

BOARD OF SELECTMEN – TOWN OF NATICK

MEETING MINUTES

EDWARD H. DLOTT MEETING ROOM – NATICK TOWN HALL

January 4, 2016

6:00 PM

PRESENT: Charles M. Hughes, Chair; J. Richard P. Jennett, Jr., Vice Chair; Nicholas S. Mabardy, Clerk; John J. Connolly, Member; and Joshua Ostroff, Member.

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Martha L. White and Executive Assistant Trish O’Neil

Chairman Richard Jennett called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Hughes, seconded by Mr. Jennett, moved to enter into Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to Real Property and Litigation with the Chair announcing that discussion of Executive Session matters in Open Session would have a detrimental effect on the Board of Selectmen’s negotiating position and the Town’s interests. By a roll call vote, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Jennett, Mr. Mabardy, Mr. Connolly, and Mr. Ostroff all voted in favor of the motion. The Board entered into Executive Session at 6:05 p.m. after announcing that the meeting would return to Open Session at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Open Session reconvened at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a moment of silence was observed for our fallen heroes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ms. White announced that the Town was not awarded the \$400,000 grant from the State toward the purchase of the conservation restriction on the Pegan Lane property. She stated that it was a very competitive grant process with many qualified applicants. The plan is for the Trustees of Reservations to make up the difference, i.e., the Town will not fund the purchase.

Mr. Connolly shared that he had recently seen a pedestrian hit by a pickup truck in the crosswalk near Honey Farms on Route 27. The person, who was propelled forward about 15 feet, was very badly hurt. Mr. Connolly commended the Police and Fire Departments for their job performance and their professionalism in dealing with the situation and helping the injured party.

WHAT’S NEW

Jemma Lambert, the Director of Community Services, talked about the Hartford Street Community Garden, a farm initiative in which gardeners build and create their own vegetable gardens, thereby helping to feed their own families as well as donating to the local food pantry. All Natick residents are welcome to enter their names in a lottery with the application deadline being March 25, 2016. Applications are available at the Community-Senior Center. There are 58 4x10 beds available. Ms. Lambert thanked Jeremy Marsette and the DPW crew for all their hard work and many hours spent cleaning out this formerly fully wooded site and preparing it for use. The gardening site is located next to the Presbyterian Church and the food pantry, and the church has signed a 99-year lease agreement with the Town.

CITIZEN’S CONCERNS

Peter Mundy, Chairman of the Friends of the 4th Committee, announced several upcoming events: Family Night on Wednesday, June 29th; Natick Voice on the Common on Thursday, June 30th, and the 4th of July Parade on July 4th. Mr. Mundy stated that the committee is also sponsoring another trivia night. Mr. Mundy submitted his request for a parade permit for the 4th of July this evening.

Jim Araugo, the teacher’s representative to the Public Employee Committee (PEC) that negotiated with the Town on health insurance, stated that the employees and their unions felt blindsided by the changes in their health insurance coverage, feeling that they had to fight for coverage, and that the preference would

have been working through the traditional bargaining process rather than having the Town negotiate with PEC. Ms. White stated that she felt it would have been impossible to have reached a consensus among 19 unions via traditional means.

APPOINTMENTS WITH THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

1. **Chief of Police – Request to Appoint Retired Officer Diane Morrill as Special Police Officer:** Chief Hicks spoke in support of this appointment. On a motion by Mr. Mabardy, seconded by Mr. Ostroff, the Board voted unanimously to appoint Diane Morrill as a special police officer.
2. **Interviews for Appointment to the Mathworks Scholarship Committee:** A math professor and a Natick resident have been appointed to the committee. Three spots still need to be filled. Four applications have been received. Three interviews were conducted this evening and the fourth will be conducted at the February 1st Selectmen’s Meeting. Of the interviews conducted this evening, Mr. Greg Cohen is a 14-year Natick resident with two children at the Kennedy School whose job consists of helping people with the college admissions and financial aid processes; Mr. Brian Fay is a 3-year Natick resident who stated he has a good background evaluating college-level students; and Ms. Elyse Barrett is currently looking to reside in Natick and stated she has a passion for helping students seeking education in the science and math disciplines.
3. **Lincoln Café – Application for a Common Victualler’s License:** Informed by Susan Ramsey, Director of the Council on Aging, after a discussion with the Town Administrator, that the café had been operating with a lapsed license, Judy D’Antonio, the manager of the Lincoln Café and Vice President of the Friends of the Natick Senior Center, presented before the Board requesting to renew the café’s common victualler’s license. On a motion by Mr. Ostroff, seconded by Mr. Connolly, the Board voted unanimously to bring the café into compliance by approving the license. Jerry Pierce, President of the Friends group, thanked everyone for their support of the Friends and the café. Ms. D’Antonio thanked Mr. Mabardy for making arrangements with Roche Bros. Supermarket whereby hundreds of dollars’ worth of breads and baked goods are donated to the Community-Senior Center for use in the café.
4. **Alex Chiemets – Water Hero, Inc. – Regarding Proposed Memorandum of Understanding:** Mr. Chiemets gave a presentation of a device in the production stages that, using Wi-Fi, reports data on water usage, including likely leaks, to smart phones and other Internet devices. Mr. Ostroff explained that the device was created by a local inventor in a small, local start-up company who had had a catastrophic water leak in his own home. The idea is that people who acquire one of these devices will be alerted electronically in the event of a water leak. The Wi-Fi signal will transmit via a home’s router to the company’s cloud and to a portable device. Mr. Chiemets explained that the device will monitor the flow of water into a home in a noninvasive way, strapped to the side of a water meter and not requiring a professional plumber for installation. Two units are proposed, one a do-it-yourself unit and the other a Pro unit, at a cost of \$200 and \$300, respectively. Mr. Hughes inquired as to whether the devices would be compatible with the Town’s current water meters and received an affirmative response. Mr. Ostroff explained that the Memorandum of Understanding would allow for the Town and the Water Hero Company to work together to pursue opportunities to test the devices. Jeremy Marsette, Director of the DPW, expressed support for the MOU in terms of exploring what the devices can offer, especially where there is no financial obligation involved, and obtaining some sample units to test how they would integrate into the Town’s current system. Moved by Mr. Ostroff and seconded by Mr. Mabardy, the Board voted 4-1-0 to enter into the agreement. Mr. Connolly cast the dissenting vote, stating that though he liked the idea and would be willing to work with Water Hero on a handshake, he would not sign any agreement in light of the Town’s recent negative experience involving ConEdison and Community Choice aggregation.
5. **Treasurer – Establish Useful Life for Equipment in Anticipation of Borrowing:** On a motion by Mr. Ostroff, seconded by Mr. Mabardy, the Board voted unanimously that the maximum useful life of the departmental equipment listed below, to be financed with the proceeds of the equipment borrowings authorized by the vote of the Town, passed on October 22, 2015, is determined, pursuant to GL. Chapter 44, Section 7(9), to be as follows: Replace H-57 sidewalk front end loader (borrowing amount \$245,000, maximum useful life of 10 years) and replace W-19 Vactor (borrowing amount \$410,000, maximum useful life of 10 years).

DISCUSSION AND DECISION

6. **CSX Purchase and Sale:** Mr. Ostroff stated that the purchase and sale agreement previously signed by the Board is awaiting execution at CSX. Environmental testing will cost approximately \$18,000 but will not be done until CSX signs the agreement. Mr. Ostroff's request is for the Board to authorize the Town Administrator to file a "Notice of Interim Trail Use" with the U.S. Surface Transportation Board, a process also known as railbanking (a voluntary agreement between a railroad company and a trail agency to use an out-of-service rail corridor as a trail unit), which will provide the Town with the right of first refusal and other protections helpful in the acquisition of railroad corridors. On a motion by Mr. Connolly, seconded by Mr. Ostroff, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the Town Administrator to file the notice.

7. **Fiscal Year 2017 Operating Budget:** In submitting the Town Administrator's Fiscal Year 2017 operating budget, Ms. White announced that the Town is presenting a balanced preliminary budget for the first time during her tenure and many years prior. Mr. Towne presented the preliminary budget using a video presentation, including presentations on the General Fund as a whole, Revenue for the General Fund, and the Water and Sewer and Sassamon Trace Golf Course Enterprise Funds. In closing statements, Ms. White stated that in preparing the budget, much consideration had been given to the suggestions that had been submitted by the Board Members.

8. **Accept Final Minutes of Master Planning Steering Committee:** On a motion by Mr. Connolly, seconded by Mr. Ostroff, the Board voted unanimously to accept the final minutes of the Master Planning Steering Committee from December 22, 2015. This committee has been retired and will be succeeded by the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) pursuant to approval of Article 29 during the 2015 Fall Annual Town Meeting. Existing members have been sent an email asking about their desire and ability to serve on the new MPAC.

9. **2016 Spring Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles:** The Board Members discussed potential Warrant Articles for the 2016 Spring Annual Town Meeting, including establishing a fund for problem properties, appropriating mitigation funds for design of the West Natick Fire Station, appropriating funds to replenish the Walcott Fund, and revisiting the unaccepted roads issue, among others. Mr. Hughes directed the Board Members to submit their suggestions for the Warrant.

10. **Town Administrator Evaluation:** Mr. Hughes informed the Board Members that Ms. White's self-evaluation is in the agenda packet and instructed them to try and get their evaluations done by the end of January.

11. **New Electric Rates for Municipal Facilities:** Ms. White provided the Board with the results of the bid process, in which the Town Administrator had been authorized by the Board to negotiate for electrical supply for municipal facilities. Mr. Chenard gave a presentation on the bidding process and the bids received. The Town has entered into a three-year contract with ConEdison Solutions for its larger accounts at a rate of 7.36 per kWh beginning in December of 2016. The smaller accounts will have a three-year contract with Constellation Energy at a rate of 10.16 per kWh, also beginning in December of 2016. The Town is currently paying 9.34 per kWh for all general government buildings. Mr. Connolly took issue with the ConEdison contract, feeling that the Town should not have entered into another contract with the utility company based on the problems with high pricing in the Community Choice Aggregation initiative.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR NOTES

None.

SELECTMEN'S CONCERNS

Mr. Connolly stated that he encountered a local auto dealer who expressed concern that he had not yet received his license and was informed that Class I, II, and III licenses for which renewal information was received were in the Selectmen's folder awaiting their signatures. Mr. Connolly asked if there was a wait list for commuter permit parking and Ms. White referred him to Ms. Calhoun in the Community Development Office for an answer to that question. Mr. Connolly gave a list of three items he would like to have on a future agenda: Lake Street, performance evaluations and/or pay raise percentages for non-union personnel, and a request for public information. Mr. Connolly stated that he had requested information about a month ago regarding the Pond Street retaining wall and who had paid for additional work but has not yet received it. Mr.

Hughes asked Ms. White to check with the Director of the Department of Public Works. Mr. Connolly stated that he had reported a flag to be in disarray on the Common but that it is still flying improperly. Ms. White stated that she thought it had been taken care of and would follow up on it.

Mr. Mabardy questioned the cost of pay raises in relation to the Fiscal Year 2017 budget, how many vacancies there currently are across municipal departments, and whether any positions have been eliminated. He wondered if, in the interests of fiscal conservatism, some services could be privatized. He expressed the concern he has heard from some residents who feel they are being driven out of town because of high taxes and the "unaffordability" of living in Natick. Mr. Hughes pointed out that lower taxes would mean cutting services. Mr. Mabardy responded that people are talking about cutting administration, not services.

Mr. Ostroff announced that there is a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. on January 11th at the Hampton Inn regarding the rail trail. He stated that there had been an issue with signals timing out at Route 9 and Oak Street but that the issue has been resolved by the DPW Director and MA DOT. He mentioned that there has been interest in a pedestrian bridge at the Marion Street location. He asked if the Board was interested in exploring the Visitability Incentive Program. Mr. Ostroff talked about health insurance in response to the topic brought up during the Citizen's Concerns portion of the meeting. He stated his belief that the decision making pertaining to health insurance was difficult but that the Town could never have achieved the savings it did without the changes that were decided upon. He stated that he felt he had made the best decision for the people of the Town but that it could have been done in a more diplomatic way, and he expressed regret that there had not been more time allotted and better communication.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Hughes and seconded by Mr. Mabardy, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:40 p.m.



Nicholas S. Mabardy, Clerk

January 4, 2016 Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes Approved by the Board of Selectmen on June 13, 2016

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All documents used at this Board of Selectmen meeting are available at:

<http://naticktown.novusagenda.com/agendapublic/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=207&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda>