

HARDWICK SELECTBOARD MEETING
307 Main Street
Gilbertville, MA 01031
August 28, 2023

Attendees: H. Robert Ruggles (HRR), Chair; Kelly Kemp (KK), Vice Chair; Eric Vollheim (EV), Clerk; Nicole Parker (NP), Town Administrator; Bill Lewis (BL); Colleen Mucha (CM); Kevin Clark (KC).

Executive Session

Called to order August 28, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

HRR noted first order of business was the need to go into Executive Session. Reason: To discuss strategies with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of a public body, and the Chair so declares.

Vote Taken

HRR called for a vote from the Board.

Passed (3:0)

Motion

KK made a motion to acknowledge receipt of the complaint of Open Law Meeting and also moved to acknowledge the response from the attorneys that will be sent to the Attorney General's Office regarding the complaint.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Motion

KK made a motion to have NP forward the response to comply with the deadline.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Selectboard Meeting Reconvened in Open Session:

Appointment Requests

- Council on Aging: Margaret Rising
NP stated there is currently only Ned Kelly on the Board; however, the Outreach Coordinator also recommended Margaret Rising, so she came highly recommended by the Council on Aging.

Motion

EV made a motion to appoint Margaret Rising to the Council on Aging.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

- Zoning Board of Appeals: **Elizabeth Cyran**
NP stated there were currently only 2 people on the Board, Harry Comerford and Glen Wojcik. KK stated more information was needed regarding the number of seats on the Zoning Board of Appeals. NP responded stating there are 5 seats.

Motion

EV made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Cyran to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

No second.

- Zoning Board of Appeals: **Rick Romano**

Motion

EV made a motion to appoint Rick Romano to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Motion (1:1:0). Kemp; Ruggles.

KK suggested item be tabled to further investigate the necessary background knowledge needed to serve.

Hardwick Rod and Gun Club Extension of Quiet Hours to 11:00 p.m., October 14, 2023

EV requested additional details regarding the request for extending quiet hours for a special event. Bill Lewis, President of the Hardwick rod and Gun Club, stated there would be a countrywide competition under lights. He stated the Club was trying to be diligent by requesting an extension should the event run beyond 10:00. Police Department said the Club needed to speak with the Selectboard.

Motion

KK made a motion to approve the Hardwick Rod and Gun Club for their event, the Rimfire Rampage, on October 14, 2023 starting at 7:00 p.m. and not to exceed past 11:00 p.m.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Colleen Mucha (CM), Interim Superintendent of Schools; Kevin Clark (KC), Facilities Manager

CM stated in the Spring there was an HVAC issue in the middle/high school needing repair. Other towns moved to fund the incurred expense differently than in the past. It was noted that enrollment affects being able to pay for the expense up front or the need to borrow funds. CM reached out to their legal counsel, and it was suggested an Inter-Municipal Agreement be created.

A question was posed from the floor regarding classification of students with regards to enrollment in a regional school district.

CM stated reports are submitted to the State twice a year. On October 1st a report will be submitted to the State. Students are coded by the town they reside in. Note: Homeschoolers are not factored in.

CM discussed a situation that arose regarding a Greener Communities grant for one of the school buildings. The Town sought the funding to pay for that project, therefore, the school did not have any

oversight regarding the project. Over the summer, a problem occurred with the heating system. The workers in the building were working independently, and so pertinent people were unaware of the situation as well as the local fire and police departments. Ultimately, it was decided there needed to be a procedure in place, so when workers enter the facilities, there needs to be awareness by the school staff as well as a final say on the project.

A document was passed to the Selectboard which was created as a guideline to make everyone who might be affected aware of the project including local fire, police, highway departments, etc. in case a situation arose. KC said there should be pre-construction meetings, etc. where details could be discussed thus eliminating issues before they happen. Protecting the integrity of the building is important.

CM requested the Board read over the guideline draft and offer any other additional suggestions/recommendations.

CM addressed EV to make him aware they are working on creating a training program for their young students sparking interest in becoming EMTs and firefighters. They've been in contact with local fire chiefs and are hoping to have a program up and running once they receive a little more information. EV stated the Hardwick Rescue and Emergency Squad is still in existence, and the Board of Directors have some money that they've decided to put toward something of this kind. Discussion ensued pertaining to student training in those fields.

Personnel Committee Recommendations

- New position for Highway - Assistant Superintendent
- Promotion for Highway Laborer to Foreman: Zachary Barrett.
KK suggested Mr. Barrett sign an agreement stating he will get a CDL license plus guarantee a minimum stay in the position. NP stated per his supervisor Mr. Barrett is willing to sign an agreement, hopes to have CDL before the snow flies and is willing to stay for at least 2 years.

Motion

KK made a motion to accept the posting for the new position, Assistant Superintendent.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Motion

KK made a motion to allow the Highway Department to do the promotion from Highway Laborer to Foreman for Zachary Barrett.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Sewer Abatements

An abatement application for the property located at 20 Johnson Road was reviewed. The abatement amount equaled \$386.44. NP noted per the abatement form, property owners must file for abatement within 6 months upon receipt of the bill.

Motion

EV made a motion to grant the abatement.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Application Process for Sewer Abatements

NP stated applying for an abatement following the receipt of a sewer bill within 6 months does not work for fiscal years.

NP reached out to a couple of other wastewater treatment plants, and their due dates are within 30 days. It would be more prudent to do 30 days upon receipt of the bill in order to keep everything in the same fiscal year. HRR stated a regulation should be written stating something to that effect. NP will continue working on a regulation.

Wastewater Superintendent Report

Report accepted as written.

Meeting Minutes Approvals

Meeting Minutes – June 12, 2023

Meeting Minutes – July 18, 2023

Meeting Minutes – July 24, 2023

Motion

EV made a motion to accept meeting minutes from June 12, 2023.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Motion

EV made a motion to accept meeting minutes from July 18, 2023.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Motion

KK made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from July 24, 2023.

EV seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Old Business

- Christmas on the Common committee: NP stated committee would be voluntary resulting in no need to be nominated by the Board. KK asked the Committee to come in beforehand to touch base and ensure no liabilities exist.

- West Brookfield Ambulance Agreement: NP submitted to the Board to re-sign the agreement.
- Fire Truck: EV said they had a conversation with the Fire Chief. They have a grant application. The Pierce Arrow engine (#1) is worth \$5,000 but the repairs equal \$8,000 and is out of code and does not meet any kind of requirement (not in compliance with the national standard NFPA). Town should be putting money away every year to accommodate a new truck.

HRR recommended if the Fire Department didn't get the grant, then they should try to get enough support and go for an override, so the Town votes it through. EV agreed and stressed something must be done. HRR noted it has to be placed on a ballot.

Town Administrator Report

NP gave update regarding USDA project:

- The first treatment plant will be going out to bid soon. The RFQs for sub-bidder and General Contractor are due Wednesday, August 30, 2023, by 10:00 a.m. Lots of bids are coming in.
- The debt repayment is still being discussed.
- NP is working on the oversight and use of a new RFP and is still trying to get Whitewater Wastewater because only Blue Heron has been received. Everything is moving great. Ricciardi will be back the week of the 19th.
- EV said KK sent out something to look at. KK stated it needs to be tweaked and needs contract jargon along with Town Counsel review prior to it going out to bid. EV stated Graves Engineering is willing to look at it and bid on it. It currently is bare bones. It was agreed this item should be placed on the next agenda.
- NP said FY23 should be closed soon and done by the end of July. We're limited with staff but wants to make sure by at least the last week of August it's done. They're very close and already reporting to DOR. Should be looking good for a Free Cash Certification hopefully within the next 6 weeks.
- Greenwich Road drainage project is being conducted currently. They are also limited with staff so it's taking extra time; expect delays and, if possible, seek alternate routes.
- Had to do some restructuring of the Highway Department.
- Exploring new heating options for Myron E. Richardson building. We will have to deal with current heating system for this winter season. We will need to be more diligent by perhaps setting some type of alarm as a reminder.
- Damage done to the Paige Library fields from the fair. The Fair Committee is working on getting a quote to have repairs done. Going forward probably best for parking to be at Eagle Hill and not grassy lots.
- Capital Planning met on Monday, August 21, 2023. There were several requests from departments regarding capital needs and building repairs. There's another meeting next month, and we can report the findings then.

Signatures and Approvals

- Chapter 90 signatures required.
- NP said she was having a meeting with the Hubbardston Town Administrator to go over other Inter-Municipal Agreements that we might be able to capitalize on pertaining to 2018 report.

Adjournment

HRR made a motion to adjourn.

KK seconded.

Motion passed (3:0).

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.