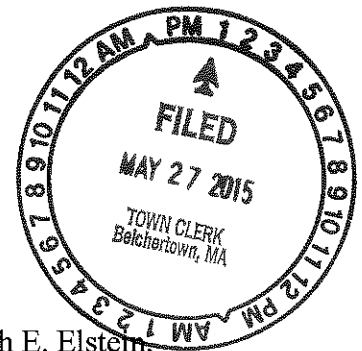


**TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, MARCH 23, 2015  
Selectmen's Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall**



**Present:** Brenda Q. Aldrich, Ronald E. Aponte, George D. Archible, Kenneth E. Elstein,  
William R. Barnett

- 1) **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 #1538 was signed for \$1,239,838.73.
  - b) Routine documents
  - c) Approval of Minutes: Mr. Elstein moved the Board accept the minutes of February 23, 2015. Seconded by Mr. Barnett. Motion passes 5 – 0.
  
- 3) **Additions to the Agenda:**
  - Withdraw Retirement Notice: Mr. Aponte presented the details. Ms. Dorval is requesting the Board withdraw her prior retirement notice. Mr. Aponte moved the Board with draw Ms. Dorval's prior retirement notice. Seconded by Mr. Elstein. Motion passes 5 – 0.
  - WRAP – massDOT: Mr. Archible presented the details. The Town received a letter from massDOT and the Governor's Office indicating that thirty million dollars has been released by the Commonwealth for road repair because of the extensive damage done to the roads due to the harsh winter. The Town of Belchertown will be receiving \$94,753.00 which has to be spent before June 30<sup>th</sup> of this year.  
  
Mr. Archible moved the Board accept the \$94,753.00 and that Ms. Aldrich be the authorized signatory on that document and that on the bills for work performed Gary Brougham, Town Administrator be allowed to sign so that it is done in a timely fashion and the Board will not have to meet to make sure bills are processed on time. Seconded by Mr. Elstein. Motion passes 5 – 0.
  
- 4) **Appearances Before the Board:** None.
  
- 5) **Discussion/Action Items:**
  - a. Appointment of Members to the Historical Commission: Per the recommendation of Leslie Squires, Chairman of the Historical Commission, Mr. Elstein moved to appoint Patrick Bierly full member to the Historical Commission, term to expire June 30, 2016. Seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.  
  
Mr. Elstein moved to appoint Jill Bierly as associate member to the Historical Commission, term to expire June 30, 2015. Seconded by Mr. Aponte. Motion passes 5 – 0.
  - b. Fire Chief's Appointment of Firefighter/Paramedic: Mr. Aponte presented the details. Mr. Aponte moved to appoint Lisa Hermanson as a full-time

firefighter/paramedic, effective Tuesday, March 10, 2015. Seconded by Mr. Elstein. Motion passes 5 – 0.

- c. Appointment of Board of Registrar: Mr. Barnett presented the details. The Belchertown Democratic Town Committee has nominated three individuals to the Board of Registrars. The Committee is recommending the re-appointment of Linda Barron. Mr. Barnett moved to re-appoint Mrs. Barron to the Board of Registrars, term to expire March 31, 2018. Seconded by Mr. Archible. Motion passes 5 – 0.
- d. Review Wireless Communication Facility Special Permit Application – O'Brien, Aldrich Street: Mr. Brougham presented the details. The special permit application was received a couple of months ago. The request is to construct a cellular tower on a parcel of land owned by Michael and Vicki O'Brien. The plans appear to be complete and are consistent with applicable zoning regulations. Following a brief discussion the Board advised the town administrator to send a letter to the Planning Board indicating that they have no concerns. The Planning Board should pay careful attention to any comments that other Boards or Committees may have.
- e. Review Assisted Living Site Plan: Mr. Aponte presented the details. The assisted living facility at the former State School grounds is moving forward on a relatively fast track. One of the large hurdles that is before this project is a site plan and Planning Board approval. Grantham Group had an initial meeting with the Planning Board about a month ago at which time the Planning Board was receptive to the plans. Grantham Group did an outstanding job with the presentation addressing any and all concerns. At that meeting it was agreed that the final review of plans would be held at the March 24<sup>th</sup> Planning Board meeting with hopefully the Planning Board signing off for this particular project.

He indicated that Mr. Brougham has done a very good job at keeping all the department heads together so that any questions or concerns were brought to the table and passed onto Mass Development, the Planning Board and the Grantham Group so they could be addressed before this. The reason it's so important to have the sign off from the Planning Board at tomorrow's meeting is because of the fast track nature of Grantham Group. They are in the process of making an application for the State tax credits which is part of the financial model for making this project happen. They need site plan approval prior to submitting that application. He stated there was a 50/50 chance that the Grantham Group would be approved for those tax credits in this first round. If they do get approved then we really are moving on a fast track.

It looks promising at this point because of some preliminary indications that have been passed onto the Grantham Group. Mr. Aponte asked Mr. Brougham if the notification came directly from the State if they were "pre-approved" or that a preference could be given to the Grantham Group. At this point if everything is squared away with the Planning Board and site plan is approved, the application goes in there is a fighting chance that we could actually see demolition for pad I but actually maybe even a spade in the ground at the tail end of this construction.

Mr. Aponte questioned Mr. Brougham if all questions had been answered or at least been passed on to the Planning Board. Mr. Brougham indicated that last week was when we received the site plan that the Board is working off of tonight

and in an effort to try and eliminate any potential delays or un-necessary stoppage of this plan and recognizing the short timeline that we are working in there was a meeting last Thursday with the Grantham Group, some representatives of Mass Development and all the Town Departments that are part of the approval process. They discussed the plans, any potential concerns from the fire department, building inspector, planning, conservation, DPW and Board of Health at this early stage and raised a couple of good points that were taken at face value and will be reflected in the discussion tomorrow night but felt quite strongly at the end of the meeting that we are ready to bring the plan to the Planning Board without concern that there would be any unnecessary delays. He requested that if there are any concerns that they be reflected in the decision as a condition and not as let's talk about this in a month in another meeting. The Grantham Group submitted a pre-application and was approved by DACD to submit this plan it's not a guarantee that the money will be there for them but it's a good indication that this project has caught the attention of DACD. It's a market that is under-served. If we are approved in the first round application which is not unheard of; but it is usually a more drawn out process it is absolutely correct that we could see a shovel in the ground by October. The abatement contract is out; there was a pre-construction meeting three weeks ago. There is limited abatement working on site happening now. The abatement of hazardous materials is scheduled to be complete by the middle of May. Once that's complete Associated Building Wreckers will be demolishing the six or seven buildings that are part of the demo contract and that work is to be complete by the end of June. He continued that there are a number of significant developments; one being there is a contractor both on the demolition side and development side, we have caught the attention of DACD and that if we can continue to move at this impressive pace it hopefully will bring the additional remediation money that was promised from the Commonwealth in the next fiscal year.

Discussion has also taken place regarding the Town extending Front Street. The primary concern was where does the Town begin on Front Street and where does the road actually head off to. There was one estimate that he and the DPW director looked at and felt it was not reflective of what the Town wanted and asked that it be amended. At the meeting last week there were some additional concerns and they will meet tomorrow night prior to the Planning Board meeting to work out the details. Once the Planning Board signs off on this application, the Conservation Commission has to sign off on the stormwater application. The conservation administrator has said there are no wetlands on this site so there should be no delay with the Conservation Commission.

It was reiterated that the Planning Board meeting will take place tomorrow evening to review this plan. Mr. Brougham has asked the department heads who didn't have a commitment tomorrow evening to attend the meeting in case there are questions so they can be addressed at that time and not hold up the approval process.

- f. Accept Auxiliary Officer Resignation: Mr. Archible presented the details indicating that Auxiliary Officer Brittney Vallee is resigning as an Auxiliary Officer as she has received a full-time police officer position in another community. Mr. Elstein pointed out that other communities are hiring trained

officers thanks to our auxiliary program. A letter will be sent to Ms. Vallee thanking her for her service to the Town.

g. Miscellaneous Matters:

- 6) **Town Administrator's Report:** The last couple of weeks have been very busy. He feels we are now making progress with the budgets. There is finally a budget proposal from the Governor and we are firming up the numbers for the Town's budget. The Finance Committee has had three sessions with some of the department heads.

We also have the budget for Pathfinder Regional Vocational High School. There is no assessment for the roof repairs at Pathfinder due to delays. That will be seen in the FY17 budget. Belchertown's assessment was down considerably as we have fewer students attending and Pathfinder took their capital out of the budget as they found a grant that they can use for their capital.

The Town is still looking at a deficit of about \$950,000.00 but that is without making any cuts to the budgets that have been submitted. The Town has also not seen the school department budget. He has met with the superintendent, business manager and school committee budget subcommittee and the school budget that was offered to the finance committee had not been seen by the school administration and they will be looking at that tomorrow night. The increase in Chapter 70 money is not even close to the cost of the added mandates. Chapter 70 needs to be reviewed. The Town needs some relief from all these mandates.

Ms. Aldrich feels that our contributions per student are skewed because we don't get the grants and funds given to some of the poverty level schools. It's not our contribution as a Town that's causing us to not give as much per student it's the whole package.

Mr. Brougham also stated that the number of students in the system is on the decline. Belchertown is considered a non-entitlement community.

Mr. Aponte stated that looking at test scores shows Belchertown on top – we get results.

Mr. Elstein agrees with everything he's heard. He also stated that the four or five counties in Western Massachusetts compared to the rest of the State are poor. We are constantly fighting an uphill battle particularly with unfunded mandates but even with general requirements of having to do all the things we need to do. It's not going to get any better. There was a very modest proposal on the State ballot to help with road repair which failed. The legislators are not interested in the problems in our area. He thinks we are in for some tough times. We are paying enough in taxes.

Ms. Aldrich feels the meeting with the school committee was a good one. There is a new group of committee members as well as a new superintendent. She felt that they listened to what the Board had to say.

Mr. Aponte stated that the postponing of the capital for Pathfinder is very significant for Belchertown. Unlike the operational costs which are directly tied to the student enrollment which has come down the last couple of years the capital is specifically

tied to your general school population of which we have the highest. That means any capital project occurring at Pathfinder will see Belchertown paying the most.

Mr. Aponte asked that the Town Administrator find out from Mr. Falcone, from Pathfinder, when he comes back with the numbers for the three year rolling average if he would ask him if the approval to the charter change does it need the super majority or does it have to be unanimous. The budgets are super majority but wonders if it's different with a charter change.

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

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

Mr. Aponte: Last summer during discussions regarding Jessica's Boundless Playground on the original site there was going to be significant amount of site work requiring significant more money. It was suggested that the site be moved to where the basketball court was located to save money. The Recreation Department and Recreation Committee are now anxious to see the next steps in replacing the basketball court. The amended CPA legislation will now allow the Town to build a basketball court. Mr. Opalenik, Recreation Director thinks the price is in the \$8,000 - \$12,000 range. The key is now the site work; if it goes to the original site for Jessica's Boundless playground fill will be needed. Mr. Opalenik has suggested the site of the old playground at Chestnut Hill Community School which is relatively flat; however, that means removing and demolishing that playground. Mr. Elstein feels it might all be CPA possible. Mr. Aponte will be responsible for looking into it and keeping the Board up to date. This will not happen until next year's CPA application process.

Mr. Barnett: Last Saturday. Senator Rosenberg in conjunction with Hampshire Council of Governments and Franklin Council of Governments their annual meeting. The Attorney General spoke in the morning along with all kinds of seminars throughout the day run by members of the State government. At noon time the Lt. Governor spoke and then answered many questions including those regarding unfunded mandates.

Mr. Archible: At the last Veterans' Service Advisory Board meeting the veterans agent brought up the fact that some veterans have come forward and asked about some of the flags that the Town owns. The Town Common has the American flag and the POW flag underneath it which is protocol and here at Town Hall we have the American flag and the service flag underneath it which is not protocol. Presently there is a service flag underneath that and we have the Town flag. He has contacted the DPW Director and instructed him to put it back in sync where the Town Hall the American flag and the POW flag underneath it. The Town flag will fly on the other pole with the service flag underneath that. This will make the veterans in town happy.

Also, a couple of week ago he asked Lew Louraine to help with some problems with Charter. Charter actually did something good for a change. It looks like the customer on South Street is moving forward and hopefully will be getting their way. He is now looking at two situations with Charter on Enoch Sanford Road. Mr. Louraine checked out Enoch Sanford and indicates that there is cable there and that the house at 65 Enoch Sanford should be able to hook up to cable. He will check out 95 Enoch Sanford Road.

Ms. Aldrich: Jane Crutchfield put a letter in the *Sentinel* about people not picking up after their dogs. She asked that people please start picking up after their dogs.

She mentioned that she has Girl Scout cookies sitting on the table because Lew and Peg Louraine had the girl scouts in working on badges. She thanked the Louraine's for helping the girls out.

- 8) **Questions from the Press:** Mr. Russell from the *Republican* asked questions regarding the proposal for Christopher Heights. He questioned how many units were proposed, the construction cost and about the tax credit amounts. His questions were answered by the Board. He also asked some questions regarding the budget which were answered by the Board. Walter Hamilton from the *Sentinel* questioned the road work being done by the Town at the former State School. The Town Administrator explained the road work as it now stands.

- 10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

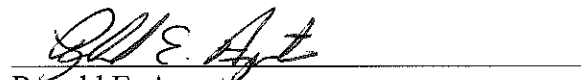
Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

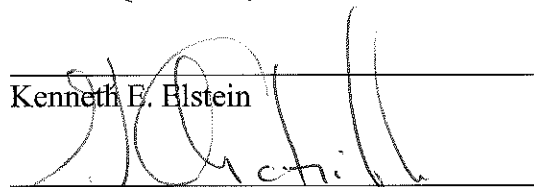
Board approved/endorsed: May 26, 2015

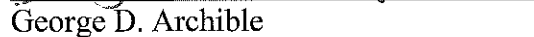
Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

  
Brenda Q. Aldrich, Chairman

  
Ronald E. Aponte

  
Kenneth E. Elstein

  
George D. Archible

  
William R. Barnett