

**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2019  
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**

**Present:** Ed Boscher, Gail Gramarossa, Jen D. Turner, Brenda Q. Aldrich

**Absent:** Nicholas O'Connor

**Call to Order:** Chairman O'Connor called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2) Sign Documents:**

- a) Warrant #2019 was signed for \$609,633.80 that brings the fiscal year-to-date total to \$26,016,136.19.
- b) Routine documents
- c) Approval of Minutes: Ms. Turner moved the Board accept the minutes October 28, 2019. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 3 – yes, 1 – abstain (Boscher).

**3) Additions to the Agenda:** None.

**4) Appearances Before the Board:** None.

**5) Discussion/Action Items:**

- a. Surplus Council on Aging 2010 Ford Van: Ms. Gramarossa presented the details to the Board. The Council on Aging is recommending the Board surplus their 2010 Ford Van. The 2010 van has been replaced with a new 2019 model. There was a lot of volunteer fundraising in order to purchase this vehicle. Ms. Gramarossa moved the Board surplus the Council on Aging 2010 Ford Van. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Mr. Boscher also added that the council on aging did a phenomenal job fund raising. Motion passes 4 – 0.
- b. Endorse Council on Aging FY2020 Formula Grant: Ms. Gramarossa presented the details to the Board. The Council on Aging is seeking the Board's endorsement on their FY2020 formula grant for \$28,920. It is used to offset some budgetary expenses for a number of their programs. Ms. Gramarossa moved the Board authorize the Chairman of the Board to endorse the Council on Aging FY2020 Formula Grant. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 4 – 0.
- c. Accept Resignation from Town Common Lighting Committee Member: Ms. Turner presented the details to the Board. Jim Phaneuf has submitted his resignation from the Town Common Lighting Committee. The committee is down to one member with this resignation. She doesn't know when the Board can talk about this committee. Ms. Aldrich commented that she noticed on social media that the cultural council posted the new lights that are going up and questioned if they could absorb this committee. Ms. Turner commented that she had a discussion with Steve Williams at the DPW and he felt that maybe this is something that should be given to the DPW. The cultural council would be the

fundraising arm of the lights. She questioned if Mr. Williams really wants to do it or if the Board should question him about it. Mr. Boscher commented that he didn't think he would have mentioned it if he didn't mean it. Ms. Gramarossa thinks it makes sense. At one time, the Town Lighting Committee wanted to expand to more than just holiday lighting. They wanted to look at the overall wiring of the town common. Mr. Williams has been involved with the holiday lighting with both the town common lighting committee and the cultural council. Mr. Boscher would like to have Mr. Williams come to a board meeting to have a more in-depth conversation about it.

The Board thanked Mr. Phaneuf for his time and support to the community. A letter will be sent to Mr. Phaneuf acknowledging his resignation.

Mr. Boscher thinks that the town common lighting and whether it's a committee or the Winter Light Nights it is all closely aligned. He would like the input from Mr. Williams to see what he thinks and if there is a better way to handle it. He would like to see it continue as he enjoys driving through town and seeing it lit up. Mr. Boscher asked the town administrator to have a conversation with the director of public works regarding the lighting. Mr. Brougham commented that they typically try to have the lights in position the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Ms. Turner commented that the cultural council has raised some money so there will be some additional holiday lights.

- d. Zone Change Application – Snow, 10 Lamson Avenue – Assessors Map 228, Lot 18: Ms. Turner presented the details to the Board. The application is for a zone change. They are looking to change the current zone from general business to primary agriculture. The change would be for 12.4 acres of their property.

Mr. Boscher asked Mr. Brougham if he knew any of the history for this property as the surrounding zones are primary agriculture but the one in question is general business. He questioned if it had been primary agriculture in the past and changed to general business. Mr. Brougham responded that it had been many years ago. Mr. Brougham presented the background of this property to the board of selectmen. He indicated that although not stated on the application that the property could be divided up into house lots.

Mr. Boscher commented that there would be multiple hearings for residents to speak up if there are concerns. The zone change will be remanded back to the Planning Board for their review.

- e. Update on Volunteer Fair: Ms. Turner presented details. She met with Ms. Gramarossa and Ms. Aldrich to talk about a volunteer fair. They have the blessing of the cultural council to have a table at the Artisan Fair on November 30<sup>th</sup> from noon to 5:00 p.m. They decided to put together a list of committees that they will try to reach out to for content regarding the committees so they have it available to give to anyone who may be interested in volunteering. The three of them will staff the booth at the Artisan Fair. Ms. Aldrich mentioned it is not just for

volunteering but there will be information for people who might want to run for an elected position in town. They want to have a table set up in the auditorium of the high school with this information during town meeting.

Mr. Boscher feels the volunteers in town are phenomenal but we need more people to volunteer.

It was agreed that Ms. Aldrich, Ms. Gramarossa and Ms. Turner would meet again on November 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 p.m., prior to the Board of Selectmen meeting.

- f. Upcoming FY2021 Budget Season Discussion: Mr. Boscher presented the details to the Board. The town's budget has grown to just over \$50,000,000 and he believes it's a good idea to give budgets that size multiple looks. He handed out pages from the finance committee handbook that is a calendar of how a typical budget season might progress. He is looking forward to starting some new processes this season as previously discussed with the finance committee and all interested parties. At the end of the season, they can reassess and figure out what worked and what didn't.

In the month of November, they will be reviewing department budgets and submitting budget requests. He is well aware that the town does not have final numbers to work with in advance of town meeting. After talking with different department heads, he does think that they have ideas of what they would like to accomplish this up coming year. Those discussions should begin in the month of December. He questioned if the Board still felt this is the right way to proceed.

Ms. Gramarossa commented that she recently had a conversation with the council on aging and they were very happy with starting the budget process early. They feel it will give them more time to think about their programing and staffing but also to think about any capital requests they may have.

Mr. Boscher proposed the Board reaches out to the different departments that they are liaisons with and get a feel for what is going on. He suggested the board members get their thoughts together and get a document together. Everything should be sent to the town administrator to have the office staff put it together. It cannot be sent to each board member due to violating the open meeting law.

Mr. Boscher questioned the town administrator to see if he saw any glaring problems with beginning the budget season this way. Mr. Brougham confirmed there are no revenue numbers. He assured Mr. Boscher that every department wants more but it is always a balancing act to get the most out of any extra money that may be available for the departments. It will have to be decided what is a priority and what isn't and if the request is significant, enough to warrant a hard look to say the town really needs to bolster the need at the cost of another program what will that program be. It is not an easy process. He asked to be given a clear directive. Mr. Brougham questioned if Mr. Boscher is looking for level-service budget proposals with capital or new requests identified on a separate sheet as

done in the past Mr. Boscher commented that he would like level service budgets with not only capital but also even program requests on a separate sheet. It would include new FTE requests. He would also like to see where a department had a FTE that left but the position wasn't filled this year but the department expects to fill it next year.

Ms. Turner questioned when the year closes. She was told the fiscal year closes on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the year. It was confirmed that the Board could see how the budgets close out at the end of the year.

Ms. Gramarossa had one other thought that she mentioned to the council on aging and a couple of other groups of hers that she might find it helpful to get an idea of what grants they currently have that might not be in the next budget or grants that they may be applying for next year. Mr. Boscher wanted to be clear that the grants will not impact the budgets but the Board wants to know what may or may not be available. He questioned the town administrator on where the money is paid into for all the grants. Is the money paid to the Town of Belchertown and then the accounting department puts the money in the correct department. He responded that some of the monies go to departments, some goes to projects. They are all with different intentions but it all comes to the town.

Ms. Aldrich commented that retirements are always huge and would like to know what the Board is looking at for retirements in the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Brougham commented that there is one retirement in the next month. The next one that he is aware of will be in June of 2021.

Mr. Boscher will email the town administrator about a budget starting process place. What do the books look like when they close, FTE's in departments and the grants?

g. Miscellaneous Matters: None.

**6) Town Administrator's Report:**

- As has been talked about several times now, Mr. Janke will be retiring at the end of November. The search committee is currently interviewing five candidates. He expects the committee to finish their interviews tonight and should have a short list tomorrow morning for the selectmen to interview on November 15<sup>th</sup>.
- He attended the High Peaks community outreach on Friday evening. Mr. Beaudette from the Planning Board was also present. There were consistent questions about those that may be impacted with potential noise from the fans or odors from the cultivation process. He believes that High Peaks satisfactory addressed the concerns. High Peaks has a signed host agreement and they have satisfied the Cannabis Control Commission requirement for the community outreach. They should be filing for their special permit with the Planning Board very soon.

Mr. Boscher mentioned that there had been an agenda item for the American Cannabis Company tonight and they are not present for at least the second time. He questioned if they offered any reason for the cancellation. Mr. Brougham commented that there are three different personalities involved in this a realtor, the business owners and the legal team. The first time they cancelled, it was because the realtor indicated they were not ready. After the first community outreach meeting they were missing a lot of essential criteria. Based on that meeting he spoke with the realtor and she indicated they were not ready to come in. At the end of last week, he spoke with their attorney who tried to work with him to negotiate the terms of their host agreement for inclusion on the agenda. The office has to post agendas on Thursday. He felt that there just wasn't time to get the host agreement done. He told the attorney he wanted to speak with one of the owners of the business, as there are many iterations of their intent.

Since that conversation, he has spent time reviewing how, when and for what purpose the common was donated to the town. It clearly states in the documents that the common was to remain for public use only. In further researching the meaning of a common, in his opinion, there is enough information to say that the Belchertown Town Common is a park. The marijuana bylaw disallows a cannabis facility within 500 ft. of a park or playground. He believes it is a strong argument and is going to ask the selectmen to take a strong stand on that. Mr. Boscher wanted to hold all discussion regarding this topic until it is on a future agenda.

- 7) **Review of Weekly Mail:** Mr. Boscher pulled out the piece of mail from massDOT regarding the safety concerns at Federal and Allen Streets. massDOT is putting most of the responsibility on Belchertown because of Allen Street and the slopes on it. The did offer a few suggestions on the feasibility of some short-term measures which included a flashing warning light or a dynamic advanced intersection warning system that would provide a warning to the thru driver that there is a vehicle on the crossroad that may enter the intersection. Mr. Brougham will speak with Steve Williams regarding this information and ask for his comments. The slope coming down Allen Street isn't all Belchertown's responsibility. There is an easement for the State that goes back quite a ways.

8) **Individual Board Members' Reports:**

Ms. Aldrich: She had several questions for the town administrator. She mentioned the windstorm from Thursday into Friday morning that caused the delay in the start of school. She questioned if it was an expensive storm due to all the trees down. Mr. Brougham commented that it was more debris than trees. The big outage on North Washington Street was caused by a big pine tree between Cedar Glen and Canal Drive. It was not a diseased or dead tree.

She mentioned that they are still doing the smoke testing of the sewer pipes. She had requested robo calls go out and they have not. She wants to know if it's too late to get them out.

Ms. Gramarossa: Another reminder that Solarize Mass program is having another meet the installer this Thursday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. There is also a video out on the solarize Belchertown website regarding the program.

A large study funded at the federal level a grant is going to the Boston Medical Center to look at reducing the rates of overdose deaths in 16 communities. It is the Healing Community Study and Belchertown is one of the towns that will be in this study. It is a four year funded study. It will mean additional resources to the town. Training around health care providers and law enforcement on overdose prevention and post overdose services.

She reminded everyone that the Board will not be meeting on Veterans' Day but invited everyone to join in the Veterans' Day activities.

Ms. Turner: November 30<sup>th</sup> is the Winter Night Light event for the cultural council. The last day to purchase merchandise (they have mugs, long sleeve shirt and a blanket) is tonight. It is through Sound Scape and the merchandise looks amazing. On Friday, she and Doug Albertson, the town planner, had a phone call with Laurie Tanner of PVPC to discuss technical assistance and how we can look at our economic development in town. They came up with a short time line. We can get up to 15 hours of technical assistance. They sent her our master plan to review and do an analysis. The next step is to apply for DLTA funding.

She met with members from the South Hadley Chamber of Commerce today to see how they work. Belchertown is a member of the Quaboag Valley CDC but not of the Amherst Chamber of Commerce. One suggestion was to not form a full chamber here in town but have some businesses get together and put together their own business assistance program.

Following that meeting, she went to the Quaboag Valley CDC and met with the Quabbin Transportation Council and they talked about the Quaboag Connector that we are a part of. She then met with the director of the Quaboag Valley CDC to pick her brain.

Mr. Boscher: He and the town administrator meet every week that cover an incredible amount of topics. He thanked the town administrator for getting so many of the little things done.

Tennis courts came down last week. He heard back from Steve Williams today and the tennis courts themselves tested positive for some inherent metals. It is not an easy project any longer. We now have to figure out how to remove the tennis courts and where to dispose of them.

Ms. Aldrich mentioned that the Pride Station is coming along. She questioned if there was a date for the opening. Mr. Brougham does not have a date but thinks it will be before the end of the year.

Mr. Brougham received an email from National Grid informing us that both electricity distribution and supply rates changed effective November 1<sup>st</sup>. It does not affect the town because we buy futures and are locked in to our rate. In total, the typical bill of a residential electric customer using 600 kW will increase by \$21.00. It represents a 15.2% increase. Residents may think about the Mass solarize program if they hear this. Ms. Gramarossa commented that the more people who sign up for the program the lower the cost.

- 9) **Questions from the Press:** Lew Louraine from *BCTV* commented that they will be going live for the solarize meeting on Thursday. They will also be going live on the 11<sup>th</sup> at the high school for the Veterans' Day event. He also commented that if the selectmen want to use the auditorium on the 15<sup>th</sup> for the interviews for the Veterans' Agent position they can go live with the interviews. The selectmen agreed to hold the interviews on the 15<sup>th</sup> in the auditorium.


- 10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: 11/25/19


Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

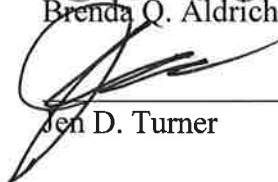
Endorsed by a majority:

  
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Ed Boscher, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gail Gramarossa

(absent)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicholas O'Connor

  
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Brenda Q. Aldrich

  
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Jen D. Turner