Select Board Meeting

June 23, 2021

6:02 pm meeting called to order by Mike Bedini.

Select Board members present: Mike Bedini, Terry Green, Neil Oleson (arrived 6:55 p.m.)

Select board members absent: None (Neil Oleson arrived at 6:55 p.m.)

Others present: Jim White, Christine Dobbert, Vicki Winchell, Stephanie Pare, Doug Miller, Kyle Kuczynski, Kendall Bell, Cindy Bosley, Ron Bosley, Rose Rathbun, Michael Tatro, Jess Carbinello, Larry Jones, Mary Jones, Joey Therrien, Jacob White, Deidre Ford

Terry Green made a motion to approve the minutes from the 6/9/21 meeting. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.

Selectmen:

* Michael Tatro, representing National Grid, attended tonight’s meeting for a Pole Hearing for property on Blackstone Road. Some abutters did attend to hear where the pole was being placed however no objections were made.
* Terry Green made a motion to accept the areas where the poles are being placed. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.
* Library requested rate increases to $18 and $15 per hour for the Director and Assistant Director positions. The Director position requires a degree and it is difficult to find a qualified candidate for the lower wages. The Selectmen will re-visit the request at the next meeting.
* Kendall Bell represented the Highway Department Union in contract negotiations. They are as follows:
  + Article 4.1 – The Union accepted the boards proposal of 2% increases per year for 3 years. They also requested the town provide universal job descriptions to anyone applying.
  + Article 5.8 – Union and board agree that all hours worked outside of the employee’s regular work day will be paid at the overtime rate.
  + Article 15.3 – Union and board agree to the wording for personal time to be accumulated and prorated at 2.67 hours per month for employee’s with less than 1 year of service.
  + Article 15.4 – Union and board agreed to the wording for sick time to be accumulated and prorated at 4.67 per hours per month for employee’s with less than 1 year of service.
  + Article 15.5 – The Union and board agreed to keep all current holidays in the new contract as well as adding Juneteenth as a paid holiday.
  + Article 16.1 – The Union and board agreed vacation time will remain as it previously was written in the last contract.
  + Article 29.2 – The Union agreed to the cell phone stipend of $35 per month.
  + Article 30.1 – Both parties agree the proposal should be for a 3-year contract.

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Selectmen (continued):

* Kendall brought up for discussion a concern brought to her by an employee (who gave Kendall permission to speak on his behalf, publicly, in his absence) stating he received his CDL license and was told he could not get reimbursed for the cost of the course. Christine replied no employees are reimbursed for the course, only for the cost of the license. The employee in question was brought up to $17 per hour. Kendall questioned that someone was brought in making $17 per hour and then employee was raised up to that rate. Christine replied the new employee was hired at a higher rate of pay due to his experience and licensure. Joey Therrien commented he thought once you received your license you would be increased in rate to which Christine replied the employee never changed positions and the licensing was not a requirement for the Utility Person position. Several in attendance expressed their displeasure with this and also asked what the repercussion would be if the employee refused to drive a truck that required a CDL since it was not required in his position. Rose Rathbun stated she would like to see the highway employee’s fairly compensated for bettering themselves and obtaining licenses. Kendall requested Christine draft language to be included in the new contract to cover this issue with descriptive job descriptions. Christine will work on drafting these descriptions but due to end of year financial procedures currently in process it will take some time.

Jim White, Highway Department Supervisor:

* Cutting swales
* Lawn mowing
* A couple of burials today with more burials over the weekend and next week.
* Crack sealing done on Stryker, Central Shaft, Blackstone and Oleson Roads.
* Mike asked how Whitcomb Hill Road was and if it was split and broke in many areas? Jim replied yes but it can wait until next year.
* Brush hogging
* Catch basin cleaning being done on Friday on Whitcomb Hill Road.
* Tony Arigoni is coming Thursday to start working on the highway departments three small garage side doors.
* Ron Bosley asked Jim if he had heard any information regarding repairs on the Tunnel fire station. Jim said he would talk to Tony on Thursday.
* Bids are out for blacktop and will be opened at the Selectboard meeting on July 21, 2021.
* Jim asked how the crew should handle cleaning up at the cemetery. The board felt if old pots were left and broken, the crew could clean up any destroyed items without the need to notify family members.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator:

* Presented the MSBA proposal for window and sill replacement at the school. Lead paint and Asbestos were found in the sills. The estimated project cost is $1.195 million. The MSBA will pay 72.2% with the town covering the remaining costs.
* On vacation July 14, 15, and 16th.

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Public Comment:

* Cindy Bosley started discussion regarding Wi-Valley. She stated in her opinion Wi-Valley is not meeting the promises that they discussed during meetings at the Senior Center such as:
  + The project was to be completed within 6-8 months
  + Fiber would be installed on Tilda Hill and Monroe Bridge and all other areas to be wireless.
  + They sold the town on foliage not being an issue, which we now know is not factual.
  + Per Cindy, the original contract stated 75% of the town meet the 25/3 speed while some would be able get speeds of 50/5.

Cindy stated they have been paid closed to a million dollars and their contract has been extended 3 times. Three phases have been completed to which Cindy inquired what the definition of a “completed phase” is. Christine answered she would need to review the original contract to answer that. Selectboard is in unanimous agreement that they will not be signing off on any future payments until the problems have been rectified. Mike asked Christine to draft a letter informing the state of the multitude of issues the town is having and to request a response from them. Terry was in full agreement with this approach. Christine will send a letter to MBI and Carolyn at the state level.

7:47 pm Mike Bedini made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting and enter Executive Session. Terry Green seconded. Unanimous.

8:15 pm Terry Green made a motion to reopen the regular meeting and adjourn at 8:15 pm. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.