



Board of Selectmen
Minutes
Tuesday, April 4, 2017 at 7:00pm
Town Hall Meeting Room

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Chair Ken Swanton in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Selectmen Ron Ricci, Stu Sklar, Alice von Loesecke and Lucy Wallace were in attendance as well as Acting Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro and Executive Assistant Julie Doucet.

Minutes

On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of 3/7 & 21, as presented.

Town Hall traffic plan

Acting Town Administrator Marie Sobalvarro explained the Town Hall & Hildreth House Construction Committee (THCC) was tasked with reviewing the parking and traffic flow around the Town Hall. A plan prepared by the engineering firm working with the Housing @ Hildreth House Committee outlines parking lot stripping and other visual cues as a first step in the process. THCC member Connie Larrabee confirmed the plan is preliminary. The committee is seeking reaction and input from the public at this time. Sobalvarro expects stripping and paving to be completed over the next couple of months. Wallace is not convinced the proposed traffic flow directing traffic to enter behind Town Hall and exit in the front is the best or safest approach. Discussion ensued around the possibility of housing behind the Hildreth House and what impact that may have. Von Loesecke wondered if an egress on another part of the property will be necessary. Police Chief Ed Denmark has been involved in many discussions on changes to the traffic flow. He does not see an immediate need however he recognizes changing behaviors can be difficult and if future development does occur he would advise making the changes sooner rather than later. Sobalvarro reiterated this is only an initial plan and is not permanent.

Public Communication

Dave Durrant, 159 East Bare Hill Road, disapproves of the proposed traffic pattern and feels it is a waste of time. He said there has never been any accidents or incidents with the traffic flow entering and exiting in both the back and front of the Town Hall. He does not like the temporary signage and cones that have been placed out front. He wonders how the idea to change the traffic pattern came about. He does not believe it will improve safety for pedestrians.

Peter Warren, Lancaster County Road, served many years at the Fire Station and only recalls one incident. He agrees the current system is not working. He pointed out people from out of town have an extremely difficult time understanding where to go. He supports the traffic pattern as it once was with entering and exiting both in front and back of town hall.

Tom Garfield, Myrick Lane, said the new pattern is fine and even with potential senior housing he does not see any issues.

John Lee, Ayer Road, walks by Town Hall all the time and encounters much confusion noting not everyone who has business at Town Hall is from town. He noticed parking is also an issue and the current configuration forces additional traffic up Elm Street. He recommended more innovative approaches taking into consideration long range planning to accommodate potential housing.

Laura Andrews, THCC member, asked for clarification on “back the way it was” does that include Elm Street as two way. The public response was yes. Additionally, Police Chief Denmark said part of the reason why Elm Street had been changed to one way was in response to concerns from residents who live on that street.

Jack Spero, Deerfoot Trail, offered some simple solutions such as adding signage near the entrance of town hall and maybe some speed bumps on Elm Street.

Connie Larrabee, THCC member, asked if anyone had objections to two way traffic behind town hall as well as in front.

The board members offered differing perspectives on the best approach to take. Wallace suggested continued work with engineers who can provide options. Larrabee noted maintaining the “historic pattern” for traffic flow can vary from person to person depending on which area of town they are coming from. She explained the renovation projects at Town Hall and the Hildreth House are what initiated the conversation.

Peter Warren, Lancaster County Road, gave a lovely tribute to Selectmen Ron Ricci who after serving on the board for nine years decided he would not run for another term. Warren praised Ricci for his efforts over the years and presented him with a gift and plaque to thank him for his service. In response, Ricci said he has really enjoyed his time on the board. He found it to be both challenging and a unique experience.

Executive Assistant Julie Doucet also spoke thanking Ricci for his service and presented him with a gift from the Town Administrators office.

Ricci’s fellow board members also took a few moments to thank him for all his hard work, dedication and guidance over the years.

Free cash overview

Finance Director David Nalcharjian provided a report outlining anomalies which occurred over the past year increasing the free cash dollar amount. He highlighted health insurance, reserved fund, buildings & liability, public buildings, school department and debt service as areas that contributed to the higher amount. Nalcharjian explained it is difficult to estimate anomalies therefore it is fiscally prudent to maintain a reserve fund balance to cover unknowns. He added having 3 to 5% in free cash is customary and shows good management.

Community Preservation Committee joint appointment

By a roll call vote, Ricci – Aye, Sklar – Aye, Swanton – Aye, von Loesecke – Aye, Wallace – Aye, Chadran – Aye, Catalina – Aye, Marston – Aye, Ward - Aye, Lee – Aye, Williams – Aye, John Walker was appointed to the CPC through the next election.

Hildreth House project update

THCC member Laura Andrews and Marie Sobalvarro reported the project is nearly finished. The committee is requesting approval for payment eight. Sobalvarro indicated approximately \$60,000 worth of work is yet to be completed which includes paving, completion or railing and painting. These are the final stages of the project. On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to approve payment eight to Classic Construction in the amount of \$53,678.10.

Town Administrator report

Sobalvarro reported Chapter 90 funds for the upcoming fiscal year are \$347,000.

Sobalvarro said Harvard will participate in the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) program for daily traffic counts. These will be conducted between Gebo Lane and the Post Office, Gebo Lane intersection and Ayer/Poor Farm/Lancaster County Road intersection. Planner Bill Scanlan is working on this. If there are additional locations to be added it must be done by May 1st.

Sobalvarro announced the ten year anniversary event being held at the public library on April 8th.

Sobalvarro informed the board of training being held by for housing trustees by Mass Housing on May 6th.

Sobalvarro reported the Massachusetts Office on Disability is also holding a training at the end of May. Those interested should contact her for more information.

Sobalvarro reported the Planning Board will be working with MRPC on a water resource protection plan through their District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) grant program. She will inform the Water/Sewer Commission.

Sobalvarro announced Ginny Thurston scholarship applications are due May 1st. Von Loesecke volunteered to review submissions.

Sobalvarro announced the Lion's Club has submitted requests for entertainment and one-day liquor licenses for their Volksfest to be held on September 16th. Sobalvarro announced a request from the Schools Trust for an entertainment license to hold a Hootenanny fundraiser on May 6th.

The board will need to act on these requests at their next meeting.

Sobalvarro said a tree donation has been offered to replace the tree on the common. The board members approve of the donation which will include removal of the old tree and planting of the new one.

Old Library architect contract

On a Wallace/von Loesecke motion, the board voted unanimously subject to approval at the annual town meeting to approve signing contract with Abacus Architects.

Board of Assessors Resignation

On a Ricci/Sklar motion, the board voted unanimously to accept resignation from Cindy Russo and send letter of thanks for service.

Policy updates

On a Ricci/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to accept the upper town hall use policy as printed.

On a Ricci/von Loesecke motion, the board voted unanimously to approve the liquor license policy, as amended.

DPW & Police contracts

On a Wallace/Ricci motion, the board voted unanimously to endorse dpw and police contracts.

Affordable housing sale – 31C Elm Street

On a Ricci/Wallace motion, the board voted unanimously to waive their right of first refusal.

Annual Town Meeting follow up

Sobalvarro said the Conservation Commission voted to not accept the Quarry Land gift by using CPC funds. Ricci spoke with commission Chair Paul Willard. The board decided to take no action at this time.

Sobalvarro said a meeting with various boards/committees will be necessary to decide how to use free cash. She recommended this be done after the annual town meeting. All agreed.

Goals

Von Loesecke will provide a draft communication plan for review and discussion at the next meeting.

Selectmen reports

Wallace reported the Housing @ Hildreth House Committee is making progress and will provide a report to the board once they have more information.

Swanton asked everyone to bring their calendars to the next meeting so the summer schedule can be decided.

Swanton reported the school building committee has heard interesting alternatives and cost estimates. They have discussed the Bromfield House. Public sessions will be scheduled.

Ricci reported the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust is close to securing a buyer for 166 Littleton Road.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.

Documents referenced:

Traffic plan – dated 3.27.2017

Free cash – graph dated 4.4.2017 and report dated 4.5.2017

CPC vol form – dated 3.6.2017

Classic Const. invoice – dated 3.17.2017

Old Library proposal from Abacus Architects – dated 3.27.2017

Russo resignation letter – dated 1.24.2017

Policies – upper town hall and liquor dated March 2017

31C Elm affordable sale letter of intent - dated 3.24.2017