**Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes**

**3/6/2019 6pm Ramsdell Room, Pelham Library**

**Present:** Selectman Agoglia, Selectman Ribeiro, Selectman Pearson, Fred Vanderbeck, Eversource Rep- Nick Langoni, Chief Thomann, Amy Wasserman and Scott Plotkin (7:25pm), Nancy Long-Dog Officer (7:20pm), Richard Hall (8pm), Kristen DeBoer, and Susannah Carey.

**Open:** Selectman Pearson opened at 6:00pm.

**Eversource Utility Pole Hearing Request-84 Buffam Road 6:00pm**

Representative Nick Langoni was present. Motion to approve the pole request, unanimously approved.

Eversource contracts out for regular inspections of poles; core samples are taken and a report is generated with replacement recommendations if needed.

**Full Time Police Officer-Chief Thomann**

Chief Thomann had secured another candidate for the position but that person was recently recruited by the State Police. The application and interview process will move forward again. The cost for the Academy is around $3k with equipment costs around $2k. A warrant article will be created for the May Annual Town Meeting for those expenses.

**Speed Sign for Amherst Road**

Chief Thomann discussed the broken speed sign parked at the station. Speed signs are not placed during the winter months due to plowing, sanding, & salt that is spread on the roadways. The Board of Selectmen are in favor of the Police Department purchasing a smaller solar powered sign that is movable and can be placed wherever needed, especially on Amherst Road to slow traffic in the Village Center. Costs for solar sign range from $5k-$5,500. Chief Thomann will submit a warrant article for Town Meeting.

Other-

Leash Law-Susannah Carey will share the Town of Amherst Animal Welfare bylaws with Chief Thomann. Chief Thomann and Susannah Carey will work to create two options for voters at Town Meeting; one with less strict language than the other.

Country Lane Fencing Complaint-David Litwak has filed a complaint regarding a fence located on cul de sac on Country Lane. Discussion of drafting a cease and desist letter to the Plotkin & Wasserman family who have been using the town owned property as a fenced in gardening space. Discussion of the 2017 hearing regarding the Country Lane Circle Planting and its use by one family. There was no resolution following that hearing and no order given to remove garden or fencing. Motion to order removal of fence on Country Lane with a letter, unanimously approved.

**Collector/Treasurer Contract Negotiations**

June Massee is asking for a salary increase to be in line with salary of predecessor. The increase would bring the Collector and Treasurer’s combined salary to $42,500; currently around $40k. Salary increase will be appear under Article 4 on the warrant. June does not currently take the Town’s health insurance but if she did the Town would be paying about $8,700 more for this employee. Motion to increase Collector and Treasurer’s salary to $42,500 effective July 1, 2019, unanimously approved.

Salary Discussion-Suggestion to apply a Town-wide policy for incoming/newly hired employees to have the ability to review salary options both with and without town health insurance. Idea to task a group of volunteers to examine town-wide salaries prior to Town Meeting in light of the 2019 ATM warrant article with salary increases. Would the Personnel Board be willing to come back and work on this task even though all of the members left mid-term? Consensus to hire a professional consultant to perform a salary study for competitiveness and fairness. HCOG will be contacted first for any assistance or resource suggestions they can offer.

**Annual Town Meeting Articles Received to Date**

Citizen Petitions-Two brought forward by Kristen DeBoer regarding rezoning the Village Center with language changes. Neighbors in outer zoned district were not willing to accept the rezoning articles the Planning Board is presenting at the Annual Town Meeting. Neighborhood District neighbors have signed the petitions. The Board of Selectmen will decide at 3/20/19 meeting to include any/all petitions received by the deadline on 3/7/19 at 5pm for inclusion on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

Warrant Articles-Energy Committee will put forward article to cover the balance of the new HVAC unit for the Community Building. Grant maximum applied for is $250,000. Selectman Pearson will speak with John Trickey about a HVAC placeholder for $300k from Capital Planning. Green Communities grant will be finished soon for the Board of Selectmen to sign. EV Charging Stations will not be on the warrant for Town Meeting. Police Dept has three articles so far, Fire Dept has one, Highway Dept has seven, Coll/Treas has one for VADAR, and Board of Selectmen have three so far; change the Town Clerk position from appointed to elected and two dog articles. The Board has the ability to pull any article from the warrant up until the warrant is finalized. Motion to include act establishing Town Clerk as appointed, unanimously approved. Invitation to be sent to Kathy Martell to attend 3/27/19 meeting at 5:30pm in the Rhodes Building to discuss the Town Clerk article.

**Personnel Workload Distribution**

Motion to increase pay for Administrative Assistant to $22k/hour, unanimously approved.

**Dog Hearing for Written Complaints Received 7:30pm**

1.Selectman Pearson opened the dog hearing at 7:30pm.

2.Chief Thomann read the letter that was sent to the offending dog’s family from the Board of Selectmen.

3.Dog Officer reported complaints from Country Lane neighbor, Dean Brown, who filed reports and pictures with the Police Department. Nancy Long spoke with the Wasserman/Plotkin family to find a resolution and Ms. Wasserman indicated a dog trainer was hired.

4.Police Department’s involvement included a discussion with Ms. Wasserman and Mr. Plotkin who also indicated that a dog trainer had been hired and that they had attached a bell to Ellie’s dog’s collar.

5.No complainants to testify.

6.Wasserman/Plotkin’s testimony. Dean Brown has child in early 20s living at 7 Country Lane as well as a large dog. Dean Brown’s wife contacted Ms. Wasserman through Facebook. Ms. Wasserman sent back a message to help remediate the situation with the dog but no response back from Mr. Brown. Ms. Wasserman indicated the dog’s bell had gone missing off her collar after two encounters with the Browns. Dog trainer Susan Miller was hired by the Wasserman/Plotkin family. There have been bears in the neighborhood who could have knocked over compost, garbage, etc. Ms. Wasserman admits that her other dog, Suki, gets loose but she helps to retrieve. Mr. Brown has a dog that continuously barks and disturbs the neighbors who will not walk near their end of the Lane. Ms. Wasserman wants a friendly neighbor and dog relationship. Mr. Brown’s cat frequents the Plotkin/Wasserman yard while Ms. Wasserman’s dog chases their cats. Ms. Wasserman has moved her recycling into their shed, but Mr. Brown leaves out his trash. The offending dog, Ellie, is very friendly and is let off lease 1-2 times per week but usually returns back on her own property. Other neighbors in the past had chickens and Ellie used to chase them while frequenting other neighbors’ properties trespassing.

7. Board of Selectmen will decide and notify within 7 days. Hearing closed. Ms. Wasserman & Mr. Plotkin exited the meeting.

Motion make and unanimously approved that a letter will be drafted to the Wasserman/Plotkin family requiring their dog Ellie to be on a leash going forward. No complaints were received to date about the Brown’s dog barking/noise from anyone in the neighborhood. There were 3 documented letters from the Dog Officer to the Wasserman/Plotkin family for Ellie in regards to excess fines for running at large. The unpaid fines will also be included in the letter demanding payment.

**Town Officials-**none.

**Public Comment**-none.

**Liaison Reports**

Highway; Selectman Ribeiro; Spoke with Rick about siding the Rhodes Building. The building is set to be painted. CPA funds may not be used for maintenance. Ongoing work-storm repairs, plow trouble, patching, fixing/sanding ice flows. Mutual Aid pack information from Chief Thomann to share with Selectman Ribeiro. Letter to be drafted to Eversource about unresolved lighting issues with World Energy and their inability to return phone calls to the town; consult with Rick and Stan.

Town Offices; Selectman Agoglia; personnel & salary discussions earlier in the meeting.

Fire Department; Selectman Pearson; none.

Police Department; Selectman Pearson; updates from Chief Thomann earlier in the meeting.

Finance Committee; Selectman Ribeiro; Budget hearings concluded. Identified need for review of town wages. John has put a placeholder for the new HVAC system. Capital items for School cost around $11,000. Middle School roof will be put in budget but the track will be put off. Tree Warden asked for salary increase.

Library; Selectman Pearson; Gayle Barton attended the Roundtable meeting.

Elementary School; Selectman Ribeiro; School Committee meeting on 3/5/19 during Roundtable meeting.

Regional School; Selectman Agoglia; 4-Town meeting on 3/2/19 with presentation from small working group and review of 12 interactions of Regional assessment formula. Five-year projections: major changes to Chapter 70 funding which will hurt the district with declining enrollment. Chapter 70 was discussed at the January MMA Conference in Boston. Future projections show Pelham’s contribution will be about $35,238 less than what it is this year. Pelham’s enrollment is decreasing at a slower rate than other towns (Leverett, Shutesbury, Amherst) with exorbitant transportation costs.

Two topics focused on during discussion, 1.) Moving the 6th grade classes from all 4 towns to the Amherst Middle School and the overall impact, and 2.) Consolidating grades 7-9 into the Amherst High School, which has the capacity to hold grades 7-12, and completely vacating the Middle School for other uses. The Board of Selectmen would like to draft a letter to Representatives about negative affects to Pelham’s budget and the Chapter 70 funding. Dr Morris’s office will be consulted for timeline, content including text, suggestions of what may have the biggest impact, and opportunities for advocacy. Idea to include letters written by school children about Pelham School to Representatives.

Regional School District Planning Committee; Selectman Agoglia; Discussion about assessments; appears there are ample incentives for Pelham to regionalize and potential incentives for savings related to transportation costs. It looks as if funding will stabilize for Pelham if regionalize with Amherst. Discussion early on of town becoming part of Amherst and Pelham School closing, but now the discussion focuses on continuing on with Pelham School preserving this small-town school. Engagement date with the Pelham Board of Selectmen is April 13.

**Minutes**

Motion to accept minutes from 2/26/19 as amended, unanimously approved.

**Old Business**

MMA-Legislative breakfast on 3/29/19 at Athol Public Library; Selectman Agoglia will attend.

**Time Reserved for Topics the Chair Did Not Reasonably Anticipate-**none.

**Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn, unanimously approved at 8:46pm.

**Documents Examined**

Eversource pole hearing request, dog hearing letter to Wasserman/Plotkin family and dog hearing order document, Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles & Citizen Petitions received to date.

Respectfully submitted, Susannah Carey