Select Board Meeting

May 26, 2021

6:02 pm meeting called to order by Neil Oleson.

Select Board members present: Mike Bedini, Terry Green, Neil Oleson.

Select board members absent: None

Others present: Jim White, Christine Dobbert, Vicki Winchell, Stephanie Pare, Doug Miller, Kyle Kuczynski, Kendall Bell, Cindy Bosley, Ron Bosley

Mike Bedini made a motion to approve the minutes from the 4/28/21 meeting. Neil Oleson seconded. Unanimous.

Selectmen:

* Mike Bedini made a motion to approve the business license for Anthony and Emily Arigoni and a Victualer License for the Manice Center. Terry Green Seconded. Unanimous.
* The board signed a Chapter 90 request for resurfacing of South County Road and Upper Church Road.
* Mike brought up the question regarding what Is happening with Wi-Valley. The service has not been any better, nor has the customer service. A resident was brought to tears by an employee of Wi-Valley. Wi-Valley reps do not return customer calls timely either. All present agree this is unacceptable. Stephanie Pare mentioned several people would like a representative from Wi-Valley to attend a Selectboard meeting. Cindy Bosley stated the Tunnel section of town has been without service for approximately 3 weeks. She was also wondering if Wi-Valley received payments. Christine stated Phase 1 and Phase 2 have been paid. She will send a request to Brian of Wi-Valley to attend an upcoming Selectboard meeting.
* Kendall Bell represented the Highway Department Union in contract negotiations. Several changes were proposed to the current contract as well as clarifications for previous proposals. They are as follows:
  + Article 4.1 – Neal stated the cost of living is 1.3% this year.
  + Article 5.7 – Kendall questioned the difference of using 8 hrs per day or 10 for holiday or vacation days when the crew is working 4, 10 hr days during the summer. She will discuss with them and decide.
  + Article 9.3 – The board would like to change the word “recalled” to “offered”
  + Article 12.2 – Continuing to negotiate probationary period of new employees and when a new employee would receive their raise if they started midway during the fiscal year.
  + Article 13.1 – All parties agreed on changing the wording from “will be” to “may be” regarding grievances to be filed.
  + Article 15.1 – Added in clarification regarding holidays that fall on Saturday (holiday should be recognized on the Friday before) or Sunday (holiday should be recognized on Monday following). Selectboard has added Juneteeth (June 19th) as a paid holiday.
  + Article 15.3 – Kendall requested clarification regarding prorating personal days for employees who have worked less than one year. Neil stated since there are 4 days earned per year it would equal one day earned for every 3 months worked.

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Selectmen (continued):

* + Article 15.4 – – Kendall requested clarification regarding prorating sick days for employees who have worked less than one year.
  + Article 16.1 – Board would like to change the wording regarding earned vacation time from 5/6th day per month to 4 hours as it is easier to calculate. Kendall did not feel this was agreeable as the employee is losing almost 2.5 hrs per month.
  + Article 16.2 – Board proposes changing wording of vacation time to be used during shut down from “will be” to “may be”. This was agreed.
  + Article 17 –Kendall requested the contract states the Life Insurance is $4000. Christine stated they prefer no amount be listed in the event the town switch carriers and the same amount is not possible with the new carrier.
  + Article 17.5 – Added language offering a group Vision Plan.
  + Article 18.1 and 18.2 – Detailed the pension benefits offered to town employees. Both sides agreed to these items.
  + Article 21.1 – Negotiating when longevity pay would be paid out to employee. Kendall will discuss with the crew as to when they would prefer payment as town has no preference.
  + Article 29.2 – Discussions held regarding cell phones. Town would like to pay a stipend of $35 per month to each employee and employee would carry their own phone and cell contract. Kendall asked if provider preference would be a problem to which Christine stated no as most providers service works in town. Kendall will discuss with the group. She also asked where the $35 amount was derived from. Christine replied it is comparable to the cost (rounded up) the town now pays for each cell phone.
* Kendal inquired as to what determines the highway department starting rate of pay. Neil replied an offer is made to the candidate based on licenses held and experience. Some are hired without license and raises are then given once licensing is achieved. Hiring local is also a preference if the candidate meets the qualifications required.
* Kendal discussed the issue of a grievance for an employee who was hired for less than $20 per hour. The Selectmen informed her that that particular employee was hired for a Utility Person position, which was a lower rate of pay and the employee was unlicensed. Once licensed pay increases are awarded.
* Negotiations will continue with Kendall Bell at the next Selectboard meeting to be held on June 9, 2021.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator:

* Cherry Sheet estimate for FY 2022 is $795,277.00 - $806,000.00
* The state of Massachusetts has adopted Juneteenth (June 19) as a state holiday effective this year.
* Deerfield Watershed Association is looking to the town for support of their initiative.
* A newly created position with the Assessors will be posted in the MMA newsletter for June. This position is being posted as a Principal Assessor position at the rate of $12,000 per year. The candidate will report to the Selectboard.
* Fiscal Year 2022 budget has been completed.

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Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator (continued):

* The warrant for the annual town meeting has been completed. The meeting is scheduled for June 25 at 7 p.m. Two changes will be made to the warrant before it is signed and mailed:
  + Changing the BOH Dump Sticker line to $360 as the cost is $359.
  + Also adding an Article 15. This will request voters to add $100,000 to the stabilization account out of taxation.

Jim White, Highway Department Supervisor:

* The highway department will receive blacktop millings from Warner Brothers for $200 per truckload that will be used for South County East. The millings are being taken from the Route 2 project currently in process.
* Cutting swales on Upper Church Road.
* Working on truck #4.
* Front walkway at the town hall is in the process of being rebuilt.
* Ann at West Oil submitted a rate of $2.433 a gallon for heating oil for all town buildings. They do not have a diesel price yet. Selectboard agreed to accept this price and move forward with a contract. The estimate is approximately 16,000 gallons will be used by the town.
* Whitcomb Hill gutters have been cleaned.
* Cleaning up sand on Monroe Road.
* Cemeteries mowed and weed wacked.
* Due to the recent fire at the scrap yard in North Adams, the board asked Jim to check with Apkins and see if they are currently taking metal.

Public Comment/Questions:

* Ron Bosley asked Jim if the highway department is putting fill in on Upper/Lower Church Road Jim replied “yes”.
* Cindy Bosley brought up the blacktopping of Route 2. Christine replied they are starting June 1st. Paving will be from Charlemont and continue 8 miles into town.

8:06 pm Mike Bedini made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Terry Green seconded. Unanimous.