

**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2019
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**



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

Call to Order: Chairman Boscher called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) Sign Documents:

- a) Warrant: Warrant #2007 was signed for \$971,624.75.
- b) Routine documents
- b) Approval of Minutes : Ms. Aldrich moved the Board accept the minutes of July 22, 2019. Motion seconded by Ms. Gramarossa. Motion passes 5 – 0.

3) Additions to the Agenda:

4) Appearances Before the Board:

- 7:03 p.m. Jim Natle, chairman – CP Committee- Mr. Natle gave a description of what the grants were for.
 - Endorse Belchertown United Church of Christ CP Grant Agreement. This grant is for an ADA accessible elevator and was approved at the annual town meeting.
 - Endorse Wayfinders CP Grant Agreement. This grant is for first time homebuyer's assistance program for people who are moving into the Town of Belchertown.

Mr. Boscher Commented these grants were approved at the annual town meeting and the Board is simply endorsing them.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board endorse the Belchertown United Church of Christ CP Grant Agreement for their ADA accessible elevator. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board endorse the Way Finders CP Grant Agreement. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Ms. Gramarossa questioned the status of the ADA accessible elevator. The church has obtained all their quotes in and they are ready to begin work. They may have already begun work and are just waiting for the grant endorsement so they can be reimbursed. They are required to pay up front and then are reimbursed or the contractor is paid directly. This system is in place for all grant recipients.

- 7:05 p.m. **Jay Buckley, 403 Michael Sears Road** – Traffic Concerns: Discuss Allen Street/Federal Street Intersection. Mr. Buckley was present for the discussion. He is concerned about how fast people

drive on Michael Sears Road especially from the hill to the end of the road. The police have been very responsive to his calls. The young kids in the neighborhood are riding their bikes in the street and he is concerned for their safety. He feels the volume of traffic and the speed people are driving is dangerous. He indicated tractor trailers are using this section as a cut thru.

Suzanne Bay who does not live in that area of town questioned the guidelines that are in place for road signs indicating direction of travel and speed limit. Mr. O'Connor commented that there had been a sign in place and that the data from that sign was given to the Selectmen.

Chief Pronovost commented that the town does have speed boards that are under the control of the police department. They have deployed those throughout town where there is a problem. They did place one in March in the area that Mr. Buckley is concerned about. During that time period 1,620 vehicles were logged travelling on Michael Sears in one week. Only seven of those vehicles were over the speed limit and the average speed limit was 27.5 mph. Mr. Buckley commented that people speed down that road and would be willing to set up a go-pro to prove it. Mr. Boscher commented that speeding is a town wide problem.

Mr. Buckley questioned if there is any way to address traffic volume on residential streets that probably were not made to handle 200 vehicles per day / 1,600 cars per week. He wants to see the town take action for an issue that he has pointed out. Chief Pronovost pointed out that they are seeing a large volume of traffic in many areas when they use the speed board.

Steve Williams, Director of Public Works commented that this is not an isolated problem – it is a town wide problem. He said when he receives the phone calls or emails regarding traffic concerns he follows up with the police department, speed board is put out and look at the accident history in the area. There is no accident history on this section of road. Posted speed limits are set by massDOT while statutory limits are set by the town. That can be done case by case on the roads or as a blanket speed limit. It is not an easy problem to solve. Even the new speed boards that give a message are proving to be more of a novelty – they seem to be very effective for a while and then lose their effectiveness. Another problem is that the town has grown. We now have a lot of traffic on the roads but the bigger problem is that most of the right of ways are very limited bordered by stone walls and trees and are narrow. We can do a heavy resurfacing of a roadway for between \$100,000 and \$200,000 a year. The State provides just under \$7,000.

Mr. Boscher questioned what the options are for moving forward. DPW Director Williams commented that the town can look into possibly lowering the speed limit, possibly installing an “advisory” sign and request additional highway funding from the State.

Mr. Buckley also questioned the right of pedestrian to walk on the road without having to dive into the woods. He feels the tractor trailers should not be traveling on our back roads. They need to stay on the State roads and not be tearing up the town roads. Chief Pronovost commented that walking on the roads people just need to use common sense. There are a number of streets in town that have the same complaint. These are old, narrow roads which make it difficult. Chief Pronovost is actually looking to lease a motorcycle to help catch speeders on the old narrow roads that are difficult for the cruisers. There is a lot of distracted driving, there are rude drivers and they are not very cautious. GPS is also another part of the problem as it brings people through all neighborhoods that it never did before.

Mr. Brougham commented that truck exclusion is an option but it requires a lot of work to get it. It requires approval from massDOT. He questioned Mr. Buckley what types of trucks and if it's on a regular basis. He was told its all types of trucks and not on a regular basis.

Mr. Boscher indicated there isn't a clear path moving forward but the Board will continue discussions with the police department and the department of public works.

Allen Road and Federal Street: Mr. Boscher provided a brief overview. It is a dangerous intersection with a lot of accidents. Mr. O'Connor pointed out that Federal Street is a State road which massDOT is responsible for.

Mr. Williams suggested that the problems with that intersection are not new. There have been informal discussions ongoing for years with massDOT regarding this intersection. He was in touch with massDOT prior to tonight's meeting and feels that they were receptive to wanting to meeting out there and look at field conditions. There may be an issue with maintenance, if there is an issue with traffic patterns or a need for improvements. They did ask for a formal request from the Board of Selectmen to look at that intersection more closely. They want three years of accident history and full reports (detailed). It is a State road that intersects with a local road but the accidents are happening in the State right of way. The work to potentially correct the issues is going to happen in the State right of way. Most people complain about the lack of site distance with people having a hard time seeing in both

directions. In his opinion the work will have to take place on the shoulders of the State road.

He is requesting that the Board forward a request to massDOT and include the three years of accident history. He feels they will see activity there from massDOT pretty quickly.

Richard Torres of 43 Allen Street thanked the Board for the Board for looking into improvements for this intersection. He drives it daily and indicated there are a lot of obstructions at the intersection. There have been a lot of accidents at this intersection.

John Speck of 37 Fletcher Avenue has had two family members in two different accidents at that intersection. One was his father in law and the other included his older son who was driving his four other children to school and was broadsided at that intersection. It is a rule in his family that no-one in his family goes through that intersection.

Mr. Boscher moved the Board endorse a letter to massDOT requesting that they look at that intersection. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Crosswalks: Mr. Boscher briefed the Board regarding a conversation he and Steve Williams had about crosswalks in town. He learned that there is a lot about crosswalks and what can and can't be done with them. The budget in town only allows the crosswalks to be painted once a year. This year they are to be painted in a ladder version.

Ms. Aldrich reported that twice in the last two weeks she was nearly hit. She was crossing here in the center of town going towards the common when one motorist stopped to let her cross and a motorist in the opposite direction had to slam on their brakes and almost slid into her. The other time also happened in the center of town the night of the community band.

Maple and State Street Bid – Mr. Williams reported that the bid for that project is going out this weekend. It has a full comprehensive review of pedestrian and bicycle safety. It is designed to not only current needs but future growth.

Tree Discussion: There is significant tree mortality throughout the town. Much of it has to do with the recent years of the heavy gypsy moth infestation; we have been in a drought in seven out of ten years, pathogens in the area, and insects in the area – there's a lot infecting our trees. Last year people were hopeful that some of the trees were just stressed and would recover. In the last five years he has averaged about 100 trees for removal. As there are so

many this year he solicited assistance from a local arborist. As of Friday they were at 84 miles of roadway complete with still about 47 miles to go. There are 661 trees inventoried at a cost of \$805,950 estimated. There is a budget of \$85,000 a year for tree removal. Some of these trees are very historical. They have measured trees that are 65 inches in diameter. He would love to count rings of the tree to see the history of it. He doesn't know how they are going to push through it. He will concentrate on the main roads for tree removal and side roads will have to wait. They will try to get State funding.

Ms. Aldrich questioned about getting a tree department together and if it is something we should be looking to do. He thinks it's a goal that we should be moving rapidly towards. It will not help the situation we are now in. We need to get money to help take care of the problem we have now. We need a production bid out now to take down 200 – 300 trees just to try and catch up. He's worried about the 100 trees a year that he has been taking down. A tree division within the DPW is an answer for long term. Short term the town needs to put some money into this whether it's from the stabilization fund but he needs a one-time lump sum.

Mr. Boscher questioned if there is money available from the State to help with this problem. The town administrator does not know if there is. He and Mr. Boscher will work on obtaining information from the State.

- 7:45 p.m. American Cannabis Co., Community Host Agreement – 55 Main Street: Mr. Boscher announced that the American Cannabis Company called today to cancel their appearance with no rescheduled date.

5) Discussion/Action Items:

- a. Permission Form for Participation in Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Upcoming Bids: Mr. Boscher asked the town administrator to present the details of this request. He explained that the town had used the Hampshire Council of Governments purchasing program and in particular road salt. Now that the HCOG is closing some of the procurement program has been transferred to the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The town wants to participate in their bid solicitation of road salt and in order for them to do so we have to grant them permission to solicit on behalf of the Town of Belchertown.

Ms. Gramarossa moved the Board agree to and sign off on the permission form so that the town can participate in the Franklin Regional Council of Governments upcoming bids. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Mr. Boscher questioned if the town would have to give permission on an ongoing basis. Steve Williams, Director of Public Works was unsure of how it would go moving forward. He will look into it. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- b. Accept Resignation – Library Page: Mr. Boscher presented the details to the Board. Ian Kenneally has submitted his resignation as a library page. Mr. Boscher moved the Board accept the resignation of Ian Kenneally, effective August 13, 2019. A letter will be sent to Mr. Kenneally thanking him for his service to the Town.

Mr. Boscher moved the Board appoint Ben Grillo to the position of library page for five hours a week, effective August 16, 2019. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- c. Accept Resignation – Conservation Clerk: Ms. Turner presented the details to the Board. Michele Nowak, Conservation clerk submitted her resignation. The Board accepted her resignation and a letter will be sent to Ms. Nowak thanking her for her service to the town.
- d. Appointment of Member – Veterans Services Advisory Board (VSAB): Per the recommendation of Ray Janke, Chairman of the VSAB, Mr. Boscher moved the Board appoint Michael Edreich to the VSAB, term to expire June 30, 2022. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- e. Appointment of Members – Recreation Committee: Mr. O'Connor presented the details to the Board. There were three letters of interest received for two open vacancies on the recreation committee. He has worked with these individuals in various capacities regarding recreation in town and all are highly qualified.

He feels that after reviewing all the applications, considering the recommendation that was put forth by the recreation committee and discussing it with others involved he is going to move to appoint Chris Shea and Steve Corbin to fill the vacancies. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner.

Ms. Gramarossa commented that it was not the recommendation of the Recreation Committee. She questioned why the Board was not going with the recommendation of the Recreation Committee as that is the typical position of the Board. Mr. O'Connor commented that he disagreed with the recommendation after talking with various stake holders, teams, coaches that are part of the rec. community. He continued that they are all highly qualified candidates both his recommendation is different than the recreation committee. Ms. Gramarossa questioned if he spoke with the Recreation Committee. He responded that he discussed it with the recreation director specifically and the chairman of the recreation committee is aware of the discussions and has been involved as well. He further commented that the Board does not always go with the committee recommendation going on to say that the current recreation director was not the choice of the search committee for that position. Mr. Boscher called for a vote on Mr. O'Connor's recommendation. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- f. Joint Appointment of Planning Board's Alternate Voting Member for Special Permits: Per the recommendation of the Planning Board, Ms. Turner moved the Board appoint Elizabeth Pols as the Planning Board's Alternate Voting Member for Special Permits. Motion seconded by Ms. Gramarossa. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- g. Endorse 2019 Fair Contract: Ms. Turner moved the Board endorse the 2019 Fair Contract with Dean & Flynn, Inc. d/b/a Fiesta Shows. Mr. O'Connor commented that this is the same vendor that has worked with the town for the last three years

and they have done a great job. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- h. Endorse UMass FY20 Bus Transportation Agreement: Mr. Boscher moved the Board endorse the UMass FY20 Bus Transportation Agreement. This is an annual renewal. Motion seconded by Ms. Aldrich. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- i. Miscellaneous Matters: Ms. Aldrich asked the town administrator to update the Board on news article written by Jim Russell regarding the Hampshire Council of Governments closing and how Belchertown may be on the line for a part of what they are losing. Mr. O'Connor also questioned it stating that the article spoke on how the town may be liable for a portion of the retirement fund that they are not able to fund.

Mr. Brougham indicated he did not have the paperwork with him but reported that it is a substantial amount of money if the HCOG did not get the legislature to take the former Hampshire Council or County employees under the State's retirement that they would reach out to member communities. When he questioned if it was only current members, or includes former members or all towns in Hampshire County he was told it would be all Hampshire County cities and towns. The HCOG just defaulted on a payment of about \$377,000. There is a big push to have legislation that would allow these 40 employees to move into the State pension system. The town administrator maintains that the Town of Belchertown does not owe anything. Ms. Aldrich feels they should go after Todd Ford's pension. Mr. Brougham commented there has been no continuity with the legislation group – we've lost a bunch of them. It annoys him to see the HCOG claiming they didn't have a fair chance; they didn't get the same deal as other council of governments. He reported that those other councils didn't have a long term care facility that was sold for 4.5 million dollars but now the HCOG can't explain where the money is.

Mr. O'Connor commented he's been on the Board for four years and has seen the HCOG get three chances and further we are no longer members of the Hampshire Council of Governments. The town administrator had been sounding the fact about the HCOG from the time he was elected to the Board and we finally got out of it. He was absolutely right. He was fought by a lot of people to not leave the HCOG but he was right. Mr. O'Connor commended him for it.

Mr. Brougham reminded everyone that the town meeting of 2018 voted to leave the HCOG; statutorily we sent a letter to the HCOG notifying them which was done by certified mail. They were supposed to let us know of any liability and Todd Ford never responded. As far as he is concerned we owe nothing.

6) Town Administrator's Report:

- Work on the auditorium is progressing, the acoustical cloud is up, there is accent lighting on the top that illuminates the pictures on the walls, the projector is installed, the curtains will be coming – they were special ordered.
- Sportshaven hearings continue. He goes back to court on the 16th of September. On the 27th of August, he, Judy Metcalf, Jim Mazik from PVPC, CDBG, the attorney general's office and DEP will be in Worcester to try and get a better understanding of how to move the remediation money forward.

- He attended the National Night Out.

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

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

Ms. Aldrich:

- Also attended National Night Out. It was bigger than last year. She thanked all the first responders.

Ms. Gramarossa:

- Agreed that National Night Out was well attended. The k9 exhibition was the headline for the night!
- Reiterated in terms to the improvements to the auditorium that the solarize project is going to be having a community education meeting in September and they are booked in the auditorium so they are excited with the new improvements.
- Thanks to the Farmer's Market for all of their hard work. It looks like it is very well attended.

Mr. O'Connor:

- Fall meetings are beginning again. He attended his first meeting for the scholarship committee. Donna Lusignan was re-elected as chairman.
- He met with Kevin Hannon in the IT Department to go over what's on his "hit" list right now. The new server is in, the website will be reconstructed and other ongoing projects were discussed.
- He, Gary Brougham and Kyle Thibeault met with Melissa Siren the grant program supervisor for the Division of Conservation Services. They are the PARC grant evaluators. At the time they met they were setting up for National Night Out so she got to see a lot of activity.
- Cherry Sheet budgets look like we are being level funded again. We have had two years of solid budgeting. The upcoming year has the potential to be very rough.

Ms. Turner:

- The Lake Wallace Trail continues to get grant funding so the latest round they got an AARP grant for \$10,000 so they are closing their gap for phase I.
- This Friday is the last Food Truck Friday from 4:00 – 9:00 pm
- She went to a Fair Committee meeting.
- She made earring at a workshop at the Recreation Department. They have workshops for adults so everyone should check them out.

Mr. Boscher:

- He thanked the Board members for all their work
- He and the town administrator have fielded a number of resident's concerns / complaints. He thanked Mr. Brougham for stopping his work to listen to him about all of the calls he is receiving.
- He also attended National Night Out and it was a much bigger even than last year.

- He went on a police ride along last Saturday. On shift were Sgt. Jenks, Officers Bradway and Ivey. It was a very busy night. Chief Pronovost told him to relay to the Board of Selectmen that any of them can do a ride along if they want to. They will need to arrange it with the Chief. He recommended the 4:00 pm to midnight shift.
- He also spent significant time with Director Williams regarding crosswalk painting. He never knew it could be that involved. They also talked about the trees as discussed earlier.
- He met with residents regarding the solar project on Gulf Road. They are fighting their fight with the Planning Board. He thinks it will be coming back to the Board of Selectmen.

9) **Questions from the Press:** Steve Hill from *The Sentinel* questioned how much the UMass Transportation Contract was for and if there was any data for the number of passengers that are picked up or dropped off in Belchertown. He was told it runs 7 trips a day week days only and the Board's information does not include any passenger data. The cost is dependent on full State RTA funding and if that funding is cut the miles will be reduced. There is no actual cost listed to the Town but that information will be sent to Mr. Hill as soon as possible.

** Mr. Boscher reported that the Board will meet on Saturday, August 17, 2019 at 6:45 a.m. This will be a strategy meeting on how to align a lot of different priorities from the Board member perspectives and what they want the balance of the year to look together.

10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator


Board approved/endorsed: 8/24/19

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown


Endorsed by a majority:



 Ed Boscher, Chairman



 Gail Gramarossa



 Nicholas O'Connor

 Brenda Q. Aldrich



 Jen D. Turner