

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes September 27, 2021

**7:00 PM** Meeting called to order by Selectboard Chairman, John Esposito. Also in attendance were Selectmen Howard Brown and Tim Berry and minute taker, Laurie Brown. Esposito led the meeting in the pledge of allegiance.

Cemetery Trustee, Lou Springer, came before the Board to discuss the timber harvest slated for the parcel owned by the Cemetery Trustees and the Library Trustees. Because of the wet weather it has been pushed out until November or December – maybe even next year. The money raised must go into the General Fund and then the Trustees need to have a warrant article pass in March in order to move it to the Cemetery Trust Funds.

Eileen Naber explained that the Trust can be set up now, and in March there would be an article to approve the trust with the funds in it. Bonnie Angulas asked if it could be deposited into the Library Capital Reserve, and was told that the Cap Reserve money is strictly taxpayers' money.

Naber asked if we have a new Police Chief.

Esposito said that there has been a conditional offer made, pending results from the background check. An announcement will be forthcoming in the next week or two.

Naber asked about the status of the new website.

L. Brown explained that the design has already been chosen, data will be migrating beginning today, and the "GO LIVE" date is on or around November 16, 2021.

Sean Mamone asked if the contract includes maintenance and was told yes.

Angulas asked about training and was told that ZOOM training would be held November 3, 2021.

H. Brown asked if the old site would be updated before the data migration began.

L. Brown said that all the department heads were told to get their pages in order several weeks ago. She also said that she would do updates if they preferred having her do it.

H. Brown said that each Selectman should have their own email account.

Mamone said that each Selectman should have their own Town laptop. Nothing should be done on their personal computers. You could have gotten them free in the first round of COVID funding.

**7:15 PM Charles Baker** addressed the Board: Baker said that it was a mistake asking to be made an Alternate on the Heritage Commission. He explained that he sent in a letter of resignation that was forwarded to the Selectmen. At the last meeting there were words between he and another member; he walked out. That was unprofessional. He also said that the Commission cannot remove an individual; only the appointing Board.

Berry said that that was what the Selectboard did; they made him an Alternate.

After a quick discussion he said that he was making it easy for the Board and will step down.

Berry said that he hoped that didn't mean that he was stepping down from the planning board too. He feels that Baker's commitment to the Town is real and we need your expertise.

Baker said that he will have to think about that. He feels unwelcome on the Heritage Commission.

Berry said that he thinks Baker's decision on the H.C. is the right one. The conflict on that Board won't go away. It would not be good for you to stay on the H.C.

Esposito said that this is the first he has heard of conflict on the Heritage Commission. We need to straighten that out.

Angulas asked if they have seated a new chair, and was told that they will do that at the next meeting.

Berry explained that there were irreconcilable differences among the Board and that Becci Schwarz was more valuable to the Board as they had sent her to grant writing school already.

Baker said that he would consider staying on the Planning Board, but that there are too many personal agendas around that table.

Esposito said that these conflicts are not good for the Town.

Rec. Director, Heather Kennedy, came before the Board to start the discussion on Halloween. She wants the whole Town to be on the same page – not like last year where a faction in Town did their own thing in direct conflict with what the Selectmen had decided.

Angulas stated that she feels that we should go back to the traditional: Halloween night 6 – 8 PM because all of the traditional events are being changed or cancelled

Kennedy reminded her that we were in the middle of a pandemic and there were reasons for the changes. Our numbers are higher than they were at this time last year: 39 vs. 625. Everyone needs to follow the guidelines. We should publish that it is for Town residents only. Mamone said that this is not the arena for this discussion: it should include Emergency Management and the Health Officer. You have experts in the community who you can utilize.

Esposito and H. Brown feel that the Town can go with the traditional Halloween with proper guidelines in place.

Berry motioned, seconded by H. Brown to have Trick or Treat on Halloween night from 6:00 pm to 8:00 PM.

All in favor.

SAU-39 School Board Chair, Steve O'Keefe, came before the Board to update them on the Amherst school plan.

They plan to build a new elementary school and remodel the middle school. This will be a 40 to 45-million-dollar bond, of which Mont Vernon will be responsible for approximately 20%. They are setting up a committee to study the options and they would like a MV Selectman to sit on it. There will be 7 committee members and 1 School Board Rep, 1 Staff member, and 1 Selectman. They will be researching 3 things:

1. Continuing the tuition agreement as is.
2. Bringing our 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders back to Mont Vernon.
3. Alternative ideas.

The committee will be formed at our October meeting, will commence in November and deliver their findings by next May.

Mamone asked if the increase would be over the life of the project.

O'Keefe said yes; through the 25 years of the bond.

Angulas asked if this will be a warrant article in 2022 and was told: yes. She said that the \$300K Mont Vernon portion, over 25 years, would pay for the Library, renovations to the Town Hall and the new Fire Truck.

Esposito asked when the project would move forward if it was approved in March.

O'Keefe said that they would be "Shovel Ready" in one year.

Mamone asked if there was any money available for a "Shovel Ready" project.

O'Keefe didn't know.

Esposito asked H. Brown if he would like to be the Selectmen's Rep. to this committee.

H. Brown said that he thinks he should be the one.

Berry motioned, seconded by H. Brown, to appoint H. Brown as the Selectmen's Rep to the Middle School Research Committee. All in favor.

Esposito said that David Brooks was on the agenda, but is not in attendance.

Berry said that he can speak to what Brooks was going to talk about: Sustainability via a solar farm.

Esposito said that he had looked into that for the Kaminski property and was told that it would be too expensive to bring 3 phase electric down to the site.

Berry brought up an issue he feels is plaguing the Planning Board. He thinks that one or two individuals are causing plans to be delayed in getting accepted. The PB needs to get back to rewriting the ordinances, and they can't do that because they are seeing and reviewing plans many more times than necessary. He wants to talk to the Planning Board and tell them that the Selectmen are not happy with the pace of their work produced.

Esposito asked him to contact the Chair of the PB tomorrow and ask him to expedite the subdivision before them now. He stressed to Berry to be a listener, and to be diplomatic. He knows that there is a considerable amount of expertise on the PB and we don't want to alienate anyone.

Berry said that he wants to stress that the Board wants to see some progress on ordinances.

Esposito spoke to Interim Chief, Mark Slavin, regarding the noise complaint received by email. Slavin will look into it along with the issue of jake brakes being used on Rte. 13.

Esposito said that we sent a registered letter, and a letter hand delivered by the PD to a homeowner in town requesting that they clean up their property as it is a health concern. This letter was written by the Health Officer, Rich Masters. Masters is getting pricing on having the property cleaned up at the owner's expense.

Esposito relayed that the Building Inspector was sent to a property in reference to a complaint received in the Selectmen's Office. The owner of the home said that the inside work he was doing does not require a permit, but when he begins his work on the outside; decks etc... he will get permits as needed.

Esposito said that 54/56 Weston Hill Road was sent a letter telling them what to do to make it legal for them to reside in both residences.

1) get an ok from the Building Inspector, and 2) have a structural engineer sign off that the building is safe. We haven't heard back from them. Esposito said that he went down there today, and yes, there were a lot of vehicles there, but they all seemed to be registered.

Berry said that the neighbors believe that they are operating a repair shop on the property. He asked about the most recent complaints made by neighbors.

Esposito said that he would respond to them and tell them that we are working on it. It is a slow process.

H. Brown said that it will take time but we need to show that we are doing something.

Berry said that Town Counsel said that he would meet with the junk yard property owners and it is time we do that.

Esposito said that we should decide next week who we want to meet with first.

H. Brown said that the Historic District Commission met last week for the first time in 2 years. They approved 2 decks being added to property in the District. They also appointed Becci Schwarz as Chairman and JoAnn Kitchell as Secretary. We are meeting October 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM to go over the rules etc...

Esposito asked about the cease and desist served on the Secole house. They were doing renovations without a permit.

H. Brown didn't know of this.

H. Brown said that the Library trustees had a meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Jill Weber is stepping down, and Amy White is filling in until Town Meeting. They sent in a draft of a grant written to the NEH and were given positive feedback. DSK architects will spend 3 months getting bids; because of the timing, there will probably be a 10% or 15% increase in materials.

Berry said that he was told by the Library Director that they were constructing a 100-year building. I liked that idea and don't want them compromising on the materials. He asked if there was any word regarding the fundraiser.

H. Brown said that the Trustees are happy with what he is doing.

Berry motioned, H. Brown seconded, to table the minutes of 9/20/21 until next week. All in favor.

H. Brown asked if Esposito had ordered the Knotweed spraying at the Transfer Station.

Esposito said that the Conservation Commission had given him coordinates of invasives at the roadsides all over Town. Lee Gilman sprayed those and is billing us for that work. We will take that money out of Grounds Maintenance. He was told not to spray Town property without the Selectmen's or the Highway Director's instructions. The \$900 to spray the Transfer Station will come from Transfer Station Misc. Board ok'd the expenditures.

Berry said that he took the liberty to email Bill McKinney notifying him that we acted on his complaint. He said that inside work requires a permit too. Berry said that the owner will get a permit for any work needing one.

Esposito said that we have to decide on what we want to do for the swearing in of the new Police Chief, and the changes he requested to the contract offered him.

Board will decide next week.

**9:00 PM** As there was no further business before the Board, Berry motioned seconded by H. Brown to adjourn.  
All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Brown