

**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, JANUARY 23, 2017  
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**

**Present:** George D. Archible, Nicholas O'Connor, William R. Barnett, Ronald E. Aponte

**Absent:** Brenda Q. Aldrich

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

**2) Sign Documents:**

- a) Warrant #1730 was signed for \$1,882,374.09.
- b) Routine documents
- c) Approval of Minutes: Mr. O'Connor moved the Board accept the executive session minutes of October 24, 2016. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 4 – 0. Mr. O'Connor moved to accept the minutes of January 9, 2017. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 4 – 0.

**3) Additions to the Agenda:**

**4) Appearances Before the Board:**

- 7:35 p.m. – Public Hearing to Adopt the Belchertown Hazard Mitigation Plan: Mr. O'Connor presented the details. He read the certificate. Steve Williams, Director of Public Works, explained that the department heads worked with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to prepare this document. It is an update of the previous version and addresses natural disasters.

Mr. Brougham stated that Fire Chief Bock is the Town's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and was unable to attend this evening but strongly encourages endorsement of the plan. He further stated that one of the benefits in accepting the plan, is in the event of a disaster, having the plan on file it makes the town eligible for any disaster relief immediately as opposed to having to go through an application process. Mr. O'Connor moved to adopt the hazard mitigation as proposed. Seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 4 – 0.

- 8:40 p.m. – Selectman Nick O'Connor and Revenue Committee Members – Discussion: Mr. O'Connor provided an overview of the Revenue Committee work to date. They focused on capital, needs budget and level service. They addressed level service and the revenue gap.

He went through the presentation explaining that the group put together a list of terms and definitions. He presented the goals that the Revenue Committee had. They collected financial estimates for the expected FY18 revenue and level service budget numbers from the school and town. They determined the amount of a deficit for the FY18 budget using these estimates. The needs budget and capital are outside the scope of this exercise. The needs budget is significant.

Mr. O'Connor reviewed the FY18 projected tax levy. Mr. Aponte questioned Jay Whelihan; Director of Assessments if this included any assessments from the assisted living facility that will break ground this spring. He was told it would not. Mr. O'Connor then went through the breakdown of the estimated revenue. There is a gap of roughly \$979,293.00 between the town and school level service budgets and the estimated revenue. This is based on an annual tax levy increase of 2.5%.

In summary to close the gap revenue can be increased with an override; increase business tax rate or receive additional state aid. The other thing that can be done is to reduce expenses with cutbacks on services and/or full time employees; eliminate non-contract increases; or receive relief from mandates which is not expected to happen.

He indicated there are many things for the board to talk about. Do mandates need to be placed into the needs budget, do we need to do the storm water or are we going to be incurred with other expenses if we don't do that. These things will need to be factored in during the budget process.

Mr. Aponte thanked the committee for their work. He stated that there are many variables that will affect the outcome of the budget. He would like to see a comparison with towns in the contiguous area such as Granby, Ware and Monson.

Steve Williams, Director of Public Works questioned what demographics were used to select the communities because he felt pulling Granby and Ware into the comparison was just as surprising as using Longmeadow and West Springfield. He indicated they don't have the population or road mileage, student population that Belchertown has. Mr. O'Connor indicated a committee member had provided the information. Mr. O'Connor stated that comparison aside the bottom line is the town's budget is almost a million dollars short. Mr. Williams feels the demographics for comparison should be comparable to Belchertown's demographics.

Mr. O'Connor brought up free cash. He stated that if we recognize we have this deficit and it remains as is and we are not holding a special town meeting mid-year for allocation of free cash we should not allocate any free cash for FY17 but to apply it to FY18. We should carry forward that cash into FY18 to reduce that deficit. Mr. Aponte stated he would agree with that. Mr. O'Connor also feels that as we know we are going to be a million dollars short and we pay \$550,000 back to stabilization (assuming that is what we get) only to borrow it again in the upcoming budget cycle lets hold onto it until the budget has been completed. He is more concerned with the deficit. He doesn't believe paying back the stabilization fund with a deficit is the more fiscally responsible thing to do. The Board discussed this in further detail.

\*\*Bctv operator Keith Bettencourt spoke as a citizen. He feels that the Board seems to be taking on the responsibility of deciding of what the town's people want and its way beyond what they should be doing. He feels it is not the board's decision but the town's decision. He further stated the board's job is to make a

very clear presentation and then let the people decide. Another individual in the audience agreed with him. She feels the needs are not just needs but growth.

Mr. Brougham stated that he wanted to make a point. In a business the board of directors determines how much capital outlay will be and they have the benefit of a product or service that can be sold to recover. The town is limited to the proposition 2 ½ increase and we have a big board of directors in Boston and another in Washington that do not listen. As much as the town does to control finances but when you have annual mandates that cost an estimated \$300,000 to \$500,000 (storm water mandate) year one that is our town's entire year's growth. The town loses ground and every year there is a mandate dropped on the town. The towns can't seem to get the legislators to hear the pleas to stop with unfunded mandates. He feels the biggest obstacle the town faces are the state and federal mandates.

**5) Discussion/Action Items:**

- a. Appointment of Full-Time Police Dispatcher: Mr. Aponte presented the details to the Board. Per the recommendation of Chief Pronovost, Mr. Aponte moved to appoint Andrew Ronnau to the position of Full-Time Police Dispatcher. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 4 – 0.
- b. Accept Auxiliary Officer Resignation: Mr. Aponte presented the details to the Board. Auxiliary Office Matthew Niles resigned effective January 17, 2017 to pursue his career with another police agency. A letter will be sent to Mr. Niles acknowledging his resignation and thanking him for his services to the Town.
- c. Acknowledge Retirement Letter from Senior Center Custodian: Mr. O'Connor presented the details to the Board. Michael Lastowski will be retiring as the custodian at the Senior Center. His last day of work will be March 1, 2017. A letter will be sent to Mr. Lastowski acknowledging his retirement and thanking him for his many years of service to the Town.
- d. Call Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting; Set Deadlines for Submittal of Warrant Articles: Gary Brougham, Town Administrator presented the details to the Board. Mr. Aponte moved to call the Special Town Meeting for Monday, May 8, 2017 at 7:00 pm at Belchertown High School. The deadline to submit warrant articles is 4:00 pm on Wednesday, March 15, 2017 and the warrant needs to be posted by Monday, April 24, 2017. He also moved to call the Annual Town Meeting for Monday, May 8, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at Belchertown High School. The deadline to submit warrant articles is 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 22, 2017. The warrant needs to be posted by Monday, May 1, 2017. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 4 – 0.
- e. Miscellaneous Matters: None.

**6) Town Administrator's Report:** None.

**7) Review of Weekly Mail:** Mail reviewed no discussion.

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

Mr. Barnett: the One people Pot Luck event sponsored by the CAN group was a great event. Everyone felt welcome.

- 9) **Questions from the Press:** Jim Russell from the *Republican* questioned if free cash had been certified. He was told it has not been. He questioned if the tax rate has been set and it was confirmed that it has been set.

\*\* Dan Alexander, President of the Belchertown Day School stated he received a letter and was asked to provide an update. He indicated that the Day School will be out of the town's building by the deadline which is the end of March. They will be moving into the soon to be former Jitterbugs space on State Street. They are hoping to eventually build on the former Belchertown State School property. They are in the purchase and sales agreement stage.

They are applying for a million dollar grant with the early education school teaching and he asked the selectmen or the town administrator to write a letter of support. Mr. Aponte thinks it would be a good idea for the day school to do a presentation either to the selectmen or to the EDIC so that there is a better idea of what the plans are.

- 10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: FEB. 13, 2017

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

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George D. Archible, Chairman

Ronald E. Aponte  
Ronald E. Aponte

Nicholas O'Connor  
Nicholas O'Connor

(absent)

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Brenda Q. Aldrich

William R. Barnett  
William R. Barnett