TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2018
Selectmen’s Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall


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

2) Sign Documents:
   a) Warrant #1833 was signed for $782,770.38.
   b) Routine documents
   c) Approval of Minutes: Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept the minutes of December 11, 2017 executive session. Motion seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 5 – 0. Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept the minutes of January 22, 2018. Motion seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 4 – 0 (Barnett). Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept the minutes of January 29, 2018 Board of Selectmen/Finance Committee meeting. Motion seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 3 – 0 - 2 (Aldrich. Barnett).

3) Additions to the Agenda:
   - Appoint Heavy Equipment Operator: Mr. Archible presented the details to the Board. Mr. Archible moved the Board appoint Ronald Chagnon III to the position of Heavy Equipment Operator II, start date to be determined with the Director of Public Works. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

4) Appearances Before the Board:
   - 7:35 p.m. Senator Eric Lesser: As its budget season he’s here for an annual meeting. He came to talk about what the priorities could be as well as to listen to the Town’s concerns.

   Mr. Aponte spoke on the need for ongoing remediation funding for the former Belchertown State School grounds. Tremendous progress has been made but there is still a lot to do. All the help in getting the funding has been appreciated but he wants to see it continue as there is still more progress to be made. He doesn’t want the Town to find itself in a spot where the construction and development catches up to the remediation which would put a stop to construction. Senator Lesser stated that he heard the message. He is aware that there is a lot more remediation that needs to happen.

   Steve Rose, Chairman of the Finance Committee had a list of discussion items for Senator Lesser. The obvious thing is we need more money. The cherry sheets are less than last year by about six thousand dollars and the Town has more expenses. The “gateway” cities get all kinds of money and the suburbs not getting as much.
Another concern is the OPEB. Belchertown’s audit showed great concern in this area as we were in the area north of $30,000,000 and the Town is supposed to be putting $2,000,000 a year into this account. Last year the Town put $10,000 into this account so it is a real concern. The concern is that the town barely has $2,000 in its budget to play around with never mind $2,000,000. It’s a real challenge and he is concerned about how the Town will meet the promises it made to the employees.

Senator Lesser appreciated the comments. He hears it from all of the communities. He knows the legislation needs to get involved and do something because it’s not going to be solved on a town level. A potential model is some of the reforms that happened with the group insurance commission. It’s not perfect but the State did make some changes regarding health insurance that has slowed the cost of it a little bit.

As far as income there is the potential of the Fair Share Amendment to change the funding allocations for towns. That would create some new revenue streams for cities and towns. He offered a warning of a potential situation with a cut in the sales tax. If the sales tax goes down there are some positives but it will also be a negative impact on municipal budgets. Ultimately communities in Western Mass need rising property values and a growing economy. In Eastern Mass the towns are not facing the same fiscal constraints that we face in Western Mass. Western Mass has an aging population, relatively flat property values and a situation where tax revenues are at best modestly increasing and costs are going up much faster than valuation. Senator Lesser stated they need to be judicious where State money is being used with a bi-partisan commitment between the legislation and the governor to increase local aide at the same rate at the same rate that the State’s overall budget is increasing. This year it looks like there will be a 2.5-3% increase in the overall State revenue collection. The hope is to be able to increase local aide. Long term more growth is needed, more investment which will generate relief. The former State School grounds are obviously a huge opportunity.

He has a piece of legislation on regional ballot initiatives which he thinks is important because it will allow communities to sign regional packs for things like new road construction or new transportation infrastructure that will allow local assessments for local projects which is important for Western Mass so that more tax money stays local.

Ms. Alkrich interjected that she is aware Senator Lesser is committed to getting the fast rail out to Western Mass. It would make people more willing to move out to our area. She agrees with him trying to get the fast rail out here. He indicated that local communities need to step up and say that want to see that happen. MassDOT has committed to him and the Secretary of Transportation that they will do the study to see about getting the fast rail out here. Senator Lesser feels that in Western Mass we have a transportation challenge rather than a housing challenge.

Mr. Archible indicated he is a voting member of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and he also represents Longmeadow. The PVTA bus service only goes to the middle of town. People get off the bus in the center and walk down Rt.
202 and especially in the winter it is very dangerous. He wanted to know how close the Town to getting PVTA to go down to the Court House. Senator Lesser agreed to follow up on this concern. PVTA is in very tight financial constraints and has talked about discontinuing routes. He will have to meet PVTA to see whether it will include extra expense for PVTA to expand the route. Mr. Archibald indicated he has been told that the landlord at the Court House does not want the bus going there. Senator Lesser indicated that was also his understanding. He is more concerned with the PVTA’s financial situation and is worried about Belchertown as more cuts are made by the PVTA.

Mr. O’Connor wanted to go back to the PVTA discussion. He believes from a priority perspective the County Court House should rank higher than commuting traffic. Eliminating service to Belchertown altogether would be even more concerning. The Senator questioned if the Board had formally written to the PVTA requesting the stop at the Court House. It was confirmed that the Town has formally requested the stop. The struggle for the Town was that the landlord of the Court House would not allow the buses to turn around in his parking lot as it wasn’t configured for them. The side street next to the Court House does not have sidewalks and the PVTA has a policy of not picking up/discharging passengers if there is no sidewalk. Bob Bolduc of Pride Gas Station is fully permitted to build his gas station there and has agreed to place sidewalks which would allow the PVTA to pick-up/discharge passengers. Hearing this information the Senator feels he is in a good position to set up a meeting with the PVTA and facilitate keeping and extending the PVTA run.

Michael Knapp, Chairman of the School Committee also had some concerns. He expanded on the Senator’s key points from earlier in the discussion. The issues with educational investment are two-fold. He feels something needs to change with the circuit-breaker reimbursement. Traditionally it is reimbursed at 70% but he feels it needs to be greater. This year it is looking like it may be a 60% reimbursement rate. He asked the Senator to see if he can find a way to go passed the historical 70% rate and get it up to 80%.

His next concern was regarding educational investment. Health care takes a large portion of the budget. He understands that the State is working on health care but it’s a slow process and asked the Senator if he could help push it through faster.

Mr. Knapp also mentioned local aide. Chapter 70 consists of a large portion of the Town’s budget and it is not keeping pace with our revenues.

Senator Lesser indicated that on the circuit breaker the Governor filed another supplemental just a few days ago. His expectation is that it will get back up to the historic level.

Senator Lesser indicated that if the economy grows then the Town’s revenues grow and you don’t have to raise taxes on the residents.

Jim Russell from the Republican asked Senator Lesser if he could be more specific when he spoke about the foundation budget being about 25% under-funded. He
asked for a more tangible response that showed how they were moving forward in getting it better funded. Senator Lesser indicated that the State faces a very tight budget picture. Health care costs continue to skyrocket and is about 49% of the State budget. The improvements are too modest. They know where the holes are such as in special education, early education and vocational education to name a few.

Mr. O'Connor mentioned that the new revenue really needs to come from new industry, new types of business not necessarily more the same type of business. Senator Lesser feels that the legislation is not putting enough thought into what direction we should be taking with new business. While the internet created a lot of jobs it also killed a lot of jobs. They need to be focusing on where the economy is heading.

Steve Williams, Director of Public Works had several concerns. Mr. Williams brought up the Maple and State Street Corridor project. It's a project that supports the redevelopment of the State School and is MassDOT project 6084012. He thanked the Senator and his aide as well as all the other legislators for keeping an eye on that project. There are existing safety and convenience issues with the project that are trying to be addressed now.

He also mentioned the Chapter 90 funds. The Governor has proposed $200 million dollars for this fiscal year for chapter 90. MMA has been pushing for upwards of $300 million with the target being over $600 million State wide. This is going to be an exceptional pothole season. He urged the Senator to try and push the funding to a higher level. Governor Patrick used to put additional money aside for pothole seasons when they were especially bad. He asked that the Senator try to get additional money set aside for potholes for all communities.

His final comment was the State petitioning to be designated the permitting authority for MS4 and NPDES. The EPA is the permitting authority in Massachusetts. The State legislators are trying to obtain authority and become the permit writers for many permits. He was hopeful that there would be some relief in the MS4 program but it doesn't look like it will happen. He expressed his support of the State taking it over. It will be easier to work with local officials than it is with people in Washington, DC. He's hopeful that permits will be written that permit the local conditions rather than a general permit that doesn't take into consideration the variations between communities. The EPA has taken the stance that urban areas need to be regulated but doesn't look at the fact that all urban areas are not created equal.

- Cultural Council and/or Food Truck Event Sponsors: Heather Benedetti and Jennifer Turner came before the Board regarding the Food Truck Events. They reiterated the outcome of last year's event.

They have a certain amount of money that they are allowed to spend on their own event from their allocation from their grant from the State. They have applied for
a $500 grant that is just for festivals in addition to the money from the State. Vendors will be charged $75 each to participate in the events.

To their knowledge the Town has not donated or supported the Cultural Council in a financial capacity since its inception.

They did prepare a budget which they presented to the Selectmen. Mr. O'Connor presented Ms. Aldrich with the background of the last meeting with regarding the Food Truck event from last year and the requirements for going forward with this year's planned events.

The event last year cost the Cultural Council no money. This year it will cost them $1,300 per event. They will partner up with the Clapp Memorial and the Recreation Department for this year's events. This event gives local artists and musicians a way to showcase their talents. Businesses benefited from the event last year.

They figured their budget after the Cultural Council's share and the potential festival grant as well as the vendor fees to be $1,000. The budget they shared includes all the requirements for the Town plus the porta potty.

Ms. Aldrich questioned doing only one or two events this year and not the three. She was told that the feedback from residents was that they wanted this immediately. It was again questioned if logistically it might be better to only plan two this year to see how it works out with all the new requirements. Ms. Turner indicated other towns hold these events bi-weekly. Their other reasoning for planning three events is due to weather concerns in the summer where they may have to cancel due to storms.

Mr. Aponte confirmed that they would not find out if they receive the festival grant until April. They have a deadline date for themselves of May 1st to see if they can fund all three of these events. Mr. Aponte questioned their fund raising, he asked if they have reached out to sponsors. The do have a fund raising plan. He questioned if it would make up the $1,000 deficit. They are hoping it will but will have to wait and see as it is an unknown. He encouraged them to put the "pedal to the metal" to get to those sponsors, to do the fund raising. Reading between the lines he believes they are asking the Town to donate a $1,000 towards these particular events. They confirmed he was correct. Mr. Aponte indicated it is something that would have to occur at Town Meeting. He feels that if they go before Town Meeting they have to show that they have tried to raise the money for these events but there is still a deficit.

Ms. Aldrich feels that fundraising is key to their planned events. They do need to get the work out in places like The Sentinel and to their sponsors. BARC did an awesome job of fundraising prior to coming to Town Meeting asking to have the Town match what they raised.

Mr. Aponte asked for clarification regarding the nine trucks and if they had actually signed contracts agreeing to participate. He was told that the contracts
had just been sent out. They felt that nine trucks was a good number so that they aren't eating into each other's profits and it helps them to keep it from getting too big for them to manage. There are all different kinds of foods plus some desser: trucks.

Ms. Benedetti understands that they were presented with very valid requirements for what they need to do but the Municipal Guide from the State Cultural Council directs them to be requesting in kind services at reduced fees for things that are in house. It doesn't sound like there is whole lot of wiggle room for them. Ms. Aldrich stated here isn't because it would be setting a precedent for other groups wanting to use the Town Common. Everyone needs to be at a level playing field. Ms. Benedetti feels they are different in that sense because they are part of the municipality. Mr. Aponte also indicated that all department heads submitted level service budgets and asking them to agree to what the Cultural Council is asking would be asking department heads to violate the policy that they Board of Selectmen put in place.

Ms. Aldrich again encouraged the fundraising. Other committees have been encouraged to raise funds by the Board.

5) **Discussion/Action Items:**

a. **Surplus Town Owned Vehicles/Equipment:** Mr. Archible presented the details to the Board. Per the request of Steve Williams, Director of Public Works, Mr. Archible moved the Board surplus the following equipment:
   - 1974 LE-ROI Compressor - #AH69-644 Max Pressure, 220 psi, Year built 1974
   - Power America Pressure Washer 1540 – 4.5 GPM
   - 1984 Chevy D-30, 1-Ton Dump Truck
   - 2000 Ford Ranger
   - Kohler Generator – Model 30Dec4R8/4864B (30 kw)
   - Eager Beaver Morbark Portable Chipper

As well as a Senior Center 1999 Van. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

b. **Award Lake Arcadia Stormwater Improvements Project:** Steve Williams, Director of Public Works presented the details to the Board. He is requesting the Board award the vendor for this project. Per the recommendation of Steve Williams, Mr. Archible moved the Board award the Federal Street/Arcadia Lake Stormwater Improvements via 319 Grant Funding in the amount of $40,000 to A. Martins & Sons Construction Inc., 679 Moore Street, Ludlow, MA. Motion seconded Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

c. **Award Stormwater Consulting and Assessment/604B Contract:** The Director of Public Works presented the details to the Board. The 604B contract allows us to retain the services of a consultant to manage the MS4 stormwater permits. Per the recommendation of Mr. Williams, Mr. Archible moved the Board award AMEC Massachusetts, Inc., Quorum Office Park, 271 Mill Road, 3rd Floor, Chelmsford, MA the Stormwater Consulting Services for Stormwater System Assessment and
Utility/Fee Planning via 604B Grant funding in the amount of $34,915. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Mr. Barnett moved the Board authorize the Town Administrator to be signatory for both the Lake Arcadia Stormwater Improvement Project and the Stormwater Consulting and Assessment/604B Contract. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

d. Right of First Refusal – Spellman, Map 272, Lot 28/G, Bardwell Street: Mr. Barnett presented the details to the Board. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board have recommended that the Board of Selectmen not exercise their right of first refusal. Mr. Barnett moved the Board of Selectmen not exercise their right of first refusal for Spellman, Map 272, Lot 28/G, Bardwell Street. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 4 – 0.

e. Right of First Refusal – Salem, Map 275, Lot 17, West Street: Mr. Barnett presented the details to the Board. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board recommend the Board of Selectmen not exercise their right of first refusal. Mr. Barnett moved the Board not exercise their right of first refusal, Salem, Lot 17, Map 275, West Street. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

f. Right of First Refusal – Morra, Map 272, Lot 13 (Lot 81.00 Revised), Franklin Street: Mr. Barnett presented the details to the Board. The Conservation Commission and Planning Board recommended the Board of Selectmen not exercise their right of first refusal. Mr. Barnett moved the Board not exercise their right of first refusal, Morra, Franklin Street, Lot 13 to be known in the future as Lot 81 revised, Franklin Street. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

g. Application Fees – Zoning Board of Appeals: Mr. Barnett provided the details to the Board. The Zoning Board of Appeals is seeking approval to increase their fees for special permit, variance and appeal applications from $100 to $150 beginning April 1, 2018. They researched surrounding towns and they all charge more than the $100 we charge. Mr. Barnett moved the Board approve the increase for the permits for the Zoning Board of Appeals from $100 to $150 beginning April 1, 2018. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

h. Appointment of Associate Member to Zoning Board of Appeals: Mr. Barnett presented the details to the Board. Per the recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals, Mr. Barnett moved to appoint Wayne Versace as an associate member to the Zoning Board of Appeals, term to expire June 30, 2018. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

i. Appointment of Full Member to Conservation Commission: Per the recommendation of the Conservation Commission, Mr. O’Connor moved to appoint Sabrina Moreau to the Conservation Commission as a full member, term to expire June 30, 2020. Motion seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 5 – 0.

j. Appointment of Associate Member to Conservation Commission: Per the recommendation of the Conservation Commission, Mr. O’Connor moved to appoint David Lamb as an associate member, term to expire June 30, 2018. Motion seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 5 – 0.

k. Appointment of Conservation Administrator: Mr. O’Connor presented the details of the selection process to replace LeeAnne Connolly who is retiring. There were
a bunch of very good applications and those applicants were interviewed. The Search Committee has a recommendation for the Board of Selectmen to vote on.

Mr. Brougham also indicated the Search Committee interviewed five very qualified individuals. After debating strengths and potential weaknesses with each candidate the Committee unanimously voted to recommend Erica Cross as the new Conservation Administrator.

Mr. O'Connor moved the Board of Selectmen appoint Erica Cross as the new Conservation Administrator. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. The motion passes 5–0. Mr. Aponte questioned if Ms. Cross plans on moving to the area as she is now living at the Cape. It was confirmed that she is planning on moving to the area. Mr. Brougham indicated that all of her references checked out very as being very positive. Mr. O'Connor also indicated that stormwater responsibilities have been added to that job description and she has experience with that as well.

1. Accept Part-Time Police Officer Resignation: Mr. Aponte presented the details. The Board accepted the resignation of Peter Gaj as a part-time police officer, effective February 6, 2018. A letter will be sent to Mr. Gaj thanking him for his many years of service to the Town.

m. Miscellaneous Matters:

6) **Town Administrator’s Report:** He has been extremely busy.

- Concluded the search for the new Conservation Administrator with the Board’s vote tonight.
- The Council on Aging Director’s position remains under review. In the first round of advertising we received only three applications. The position was re-advertised. The deadline to re-apply is February 16th. He spent time with the Chairman of the Council on Aging this afternoon and they flagged five or six of the many applications that came in. The Search Committee will meet the week of February 20th.
- The Front Street Project is back on track.
- Also last week there was an extensive onsite meeting with the engineer firm who is designing the new $3,000,000 corridor from Front Street out to Jackson Street. The first filing for that project was heard by the Conservation Commission this evening. The plan is to have the plans out the end of March or early April with the hope of having a contractor on site the beginning of May. Ms. Aldrich has some concerns regarding the railroad tracks on Jackson Street. Mr. Williams responded to her concerns.
- The budget meeting with the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee was cancelled last week and has been rescheduled for February 28th.
- We have not received any word from Pathfinder yet but he expects to get it anytime now.
- Expect to hear at some point during the budget season that we are at a crossroads with our Fire/EMS Service. Their call volume is very concerning. Last Wednesday there were eleven EMS runs. It is becoming more the norm. We are increasingly dependent on outside services. Last Tuesday we had trouble getting service from other communities because everyone was in the same situation. Since we don’t have a care center in our Town every time the ambulance has to
transport they have to leave Town. When we have to call an outside service we lose the billing for that call. Mr. Archible stated that he was informed this week by Chief Bock that Christopher Heights has a policy of no pick-up. If one of their residents falls they will be calling for EMS service. That could mean serious trouble for Fire/Rescue. Ms. Aldrich indicated this will have to be looked at very carefully during the budget process.

7) **Review of Weekly Mail:** Reviewed, see Mr. Archible report.

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

**Mr. Archible:** The Board received a letter from Emily Sullivan who lives at 156 North Liberty Street. He has spoken with her on the phone. She is concerned about her neighbor's house at 126 North Liberty Street. It is a mess with pallets and wood skids stacked everywhere. It is his understanding that the woman that lived there is now in assisted living. The son lives somewhere else. The house is vacant. He spoke with the fire department last year and Paul Adzima to see what they can do to help the neighbors. He asked the other Board members to drive by to see what he’s talking about. He also indicated that the only zoning concern is no more than one unregistered vehicle. There is nothing about skids or pallets. Mr. Archible asked the Board to take action. He asked Mr. Brougham to be in touch with the board of health, the fire department, building inspector and the police department to see what can be done.

**Mr. Aponte:** Board members have attended several department head budget meetings. He doesn’t feel like they’ve seen a horrible situation; he’s seen worse but it is still incredibly tight. He feels we are in a little better shape than we’ve been over the last few years. Hopefully the growth and new business it will begin to generate more tax revenue.

Yesterday he attended the kickoff event for the Relay for Life. It is amazing how much money they raise.

**Mr. O’Connor:** The school committee is also going through their school budget and will be presenting their budget soon.

**Mr. Barnett:** Attended the funerals of Chief Bock’s mother. She did a lot for the Town. He also attended Chief Knight’s funeral.

He notified the Board due to health reasons he will be resigning as a Selectman, effective March 13, 2018. He chose that date so he can be replaced in the Town elections to be held in May. He worked with Town Counsel to choose the date. He has enjoyed his time as a Selectman.

Ms. Aldrich responded that it has to be an honor and pleasure to work with him.

Mr. Aponte also stated it has been an honor and privilege to work with him both as a Selectman and in the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer positions.

9) **Questions from the Press:** None.
10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: **March 12, 2018**

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

Brenda Q. Aldrich, Chairman

Ronald E. Aponte

Nicholas O'Connor

George D. Archible

William R. Barnett