**Selectmen’s Meeting Minutes**

**May 1, 2023**

**7:00 PM Esposito** called the meeting to order. Also present was Selectman Howard **Brown.**

The Board discussed the new audio-visual equipment installed in the Meeting Room. The Board discussed formulating a response to the MACC Base situation. The BOG next meets on May 16th. **Brown** will draft a letter to review next Monday night.

**Esposito** brought up the Wilton Community Power Program. Basically, all the people in the town of Wilton can buy into it at a lower rate for their electricity from Eversource. It’s just getting started; he thinks we should look into it and see if our town might benefit from something like this.

The Board went over the revised estimate from Hansen Bridge. There is an additional $28,365.00 in costs. Cleary updated the Board on the status of Brook Road. There is another sinkhole developing at the Brook Road culvert. Ben Crosby feels we should close the road as it’s a safety risk. **Esposito** asked if we can accelerate the timing of the culvert replacement? Crosby is reaching out to Hansen Bridge. Also, the Town of Amherst is starting their road work on Amherst Road on May 17th thru the end of June. Amherst Road will be closed during that time; travel will be difficult around here, especially with school still in session.

**Esposito** noticed on the Facebook Chatter that the MV Democrats want to have a meeting over at the library. The Town now owns that building; we do not allow political meetings of any sort in town buildings. **Brown** asked what policy states that? **Esposito** stated that it’s always been that way. He went on to explain that in 2011, the Republican’s representative in town came to the Board looking for a place to have a meeting. They had initially applied to the church; the church turned them down. They next applied to have a meeting in the community room of the firehouse. It was supposed to be elected Representative Bill O’Brien and his associate coming to the town to speak to the townspeople about the goings on in Concord, etc. Then O’Brien switched it over to the school. It turns out it was a couple hundred people that came and it was a big Republican festival/party completely unknown to us. **Esposito** did address it with Bill O’Brien and Bob Mead that we were completely deceived by it; we do not allow political meetings in town buildings. We did then reach out to the local Democratic rep to offer her equal time as it was only fair. We do not allow political meetings in public buildings. **Brown** asked is this a policy we have written down some place? **Esposito** stated he does not know where it’s written but it’s been in effect long before he got here. **Brown** stated that if we can’t find the policy, then it is in fact not a policy. A policy has to be written down in order for people to enforce a policy. There is no law that states that a town cannot use a building for political purposes. There is if we have a policy in place; we do not. Eileen Naber stated that it’s been known for years and because the library wasn’t owned by the town, they were able to have meetings there. It’s public knowledge; precedent has been set. **Brown** disagrees. We are talking about policy and trying to enforce policy without having a policy. That is backwards. To tell somebody they can’t use a building because in the past we’ve never been able to is asinine. We have to have a policy in place and then be able to say you can’t use the building because this is the policy we have in place; neither Republicans nor Democrats can use this building as a meeting place because we have this policy. We cannot do anything about this now until we have a full board and then we can discuss this and we can talk about what we have for coming up policies. **Esposito** disagrees. **Brown** stated that they held the Democratic Caucus at the library a month ago. **Esposito** stated we were unaware of that. They never even asked to use the room; it no longer belongs to the library. The Town of Mont Vernon owns the building. The Library Trustees do not run this town; the Board of Selectmen do. They have to request the use of a town building like anyone else. There may be a written policy; no one has had reason to look until now. **Brown** stated the precedent would be that they held the caucus there so they should be able to have their next meeting there. **Esposito** reiterated that was done unknowingly; they never came to us for permission to use the building. **Brown** asked did they go to the Library Trustees? **Esposito** stated that the library doesn’t own the building; the Town does. As an example, **Esposito** cited minutes from September 19, 2011: Town resident Lorri Hayes requested that the group “Mont Vernon Democrats” would like to use the meeting room for a meeting of their members on a Sunday night in October. Laurie Brown explained to her that the Selectmen do not allow political parties to use Town facilities. Hayes is questioning the validity of that decision. NH RSA 41:11a states that, as long as the Selectmen treat all like-minded groups equally, they are to decide who is allowed the use of Town facilities. We do not use town buildings for political purposes. **Brown** feels we should hold off on this discussion until we have a full board. **Esposito** feels that they should then hold off on their meeting for Wednesday night.

The Board reviewed the minutes of 4/17/23. **Brown** motioned to accept the minutes of 4/17 as written seconded by **Esposito.** All in favor.

**Brown** motioned to accept the quote from Mont Vernon Electric for the repairs to the McCollom Building lighting seconded by **Esposito.** All in favor.

**7:45 PM** As there was no further business before the Board, **Brown** motioned to adjourn seconded by **Esposito.** All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Cleary