

**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 2, 2020  
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**



**Present:** Ed Boscher, Gail Gramarossa, Jen D. Turner, Brenda Q. Aldrich, Nicholas O'Connor

**Call to Order:** Chairman Boscher called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**2) Sign Documents:**

- a) Warrant #2036 was signed for \$1,247,933.93 bringing the fiscal year to date total to \$ 48,542,403.19.
- b) Routine documents
- c) Approval of Minutes: Ms. Turner moved the Board accept the minutes of January 27, 2020. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 4 – 1 abstain (O'Connor). Ms. Turner moved the Board accept the minutes of February 10, 2020. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

**3) Additions to the Agenda:**

**4) Appearances Before the Board:**

- 7:20 p.m. Belchertown Cultural Alliance: They came before the Board to give an update on the process of where they are in the process and what they are doing to move forward.

They are currently working on their feasibility study as they received the grant from Mass Development. They are working with their architect and business consultant on the study. They are hoping to schedule another appearance before the board right after town meeting in May at which time they will have everything finalized.

They are actively researching new grants. They need to start replacing windows, doors and remediate asbestos in the main level of 6 Berkshire Avenue to make the building functional. They are running into the issue of not having anything formally in writing stating the Belchertown Cultural Alliance has a lease or some sort of similar document. They have the letter of support from the Board which has been great for the grant but for the larger grants they will need to apply for to get these things done they require solid agreements. The grant sources don't want to give out money and then find the building is being sold. They are not sure what the formal document needs to look like but it is something they will need. It was asked if they need that document tomorrow or next year. The grants they are looking at will open in the next 9 to 12 months and at that time they will need something in place in order to apply for them. They mentioned the grants that they are looking to apply for. They are looking for reassurance that next year the

building will not be sold. They are also speaking with Gary Ewing of Great Threads to keep that partnership going and potentially having him be associated with it. He loves the building and has taken such good care of it.

Mr. Boscher questioned what happens if everything moves forward with a lease, they get the grants but then things don't work out and grant money gets sunk in the building they are understanding that money is a sunk cost. They were in agreement.

Ms. Gramarossa questioned what the Alliance is looking for as far as an agreement goes – what stipulations will work for their vision. They are looking for a long term lease.

Ms. Turner asked the Alliance members if they wanted to talk about their vision outside of building #6. They are interested in saving all of Berkshire row. This includes buildings #6 and 8 (former Meadow School) and the administration building. The Tadgell school building has also come across their radar as has 55 Main Street. Their main vision is to take these underutilized spaces in town and make them community focused. They will do community outreach to see what the town wants. They be focusing in on drawing in businesses to these areas by them doing the hard work up front and then finding the businesses that want to partner with them once they see how it can look.

Mr. O'Connor remarked that his understanding is that the businesses would offset the cost of the operations. There are operational costs to stay in these buildings and that the businesses or groups will be footing the bill for operating the building. He was told the feasibility study will give them their bare minimum operating cost as to how much that building will truly need to be run. They have had a lot of interest in some of the office spaces that are in there. They need to be made safe and up to code before that can happen. The rents will help maintain the building(s).

The town administrator commented we need to know how long the operator of Great Threads plans on operating in the Berkshire Ave. building and conceptually what happens when he decides to retire or sell the business. He will be presenting the new lease to the tenant which will most likely be two years with the option for another two years. In his discussions with Mr. Ewing he has been agreeable to working with the Cultural Alliance. He feels that minimally the Berkshire building should stay in the town's ownership.

Mr. Boscher questioned if the Cultural Alliance is willing to pick up the expenses of running the Berkshire building when the time comes that Great Threads is out of there. He was told the Alliance would look for a succession with the established business there. There is some preliminary interest in his business. The town's lease with Great Threads allows him to sub-lease to the Cultural Alliance. The Alliance needs language in the sub-lease that allows for a longer period of time

then his two year lease with the town. They would like it to be a sub-lease with the potential for when he decides to retire the conversation would be that they would be given the lease on the building.

Mr. Brougham informed the board that the Tadgell building is under the authority of the school department. At some point in time the school department may surplus the building back to the town. The building needs a lot of updates.

Ms. Gramarossa mentioned having an open community meeting when they are ready to present the results of the feasibility study.

**5) Discussion/Action Items:**

- a. Award Bid #2020-03 – Sale of Town Owned Vehicles: Mr. Brougham presented the details to the Board. The bid was advertised as is or parts only condition. There were three bidders and the recommendations are as follows:
- 2010 For Van to Dakota Richards, 28 Parish Hill Road, Granby, MA for a high bid of \$1,559.00;
  - 1983 GMC 7000 Series Fire Pumper to P&T Enterprises, 147 Bay Road, Belchertown, MA for a high bid of \$1,569.00;
  - 1995 4000 LP Series Fire Rescue Truck to P&T Enterprises, 147 Bay Road, Belchertown, MA for a high bid of \$2,669.00.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board accept the bid recommendations on the three vehicles as presented. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- b. Appointment of Library Technician: Mr. Boscher presented the details to the Board. Per the recommendation of Sheila McCormick, Library Director, Mr. Boscher moved to appoint Ruthann Sterling to the position of library technician, effective March 31, 2020. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- c. Right of First Refusal – Sullivan, Assessors Map 276, Lot 19, North Liberty Street: Ms. Turner presented the details. The Sullivan's want to take a half-acre out of Chapter 61 and give it to another family member for the purpose of constructing an in-ground pool. Both the conservation commission and the planning board are recommending the board not exercise their right of first refusal.

Mr. O'Connor moved the Board not exercise its right of first refusal on the Sullivan property, Assessors Map 276, Lot 19, North Liberty Street. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- d. Review ZBA Special Permit Application – Moriarty Property, Assessors Map 243, Parcel 16.01, Jackson Street: Ms. Turner presented the details. The property owner is looking to build a two family duplex on the property. The lot has access to public water and sewer. The director of public works rejected the proposed driveway layout.

Mr. Brougham explained where the lot is on Jackson Street. It is an open gravel area. The owner of the property has carved out a half-acre lot and the intent is to

allow the current owner to construct a duplex. The application does meet all the set-backs. There are two other residences within that lot that use that as their primary access. The proposed driveway is 40 ft. wide which is well over what is allowed and the public works director has already reported that he will not accept that driveway. It was his understanding that the old building that sits on the lot was supposed to be removed and that has not happened and if the ZBA allows the permit it will cut off access to that building. His recommendation is that whoever reviews the plan should establish that the lot is current with what was approved when the lot was originally approved. If the building was supposed to be demolished why hasn't it been? Mr. O'Connor wants the abutters to be notified even if they are not local – the owner of the building does not live in town.

The town administrator will send a letter for the board of selectmen to the zoning enforcement officer and town planner to make sure the building is taken down if it is supposed to be before a permit will be issued. The letter will also address the fact that the driveway is not compliant and the DPW director will not approve it.

- e. Review ZBA Variance Application – Cote, 586 George Hannum Road: Ms. Turner presented the details. The homeowner is seeking a variance in order to build a garage. Mr. Brougham provided additional information regarding the property. It makes sense to build the garage where they are requesting and as long as the abutter's have no concerns.

Mr. O'Connor questioned if this was more than just a garage as it looks like more space than just a garage. The plans just show it as a garage. The letter back to the ZBA asks if it is limited to just a garage or if it includes living space as well.

- f. Discuss Splash Park Funding: Mr. O'Connor reviewed the background of the State funding that was to go to the splash park. Funds have been spent on removal of the condemned tennis courts. There is approximately \$50,000 of that money remaining.

He suggested following up with a discussion at the next recreation committee meeting towards what we use the remaining funds for. He feels we need to add town funding so we can apply for future grants. He feels the recreation department needs to install basketball courts. His recommendation is that the town goes forward with developing something in that area.

He recommends taking the \$50,000 and discuss it with the recreation committee. He feels the town will need to find some money in our budget to supplement it. We should update the bathrooms that are there and get the basketball courts in. The town needs to show progress in order to continue receiving money for these projects. All Board members were in agreement.

Mr. Boscher feels the recreation department needs two basketball courts if they want to have summer programs.

- g. Review Lis of Submitted Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles: Mr. Boscher questioned if the lease/purchase fire department was a place holder as it seems

vague. The town administrator responded we had recently received a compression device that needs to be re-leased every year or it could be to purchase some defibrillators.

Mr. O'Connor suggested adding a fifth warrant article to the list as a place holder if necessary. This would be to supplement funding for the basketball courts they just spoke about. The board was in agreement.

h. Miscellaneous Matters:

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

- Senator Lesser will be visiting with the Board on Monday evening. The Senator's Office has requested a list of talking points. As a minimum he will be asking for funding for all the trees that have been affected by the gypsy moths. He has also informed the superintendent of schools in case they have something to talk about.
- The CDBG contract for the Sportshaven project arrived today. It seems to be a rather straight forward contract. He will ask the board to endorse it next week.
- Tomorrow morning the tax abatement committee is meeting to further discuss the taxes that will be forgiven by the town. The Tenant's Association is to come and be prepared with some offer. The town can forgive up to 100% of the interest but not greater than 75% of the tax arrears. The total number is around \$300,000 with \$200,000 closer to interest and the remaining for taxes. It will be a consideration of the court and likely DCHD before the transfer of ownership.
- With all the concern about the corona virus he solidified a meeting for 8:30 on Wednesday morning with Judy Metcalf, Director of Quabbin Health Services. He invited the school department, school nurses, our community nurse, town departments that could be potentially exposed.

7) **Review of Weekly Mail:** Mr. Brougham mentioned a letter from a resident banning single use plastic bags in Belchertown. Ms. Aldrich asked if the citizen could make it a citizen petition for the ATM. Mr. Brougham will place it on the board's agenda in two weeks. Ms. Gramarossa also commented that some communities have done it through their board of health.

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

Ms. Aldrich: Reminded everyone tomorrow is the primary. Get out and vote.

Ms. Gramarossa: She will also be at the tax abatement committee meeting tomorrow. She will also attend the meeting on Wednesday morning regarding the corona virus.

Mr. Boscher: It's been a really busy time of the year for the board. There are more budget meetings this week. The board also met this past Saturday. He thanked everyone for their efforts.

9) **Questions from the Press:** Steve Hill from *The Sentinel* questioned the amount of money that the town had received from the state for the splash park area. He was told we received \$75,000. He also questioned if there had been RFP's issued on the

buildings on Berkshire Avenue in the past. He was told there had been. Great Threads is operating on a lease that was done on a RFP. Meadow School has had very little interest. It requires a great deal of renovation.

**10) Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator


Board approved/endorsed: 3/9/20

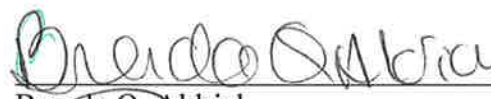
Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

  
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Ed Boscher, Chairman

  
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Gail Gramarossa

  
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Nicholas O'Connor

  
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Brenda Q. Aldrich

  
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Jen D. Turner