**Selectmen’s Public Meeting Minutes**

**December 4, 2023**

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

Sheila Sturm came before the Board as a concerned citizen. She and her husband David reviewed the minutes from a couple of meetings and learned that there is a room use policy that we are working on. Howard Brown sent them a copy of it. The thing that concerns them the most about that proposed policy is that it specifically bans political or religious groups from using any of the public buildings here in town. She questions can we constitutionally ban political and religious groups from room use where we allow other groups to gather. She thinks the answer to that question is no, we cannot. It would not survive constitutional scrutiny. We are able to make regulations on the use of public property in terms of time, place and manner. Where you can get into trouble is where you say this group can use it, but this group cannot and you’re making that decision based on content. Constitutional speech, religious speech, political speech is protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution. If we make a regulation restricting time place and manner, it has to be content neutral. Why would we ban political groups such as the MV Democrats or the MV Republicans from being able to use any one of the public rooms that are available for use by other groups like the Hooks and Needles? You cannot deny somebody based on content. She strongly recommends we have any policy reviewed by Town Counsel. She went on to say that this may be targeting the use of the library where the MV Democrats meet. Under RSA 202-A:6, the BOS does not have control over who meets at the library. The Library Trustees shall have the entire custody and management of the public library. **Quinlan** noted that he has been in touch with Town Counsel and NHMA on this; he is still waiting for answers.

**Quinlan** moved on to discussion with Library/Conservation/Cemetery about the town center parcel. It’s been several months since we last met. They each have a portion of the parcel; he is wanting an update.

Adrienne Gosselin, Chair of Conservation Commission, said they have planted some native plants around the pond. They are holding off and keeping funds available for additional landscaping once construction takes place. There had been concerns voiced to Meridian over the plans as far as road drainage dumping into the pond, but those concerns have been addressed.

Lou Springer, Cemetery Trustee, stated that with respect to the cemetery, most of the work is still in the existing cemetery. They did have a ground radar survey of the new site done a few weeks ago; they don’t have any results back as of yet. They also met with Pete Ryder, who is an expert in stone walls. They are considering putting a stone wall across the demarcation line where the cemetery separates from the library property. They also have the plans for the wrought iron gates in the existing cemetery. They are considering having those gates reproduced at the entrance of the new cemetery. They still have some extensive work to do in the existing cemetery in terms of finishing the layout of the open area. He can see next year there being much more emphasis on what they’re going to do with the new cemetery. **Quinlan** noted that we have a partial evaluation of the whole cemetery parcel, both the cleared land and wooded, as well as partial information on all the water and stone in there. He spoke with Spencer Tate of Meridian; they could do the rest in fairly quick order if the Cemetery Trustees would like to pursue it. This would give a detailed map of the whole cemetery parcel, where all the major obstacles and water issues are. The cost of this would run between $3600-$5,000.

Cindy Raspiller, Library Trustee, noted that the Library Building Committee is hosting a question/answer session at the MVVS on Wed. night at 6:30pm. They will answer questions about the project, the design, the building, etc. They are doing this early so as to have the opportunity to repeat it a couple of times between now and Town Meeting. Turnstone Corporation out of Milford had been selected as the construction management firm on the project. They are continuing on with the project and have been very helpful throughout the time since Town Meeting. They conducted a session at their offices in August to go over cost reduction suggestions and ideas. DSK also participated in that. What they are expecting to come out of that is an updated cost for the entire building. The cost that was presented last year at Town Meeting was based on quotes that were released late last year and gathered early in January. The approach this year will be different because Turnstone has been selected. They will be going back out to their subs to get a guaranteed maximum price for the project. DSK agreed to open up the spec which means more people being qualified to bid on some portions of the project which will hopefully reduce the cost. The original spec had a pretty comprehensive landscape plan. There are two pieces to that plan; hardscape that has to be done as the building is being built and then the rest which can be done after the building is built. That part will be deferred with the idea that the Foundation can continue raising funds to do those things later. Anne Dodd noted that they have asked Turnstone to work with them on plans for fire suppression; they will have that information later this month.

**Quinlan** stated that the RFP for new figures for the access road went out last week to 9 different construction firms. We should be getting results from that by the end of the month.

The Board reviewed the minutes from 11/27/23. **Esposito** motioned to approve the minutes of 11/27/23 as written seconded by **Brown.** All in favor.

Anne Dodd thanked the DPW for their help in coordinating the parking for the Messiah Sing.

**7:30 PM Esposito** motioned to go into non-public session to discuss a personnel issue seconded by **Brown.** All in favor.

**7:50 Pm Esposito** motioned to come out of non-public session seconded by **Brown.** All in favor. **Esposito** motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session of 12/4/23 seconded by **Brown.** All in favor.

**Brown** motioned to name Ben Crosby as the alternate to the SRLD seconded by **Esposito**. All in favor.

**Brown** noted that he has started working on policies. He has the Code of Conduct done; he is now working on the Social Media Policy and the Employee Handbook.

**8:00 PM** As there was no further business before the Board **Esposito** motioned to adjourn seconded by **Brown.** All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Cleary