloski responded, generally speaking, most of the towns in the region seek the services of a professional vendor that screens these dogs out for the quality the department is looking for. We have demonstrated the need, and the benefit, of having a dog that has a high drive but has a real good nose.

Chief Kozloski said we train the dog for patrol work that is more of an aggressive approach than a family pet. We've identified the real need for our community to be the K-9's nose. Our dogs have been trained in the drugs and tracking piece, as well as if someone has to be apprehended, keeping the handler and other officers as safe as possible. Storm was a full patrol dog.

Dr. Smith asked, about how much money he is talking about, and what the timeline is that he is looking at.

Chief Kozloski said Officer Rondeau has done some excellent research, and they believe Monson would be able to qualify for a grant of up to 80% payment of a K-9. Those agencies also provide the potential for medical care for Storm after retirement, and noted there are quite a few possibilities out there.

Chief Kozloski noted Storm cost \$8,000 and he believes there is a pretty high likelihood we could get up to 80% of that reimbursement back to us which would leave us at about \$1,600; then there are some training options, some locally with the cost of overtime on top of that, or if we pay a little bit more, we could get a K-9 that is actually trained, or well underway when we take delivery of it, which would run us \$8,300 to \$8,500.

Dr. Smith asked about the timeline for all of this.

Chief Kozloski said it would depend primarily on the route we take.

Mr. Harrison asked during the times when Storm isn't available, if we have access to K-9's from other communities.

Chief Kozloski said we have relationships with Wilbraham (who recently lost their handler and K-9), Ludlow, Ware, East Longmeadow, and Palmer. The regional dogs and handlers train together, and through that relationship, we build the ability to be able to rely on them, based on their handler's availability.

Chief Kozloski said as far as the timeline, it looks like a March 16th class would be the next one locally.

Dr. Smith asked how long it would take to get a dog.

Officer Rondeau said the purchase of the dog would be quick, since they have dogs ready. It's the training that would take time.

Dr. Smith reiterated, if we get a dog without the extra training, we have to wait until the beginning of the year to have that training. If we pay the extra for a dog that has already had training, the dog would be ready to go when?

Officer Rondeau said at the end of its six-week training. The canine would come back certified and ready to be deployed.

The Board agreed that's a pretty reasonable amount of time. Dr. Smith added the price difference vs. paid overtime for training equals out.

Mr. Morrell wondered what will happen to Storm when he retires, and if the town would take care of him.

Chief Kozloski said he and Officer Rondeau discussed this recently and Officer Rondeau has graciously offered to take over all care of Storm after his retirement. There are grant opportunities available that would help reimburse Officer Rondeau that covers retired K-9's with medical conditions.

Mr. Harrison asked if both dogs will get together then.

Officer Rondeau said they would be separated. Storm will enjoy his retirement, and a new working dog can be full of energy. They will have their special housing keeping them safe and contained.

Mr. Brassard said he has two recommendations for the Board. He would not recommend a Special Town Meeting route. He would recommend either using the Gifts money to not exceed up to \$10,000 or the Board could vote to request the Finance Committee release up to \$10,000 earmarked from their reserve receipts account.

Mr. Harrison and Dr. Smith said they are leaning toward using the Gifts to the Town Account. Mr. Morrell agreed.

Dr. Smith made a motion to allocate up to \$10,000 from the Gifts to the Town Account for the K-9 program. Mr. Harrison seconded, and it was unanimously VOTED.

Mr. Morrell thanked Officer Rondeau for his hard work, and reiterated he is sorry to hear about Storm. Dr. Smith seconded that.

Community Transportation:

Lori Stacy, Director at the Monson Council On Aging, approached the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Stacy said she was contacted by Rabbi James Cohn back in August. Rabbi Cohn is the National Outreach Director for Holistic Industry. Rabbi Cohn asked Ms. Stacy all about the Council On Aging, what they do, what their services are, and a lot about the town. What came out of it was the fact we are always in dispirit need of transportation in the Town of Monson. Ms. Stacy said they do fine with the seniors, but no one else has access to transportation if they need it. Holistic Industries sent Ms. Stacy a first check of \$10,000 with the promise to follow-up as soon as they have used that money, up to \$23,000. Ms. Stacy said they can now transport people, whether they are 60 years old or 40 years old. They are going to start the program off right where they are, except not looking at the age. They have an ad in Indeed for a part-time driver, hoping to extend the hours to maybe 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. and maybe a Saturday.

Ms. Stacy said she had a wonderful meeting with Quaboag Connector to see how they do things, and found out about the schedule for the PVTA out of Palmer, so anyone needing to get to work in the city, the van would just bring them to the PVTA bus in Palmer, instead of having to give them a ride all the way into the city.

Ms. Stacy said they are now calling it the Community Transportation Program, since it's open to everyone.

Mr. Morrell asked how her existing vehicles are.

Ms. Stacy said both vans are eight years old and in great shape. In 2023 she will be looking at capital funds when she does the next grant to replace them.

Dr. Smith said given the rural nature of our community, he thinks this is a great service to provide.

Ms. Stacy noted this program will start tomorrow morning.

Ms. Stacy also noted the Council On Aging was awarded a \$15,000 grant she applied for through the Osterman Family Foundation for their nutrition program.

Mr. Brassard noted there were 726 riders from town using the Quaboag Connector.

Keep Homestead Museum Update:

EmmaLadd Shepherd, Chair of the Board at Keep Homestead Museum, approached the Board of Selectmen, along with Board members Maryann and Bob Meacham.

Ms. Shepherd noted they have been doing a lot of things at the Museum in the last year or so, and she wanted to fill the Board of Selectmen in on that. Some of the things they have done are maintenance and some are to make things more attractive.

Ms. Shepherd passed pictures to the Selectmen, and held them up for the camera explaining them. They show repairs made to the walls in the barn making a three-season place for meetings, etc. The chipboard has been covered with fake barnboard and fake beams to look natural. The wall facing the parking lot was falling over and that was repaired. The concrete foundation will be painted in the spring. The foundation facing the road has been mortared and drainage installed to drain the water away from the building. A grant trust was used for garden planters; one that is wheelchair accessible and another a little taller for people who can't bend down. Myra's old washer is going to be donated to the museum from a woman who owned the laundry mat in town, and they have created a washing exhibit in the basement. When they were cleaning out the barn, they discovered a large display cabinet. They cleaned it up and it is in the living room at the museum displaying items. Also, in the cabinet is the Keep family record that was discovered in an auction catalog that the Friends of Keep Museum bid on and won.

Ms. Shepherd said items in the museum are beginning to get sun damaged from the sun coming in through the windows. There are fifty windows in the house. They are currently trying to find the best thing to put up for UV protection to protect the items.

Ms. Shepherd handed the Board a paper, as attached, showing the number of visitors to the museum and where they came from. It also shows people volunteered 802 hours at the museum, where they are doing various projects every day of the week.

Ms. Shepherd noted last year, insulation was blown in the attic and walls, and added Tom Keenan really is good at working with old buildings taking the clapboards off to drill the holes and putting them back up.

Ms. Shepherd explained buttons were donated this year from a family to the Monson Button Club. The Gauthiers appraised them and there was nothing special. One card was worth \$20. Nothing is being sold, but some are in the gift shop for crafts.

Dr. Smith said it's good to see all the work being done.

Mrs. Meacham thanked the Board for letting her and Mr. Meacham serve on the Board at the Museum, and noted no money used there comes from tax payers, all the funds used were left to the museum.

Mr. Meacham noted Myra was their 6th grade school teacher.

Mr. Morrell said he remembers Myra saying with a big smile "the museum will be well taken care of".

Ms. Shepherd said this Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., they will host their annual Open House, with a sing-a-long for everyone in town and elsewhere.

Mr. Meacham said the hiking trails are very active on the 75 acres of land.

Correspondence was read and completed.

In Other Business to Come Before the Board:

- The Board of Selectmen agreed to hold one meeting in the month of December on the 10th, unless a special meeting is required after that, since the second meeting in December falls on Christmas Eve.
- Mr. Morrell said the Silver Street bridge is now open, one day ahead of schedule; taking six weeks to do. Some small incidental work will need to be done in the spring, but it won't require closing the bridge. Most of the work left is in the wetlands off the roadway, per conservation.
- Dr. Smith asked Mr. Brassard about the Fire Chief search. Mr. Brassard responded he has two out of the five proposals.
- Mr. Brassard said the Hillside demolition should start the first week of December. The fences are up, and tomorrow morning the barricades will go up blocking the entrances to keep everyone out altogether.
- Mr. Morrell said Mass DOT closed half of the lane on the bridge on Old Wales Road by Conant Brook Dam. This will be closed off tomorrow morning, and it is scheduled to be replaced in 2021.

At 8:22 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. Chapter 30A Section 21 (2) and collective bargaining or litigation pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30 A Section 21 (3), not to return to open session. Dr. Smith seconded, and it was unanimously VOTED.

Dr. Richard M. Smith