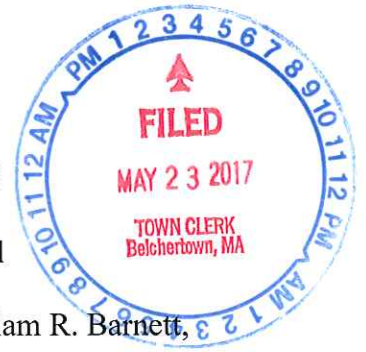


**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2017
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**



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

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 #1743 was signed for \$1,150,458.21.
- b) Routine documents
- c) Approval of Minutes: None.

3) Additions to the Agenda:

4) Appearances Before the Board:

- 7:35 p.m. Joe Shea, Director – Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust: Mr. Shea came before the Board to discuss the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust. He presented the Board with a packet of information for the Trust including financial information. In 2015 the net assets were at \$25 million and in 2016 the net assets were at \$18 million. Even with these challenges on a claims side the Trust is still very well reserved and is still in very good financial position.

He reviewed where the money has gone over the last two years. The Trust has lost approximately \$9.4 million and most of that is related to pharmaceutical claims. There has been a huge spike in pharmaceuticals over the last four years and this is an industry average. There is a re-insurer in place for any claims over \$250,000; the Trust is responsible for the first \$250,000. The Trust budget is approximately a half a million dollars a year. CanaRx allows the subscribers to purchase name brand drugs through Canada and it is far less expensive. There are two medical plans a PPO and a HMO. Over a period of two years the HMO has lost about \$8.6 million with the PPO losing \$2.3 million. The Trust knew this was going to happen in the last couple of years, the claims were spiking, the pharmaceuticals were spiking but the Trust was very well reserved.

Knowing that the claims have gone up significantly over the last few years in the last year or so there have been discussions with the Insurance Advisory Committee which is made up from a member or each member town. There have been discussions about making benefit changes as it is very benefit rich. There has been talk about adding in copays vs adding in deductibles. Right now there are no copays on imaging, outpatient hospital surgery, hospital stays. These are just discussion items at this point; there has been no formal vote for benefit changes. He explained the savings to the Trust with these benefit changes. Pharmaceuticals are where they have seen the biggest loss.

He also provided a summary of rate increases within the Trust. Our rate increase this year is slightly better than what Blue Cross Blue Shield has seen in the municipal market. Our increase is 9.4% while the average is about 10.5% increase. He briefly reviewed a report that the State use to require from those not insured by the GIC (it is no longer required). The Trust continues to do this report and in looking at it Belchertown by being a member of the Trust and not the GIC saved \$658,000. It reflects that our benefits are so much better than the GIC benefits. He stressed again that the Trust is in financially good health.

Mr. Aponte mentioned that the town is considering whether or not to consider its membership with the Hampshire Council of Governments. The Board's understanding is that they are separate groups. Mr. Shea indicated that the reserves the Trust has are restricted strictly to the Trust; the Hampshire Council of Governments cannot touch them. They are strictly for use by the Trust and the Trust members.

Mr. Aponte then questioned if the Hampshire Council of Governments disbands, can the Insurance Trust stand alone? Mr. Shea indicated that it could under Massachusetts Law 32B that established the Trust. It is his understanding from what he has read if the Hampshire Council of Governments were to go out of business the trustee powers would move from the Hampshire Council of Governments to the Insurance Advisory Committee of the Trust.

Mr. Shea explained the changes the Trust made to the retirement plan to help save money for both the Trust and the retirees.

The Board thanked Mr. Shea for coming in and going into great detail regarding the Trust's financial position and his explanation on what happens if the Hampshire Council of Governments dissolves.

- 8:00 p.m. LeeAnne Connolly, Conservation Administrator: Ms. Connolly came before the Board regarding the conservation restriction for Scarborough Brook. Funds were used to purchase this property and State law requires a conservation restriction on it. The town already owns it and has been using it for the last 13 years.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board authorize the Chairman to endorse the Scarborough Brook conservation restriction. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

The second conservation restriction is for the Holland Glen conservation restriction. This needs to be done so the town can get the reimbursement from the State.

Mr. O'Connor moved the Board authorize the Chairman of the Board to endorse the Holland Glen conservation restriction. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.

5) Discussion/Action Items:

- a. Review Draft of Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Mr. Aponte presented the details to the Board reminding everyone that at the last meeting the Board reviewed all of the warrant articles for the annual town meeting. Articles 1 -10 appear to be in order and are housekeeping items.

Article #11 sets the charts for personnel by-law employees, setting the ranges for department heads as well as other minor modifications for some positions. This year however there are inclusions for a few additional items for benefits. One of the items is for overtime in regards to call back time for the non-union DPW employees as well as additional holiday compensation for these employees. The Board was in agreement with these changes.

There is some concern with the increase of the longevity. He stated he generally opposes longevity; however the proposal is consistent with the union contracts. The proposal is to increase the longevity amounts for the personnel by-law employees. He feels the Board has worked diligently to maintain equity between labor groups and the personnel by-law employees but he is okay with this discrepancy.

Mr. O'Connor is in agreement with Mr. Aponte's remarks.

Mr. Archible feels the by-law employees should be treated the same as the bargaining unit employees. There are about 550 town employees and only 63 are personnel by-law employees. Ms. Aldrich feels the personnel by-law employees should be treated fairly. She has no trouble supporting this article.

Mr. O'Connor clarified that the discussion is not about eliminating longevity but rather about the proposed increase.

Mr. Aponte questioned if the Board supports the longevity increase and if it should be kept on the warrant for town meeting.

Mr. O'Connor questioned when this article was proposed. This was not discussed in earlier budget meetings.

Mr. Archible questioned if the town accountant had the figures for this increase. Ms. Panto indicated it is about \$13,300.

Anna Fenton, Animal Control Officer asked for clarification if the unions had received this increase in their longevity benefit. She further questioned if the unions had put it on the table for review or if the Board of Selectmen had brought it up. Mr. Brougham responded that each of the four town side unions look at what the other has done and then follow suit. Mr. Brougham supports the personnel by-law employees. He stated that less than 10% of the town's workforce is personnel by-law. There is nothing any different that's being asked by these employees than what the collective bargaining units ask for. They are asking for equity and the difference is this group has to get approval from town meeting while the bargaining units do not have to do that. He asked that the Board

give consideration to the personnel by-law employees just the same as everyone else that is represented by a bargaining unit. Mr. Archible and Ms. Aldrich were in agreement.

Shirley Dillard, personnel by-law employee stated she has worked for the town for 38 years and works with a very good group of people. People tell her department that they are one of the friendliest town halls in the area.

Brian Gibbons, Belchertown resident indicated that it is better to keep the good employees. He would be concerned with the cost of having to re-train new employees because the town was losing good employees who felt they aren't being treated fairly.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board accept section 91.6 in article #11 regarding longevity. Motion seconded by Mr. Barnett. Motion passes 3 – yes, 2 – no (O'Connor, Aponte).

Mr. Aponte presented the second half of article #11 which centers on cost of living increases, step increases and the department head salary ranges. Mr. O'Connor feels they are not level service and increases should be merit based.

Ms. Panto explained with merit based reviews the town doesn't know what is going to happen so they need to cover those in the budget. She also doesn't feel its right to say that the c.o.l.a for personnel by-law employees is not level service but its level service for the bargaining units. She feels it should be the same across the board; either all c.o.l.a.'s are level service or they all are not. Mr. O'Connor feels there is a difference. He feels the board has leverage over this money that they do not have with bargaining units. She asked that the next time the board signs contracts they remember this conversation because how can you sign a contract and say it's ok to give 75 -80% of the employees a cost of living but don't want to give it to the employees who don't cost the town anything in legal fees.

Max Bock, DPW employee indicated this is why the DPW went back to a union because they were told they were going to get certain things and that it didn't happen. The department kept losing people who were well trained and ready to work. He went through the ten year steps to get his full pay and because of the compensation study they are now going through another ten years to get to the top of the pay scale.

Steve Williams feels this is not about finances but about equity. He's reviewed all of the town contracts. All of the contracts that the board has signed have c.o.l.a.'s in them, they all have steps and they all have longevity and the equity needs to be built into the system. The by-law employees have to sit in front of the board of selectmen on t.v. with the press to talk about these matters and the bargaining units do not. Every year the personnel by-law employees have to go before town meeting and hope that the residents support them. He asked that the board support the 2% c.o.l.a. for the personnel by-law employees but also go to town meeting and show your support there.

Colleen Toothill-Berte, Town Clerk feels this issue with personnel by-law employee's vs bargaining units has been going on for years. She wants the board to treat both sides fairly.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board support the 2% cost of living increase and the step increases. Motion seconded by Mr. Barnett. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept articles 12 – 20. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept articles 21 – 29. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept articles 30 – 42. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Article 43 and 44 are both a citizen petition and therefore go on the warrant. Mr. O'Connor questioned article #43 and the wording of transfers. Mr. Gibbons who presented the article stated he met with the superintendent and school committee members who admitted that last year the school budget passed as a single line item.

The parcels in article #45 are not parcels for the upcoming auction. These are properties that need to be voted off the tax role as they are properties that are open space, etcetera.

Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept articles 43 – 45. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Article #46 is to withdraw from the Hampshire Council of Governments. Mr. Barnett would like to see it be removed from the warrant. He also wants it to be moved to earlier in the meeting so it doesn't happen after half of the residents have left. Ms. Aldrich moved that article #46 be moved up to article #13. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Mr. Aponte moved the Board accept articles 47 – 49. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- b. Vote to Discontinue an Abandoned Roadway Connected to Green Avenue and Rockrimmon Street, and Refer Matter to Planning Board: Steve Williams, Director of Public Works presented the details to the Board. He was recently made aware of an abandoned right of way between Green Avenue and Rockrimmon Street. An abutter is looking to purchase property on one side of it but is being prohibited because of the status of the right away. In doing deed research he found that prior to 1939 all deeds refer to it as a road leading from the Belchertown Meeting House to Rockrimmon Street. Sometime after 1961 it is referred to as the abandoned road. Somewhere between 1939 and 1961 it was abandoned but never formally discontinued. He feels it would be prudent to bring it to town meeting and get it off the books. As of right now it only exists on paper. He is requesting

the board of selectmen to vote to allow it to go before town meeting for discontinuance and refer it to the planning board.

Mr. O'Connor asked for confirmation that this isn't the road at the end of Green Avenue that goes to the reservoir. He was told it is not.

Mr. Aponte moved that the Board of Selectmen vote to place the discontinuance of the Green Avenue / Rockrimmon Street connector as outlined in their packet on the annual town meeting warrant. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- c. Endorse Chapter 90 Reimbursement Request: Mr. Williams presented the details and the status of the scope of the project on Main and Maple Streets. The project will include two signalized intersections; one at Rt.21 and one at Stadler Street. The project is coming in at a cost of about \$4.6 million. He further indicated the town will be competing for the funds for this project. He believes it is going to be very active competition.

Mr. Archible moved the Board endorse the Chapter 90 Reimbursement request in the amount of \$73,208.70. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- d. Appointment of Part-Time Police Officer: Mr. Aponte presented the details to the Board. Per the recommendation of Chief Pronovost, Mr. Aponte moved to appoint Officer Joseph Bergdoll to the position of part-time police officer, term to expire June 30, 2017. Motion seconded by Mr. Barnett. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- e. Changes to Membership – Historic District By-Law Commission: Mr. O'Connor presented the details to the changes in membership to the Historic District By-Law Commission. Mr. O'Connor motioned to move Anna Szmyd to the position of Architect Seat, term to expire June 30, 2018; Irene Mariettos to move to the Real Estate Seat, term to expire June 30, 2017; Jonathan Spiegel to move to the At Large Seat, term to expire June 30, 2018. Motion seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- f. Review Special Permit Application for Accessory Apartment – Almeida, 190 North Liberty Street: Ms. Aldrich presented the details to the Board. The request is to add an in-law apartment to their existing home. The Board felt the request is consistent with the in-law bylaw. The application will be referred back to the Planning Board for their consideration.
- g. Review Site Plan Application for Shed – P&T Enterprises, 147 Bay Road: Mr. Archible presented the details. The request is to place a storage shed on their property. It is properly zoned and will be constructed to the end of the property. The application will be referred back to the Planning Board for their consideration.
- h. Review Site Plan for Application for Pride Gas Station and Convenience Store, State Street and Turkey Hill Road: Gary Brougham presented the details to the Board. Pride has submitted their site plan for review and permitting. There will be five fueling islands with a convenience store. The owner hopes to be open for business before the end of the calendar year. It will be open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The application will be referred back to the Planning Board for their consideration.
- i. Miscellaneous Matters: None.

- 6) **Town Administrator's Report:** The demolition of the infirmary building is almost complete. Mass Development has also opened bids for the demolition of the cottage that burned last year as well as others. The work has to be completed before the end of the State fiscal year so those buildings will be gone soon.

We have also been working very ambitiously with the financial group on the Grantham financial package and that closed on Thursday last week.

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

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

Mr. Barnett: The rattlesnake project will not be moving forward. The snakes will not be placed at Quabbin.

Ms. Aldrich: Congratulated her daughter who won a seat on the South Hadley Selectboard.

Mr. Archible: Questioned if the Finance Committee is meeting with the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee on Thursday. He was told they were but with no particular agenda. Several Board members may attend.

- 9) **Questions from the Press:** Steve Hill from *The Sentinel* asked for the name of the contractor for Christopher Heights. He was given that name. He also asked for clarification as to why the Board had Joe Shea from the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust come in. Mr. Archible gave a brief explanation.

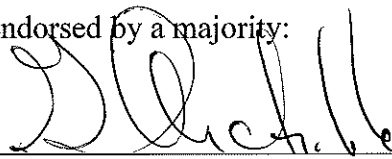
- 10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.


Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: May 22, 2017

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:


George D. Archible, Chairman


Brenda Q. Aldrich

Ronald E. Aponte

William R. Barnett


Nicholas O'Connor