

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
INCLUDES JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2020 6:30 P.M.
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Board of Selectmen Members Present:

Audrey LaBrie, Chair
Barbara Anderson, Vice-Chair
Amy Salter
Rick Ward
Mike Barbaro

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Recording Secretary

Finance Committee Members Present:

Maureen Ward, Vice-Chair
Douglas Delay
Keith Kent
Charles Corts
David Alexander
Philip Levine

Finance Committee Member Absent:

Tom Kane, Chairman

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Deanne Keddy's Email of Interest to Serve on Winchendon's Cultural Council (filed)
 - Jill Sackett, Winchendon Cultural Council's Chair, Email of Support of Appointment (filed)
- Michael Mimnaugh's Letter of Interest to Serve on the Conservation Commission (filed)
- March Notice of Vacancies (filed)
- Lickity Splits, LLC Renewal Application for a Common Victualler's License (filed)
- Winchendon Police Department Yearly Activity Summary, 2019 (attached)
 - Winchendon Police Departments PowerPoint Presentation (attached)
- Town Manager's FY21 Draft Budget Presentation (filed)
- Report of the Town Manager (attached)
- Minutes approved: N/A

LaBrie called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Announce audio/video recording disclosure – No announced they would be recording the meeting this evening.

1. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Ward stated that he had the honor of working the polls at the primary election held on March 3, 2020. He wanted to thank all the voters that came to the polls to cast their vote. There were 1,690 voters present, which is 40% of the registered voters in town. He also wanted to give a shout out to the Town Clerk's office for ensuring that everything ran smoothly.

Anderson reminded residents that burn permits are available online at the Fire Department's webpage. The information can be filled out online and payments can be made online as well. Once you are permitted, you only need to call the Fire Department the day you plan to burn to confirm weather conditions are safe.

1.1 Nomination Papers for Annual Town Election – LaBrie noted the deadline for submitting papers for the town election is coming up. Those interested in running for office must have their papers turned in on or before Monday, March 16th by 6:00p.m. She then listed the terms available, a list which is available on the website.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: There were none heard.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS: There were no public hearings this evening.

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

4.1. Cultural Council Appointment – Deanne Keddy - Deanne Keddy was present with her interest to serve on the Cultural Council, along with Jill Sackett, Chair of the Cultural Council. LaBrie invited Ms. Keddy to come before the Board to introduce herself and tell them what compelled her to submit her name. Keddy stated that she had heard about the Winchendon Cultural Council and what they did and she thought it was something that she would be interested in. LaBrie did state for the record that Keddy is a Gardner resident, but clarified that due to state oversight and funding of the Cultural Council, there is no restriction on residency requirement. Deane was welcomed and thanked for her interest.

Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen approve the appointment of Deanne Keddy to the Winchendon Cultural Council, seconded by Ward.

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion, to which none was heard.

With a vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

Conservation Commission Appointment – Michael Mimaugh - Mr. Mimaugh was not present this evening. LaBrie noted his interest to serve on the Conservation Commission. LaBrie asked if the Conservation Commission had approved the appointment; to which Daigle answered yes.

Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen approve the appointment of Michael Mimaugh to the Conservation Commission, seconded by Anderson.

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion. Anderson thanked him for stepping up.

With a vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

4.3. Board of Selectmen Board and Committee Vacancies - LaBrie read through the current list of vacancies on Committees and Boards that are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. She asked that anyone interested in serving on a Board or Committee to contact the Town Manager's Office. She thanked all the volunteers that donate their time and efforts to the Town.

LaBrie noticed one vacancy was that of Selectmen representative to the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC). Hickey indicated his interest to serve on the committee.

Anderson moved to appoint Keith Hickey to serve as the Selectmen representative to the MJTC; seconded by Barbaro. With a vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

LaBrie noted the Agricultural Commission is meeting on March 17th and will be making the appointment from the Agricultural Commission to the Open Space Preservation Appraisal and/or Survey Revolving Fund Advisory Committee.

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:

Common Victualler License Renewal – Lickity Splitz, LLC - The applicant, Mr. Lee, was not in attendance. His business, Lickity Splitz, plans to open for the season on March 23rd. The Board reviewed his application and clarified that pre-operational inspections from the Board of Health and Fire Department must be done prior to opening. Daigle informed the Board the license, if approved this evening, will not be issued until the inspections have been conducted.

Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen approve the renewal of the Common Victualler License for Lickity Splitz, LLC, seconded by Ward.

LaBrie asked if there was any further discussion, to which none was heard.

With a vote of all aye, the motion passed unanimously.

6. BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENTS:

Annual Update from Police Chief David Walsh / Introduction of New Police Officer - Police Chief Walsh sat before the Board to present his annual update. He said that 2019 was another busy year for the department, continuing to address issues related to policing in general as well as those related specifically to the Town of Winchendon. Of these issues, equipment was the first to be addressed. The department entered a lease program for tasers to ensure best protection for each officer. Due to a generous donation from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, five new mobile data terminals were installed in primary cruisers.

Walsh noted that with the assistance of the Public Works Department, the cruiser fleet is currently in good condition. The department replaced one marked cruiser and a new K-9 vehicle that will be in service next month.

The Sally Port construction project was completed in November as planned and budgeted. This area provides the department with a necessary secure area for prisoner processing and transport.

The department plans to request approval from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation for the purchase of five cruiser cameras for primary patrol vehicles.

R.A.D. (Rape Aggression Defense) programs were again offered at the Police Department and were well attended. Another community outreach initiative led by Sgt. Wolski is the P.O.S.T. (Post Overdose Support Team). This initiative focuses on identifying individuals with substance abuse disorders and provides them with education and treatment. Staff also provides programs to the elderly offering training and education on fraud and safety.

Walsh noted that the focus of their initiatives change and is adjusted to meet the ever-changing needs of the community. He stated that the outreach programs that have been instituted have been instrumental in engaging the community with the police department.

Clyde, the K9, is now in his fifth year with the department and he has proved to be invaluable. Clyde has been a valuable resource in drug searches both in Winchendon and in area communities with the North Worcester Country Drug Task Force. This past year, Clyde was involved in eighteen narcotic searches, fifteen tracks and fifteen demonstrations. On one search, Clyde tracked a mentally unstable man in a wooded area for several miles on a several hours old track. Clyde guided officers to the individual's location, where he was provided necessary care. Clyde has been battling an aggressive form of lymphoma since November. He has received chemotherapy treatments and has responded well. As of this meeting, Clyde is in remission and will be receiving monthly checkups moving forward.

Officer Brandon Lucier appeared before the Board to be introduced. Officer Lucier recently graduated from the Reading Police Academy in September and currently works overnights. His hiring will bring the first increase in staffing that the department has seen in over ten years. With this new hire, the evening shift is

fully staffed with two officers and a sergeant scheduled each evening. Moving forward, the department is hoping to hire additional reserve or part time officers to supplement the patrol force during their busiest hours.

The volume of investigations continues to be a concern. In 2019, there were twenty-nine drug related arrests and complaints sought against various individuals, nine of which were the direct result of search warrants. Walsh noted that one particular concern is the timely investigation of sexual assaults. Such investigations need to be investigated very thoroughly which places demands on the officers. To address this, the department has certified four more officers in sexual assault investigation bringing the total certified to seven.

Chief Walsh then presented his PowerPoint which highlighted recent crime statistics and departmental activity. He noted that their call volume has increased substantially, continuing on what has been an upward incline. The top six call reasons that accounted for the most man hours include accidents, domestic incidents, motor vehicle stops, requests for ambulances, request for an officer and investigations. Walsh then reviewed the 2018 overdose analysis compared with 2019.

At the conclusion of his presentation, LaBrie thanked him for his time and stated that it was interesting to see the trends.

Anderson asked how many officers were now on the force with the addition of Officer Lucier, to which Chief Walsh answered there are fifteen officers; the first increase in over ten years.

Anderson asked how the department is handling the regional issue of illegal drugs and addiction and how we can get ahead of the issue. Chief Walsh answered that there are programs that attempt to identify those that have been treated for an overdose in order to offer treatment and follow-up support. Education is key to treating this epidemic, and there are many options for treatment and an alternative lifestyle. Hickey asked what is proactively being done regarding the harmful effects that illegal drugs have. Chief Walsh replied that there is an abundance of information available but there is little interest in receiving the resources that are provided. He looks forward to seeing how statistics may change next year with the outreach program happening this year.

Barbaro moved for a five minute recess; Ward seconded. By a vote of all aye, the meeting recessed at 7:08PM.

The meeting reconvened at 7:13PM.

7:00PM JOINT MEETING WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE

Town Manager's FY21 Draft Budget Presentation – Hickey informed all that the FY21 Draft Budget Presentation can be found on the Town Manager's webpage. He then addressed the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen and prefaced his budget presentation. He noted that all topics that had been an issue in the past have been addressed in this draft budget and that this year, all budgeted funds are balanced. He used reasonable conservative revenue estimates to predict his budget.

Hickey stated that his first priority is to produce a balanced budget while providing resources as necessary to the community. He noted that the school department budget has increased fairly significantly. Hickey noted that the Finance Committee Vice-Chair, Dr. Maureen Ward, had pointed out that the appropriations presented are based on the Fall Town Meeting capital. He also noted that there have been transfers throughout the FY20 budget that occurred after July 1, 2019. The Town Accountant has been working on providing a budget spreadsheet that presents the original approved budget with an additional column that will note revised budget with transfers for wages and other Board approved items.

The Budget process and timelines were reviewed with the Town Meeting Warrant closing on April 7th, the Finance Committee holding their Public Hearing on April 29th and the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 18, 2020.

Hickey indicated he anticipates using free cash to fund article 12, if it is approved by the Board and voters. He addressed the condition of the Senior Center and the options available – either renovate the building or build a new one entirely. The voters have the option to decide on this topic. An engineer's study was done which revealed an estimated cost of repair of 3.7 million dollars. He also noted money allocated for the replacement of water meters in Town to a radio read drive-by system. The current meters in place have a life expectancy of ten years; 25% of which have been replaced or repaired already. As meters age, they do not track the water flowing through the meter as they should which results in lost revenue for the Town. There is an existing \$40,000 in the budget which will provide for the initial purchases of new radio read drive-by water meters.

Hickey noted that an option for voters is to transfer the Grout Memorial Park back under the ownership of the Town. Anderson asked who will maintain the lot to which Hickey answered the Public Works Department.

Hickey detailed the annual general fund budget summary and revenue sources for the town. He noted that 90% of the Town's revenue comes from state aid and real estate taxes. He indicated the need to appropriate the debt exclusions for FY21 in the amount of \$329,503 for Police Station renovations, fire ladder truck repairs and Library access renovations. He noted the state aid for FY21 will be \$14,222,161 and outlined how that funding is allocated. He reviewed the increase of Indirect Cost which has remained historically lower than a few years ago. He reviewed the transfers from other funds to supplement the sources in the operating budgets. Hickey asked if there were any questions, to which none were heard.

He then moved on to present a comparison of general fund budget uses from FY18-FY21 and explained significant changes in funding requests. In terms of public safety, the Town is now fully funding the addition of three new firefighters which was originally funded by a SAFER grant. As that grant has expired, the Town is now fully absorbing the full cost. Anderson asked if all the firefighters currently hired are also EMTs, to which Chief Smith answered yes. All firefighters not only assist in fire operations but in the ambulance as well. Anderson noted the high call and response volume of the firefighters to which Hickey agreed that the department is consistently busy. Hickey went on to explain significant changes in funding requests. He noted an increase in personnel, which would change a DPW Foreman position to Assistant Director. Anderson asked for clarification on why such a change would be necessary. Hickey answered there are a number of reasons, primarily being with all that is going on in the Public Works Department right now, the current Director could use some support and position ourselves when Mr. Gallant decides to retire so that he can begin training a candidate as a replacement. The cost is about \$8,000 a year to do this. He continued on to discuss fringe benefits and noted that health insurance premiums are up 3.7%. He reviewed the Capital Items and noted that all capital funding requests have been reviewed and are approved by the Capital Planning Committee. Hickey asked if there were questions or comments, which there were none.

The school budget was then presented with Hickey noting that the budget has gone up only \$5,900 primarily due to Indirect Cost being \$270,000 more than in FY20. He reviewed a side by side comparison of what the School's Indirect Costs are for FY21 vs. FY20. Hickey asked if there were questions or comments, which there were none.

Hickey next reviewed the Monty Tech Assessment. He informed the Board the actual number came in at \$839,000 and he would modify the budget from the original number used of \$842,239. He noted this appropriation continues to drop presuming there are less students going. LaBrie asked where the students were going to which Ward explained that there are just not as many available slots now with other Town's taking them. The Town has 126 slots.

Hickey then moved on to the Water Dept. budget noting it will not require a rate increase with the Winchendon/Ashburnham Water Treatment bond being paid off in FY20. The draft FY21 budget includes \$75,000 of capital to begin to replace the thirty year old water plant equipment with Ashburnham also contributing the same amount. Anderson asked about the water line breaks. Hickey replied they have been working with Ashburnham to replace the water mains while they reconstruct the road the main line is beneath; that main line is the Town of Winchendon's which supplies water to Winchendon. There is a second pipe that leaves the plant that provides water to Ashburnham that we don't contribute to. Anderson asked if we will ever work on the water main coming from Ashburnham to Winchendon to which Hickey replied that they have been waiting for the water bond to be paid off. There are no grant funds available to get this work done. He added all the professionals they have brought

in to find where the water leak is, have not been able to find a leak. It is hard to locate underground leaks without digging up and exposing the mains, a costly and time-consuming project. While the Town is responsible for the cost of unaccounted for water, Hickey noted that the level has dropped from 29% to under 15%, which is well within the legally allowable limits. Hickey concluded at some point we will need to replace the water main, but he doesn't know if there is a need to do so in FY21 at the expense the Town will incur to do so.

Hickey moved on to present the Proposed Wastewater Fund Budget, which requires a rate increase of 5.89%. The Town of Winchendon is beginning to address an EPA mandate that requires the Town to separate pipes that lead from the storm drains, ensuring that one pipe leads to the wastewater treatment plant and the other pipe takes stormwater. The budget is asking for \$35,000 to begin to address this issue as the Town is currently risking facing a \$60,000 annual fine enforced by the EPA. Anderson asked what this work entails. Hickey replied that for each storm drain, there must be two pipes underground. One pipe will lead to the Wastewater Treatment Plant for treatment and disposal and the other pipe will connect to a stormwater drainage system. Stormwater would then be directed to areas in Town that would allow the water to safely be absorbed. Current illegal drainage systems, such as sump pumps illegally discharging into the town right of way, will be addressed in order to comply with our permit. LaBrie asked what the total cost of the aforementioned work would be at which time DPW Director Albert Gallant came forward to provide more information. He clarified that forty years ago, these drainage setups were allowed. Ten years ago, the EPA introduced the Clean Water Act which mandated that the town must start cleaning up the drainage system, first the larger cities and now the smaller towns. As such, the Town is now facing the financial challenge of complying with both MS4 and I/I regulations at the same time. Gallant indicated that every drain will need to be tested, and the department is currently working on mapping out the locations of all drains. We will have to build retention ponds before they go into a river. The Town has ten years to come to full compliance with these regulations. Unfortunately, the Town only faces two options – pay fines mandated by the EPA or upgrade our system to come into compliance. In order to provide a sense of the increase, Hickey indicated that without the costs of these upgrades, the wastewater rate would only increase 1.57%. The increase is mainly to fund the \$35,000 to begin to address this issue. Anderson asked about being charged a sewer fee when she is watering her yard. Hickey answered that residents have the option of purchasing an outdoor irrigation meter which does not charge a wastewater fee. It is a \$500 initial purchase that also requires a \$50 backflow inspection twice annually. Unless irrigating on a significant basis, the cost of the meter and the backflow inspections will cost more than the sewer charged on used water. Anderson asked what would happen if the capital funding requests to upgrade the drainage system is not approved by the voters to which Hickey answered that the work would not proceed and the town would face the risk of incurring fines.

Anderson asked how much money the Town saved when the wastewater treatment process was privatized. Gallant answered that the department saved \$14,000 just for the first two reports Veolia has done for them. Hickey offered to provide both boards what the wastewater budget would be if we retained Town employees working at the Wastewater Plant and compared to Veolia operating the plant.

Hickey indicated that he was unsure how the EPA settled on the \$60,000 fine that they charged the City of Gardner, and that he would check on the formula and share it with the Board at a later date.

Resident Michael Mimnaugh came before the Board and expressed that he had worked on the civilian side of the water operating system in Leominster. He stated that should voters not pass the proper funding and the Town fails to comply, EPA conducts site visits yearly and a fine will be issued.

After further discussion, LaBrie offered her own recent experience as a homeowner on private septic. She indicated that the cost of installing a new septic is a similar price to what a homeowner would pay in sewer bills over the span of thirty-three years. While nobody wants to pay wastewater rates, there are benefits to being a customer on the Town's water and wastewater systems. At this point, Hickey presented an overview of comparable towns regional to Winchendon and what they charge for water and wastewater fees. Of these towns, including Ashburnham and Templeton, Winchendon had the third lowest fees.

Next, Hickey reviewed his proposed Transfer Station budget, which is seeing an increase in use by the Town residents. He noted that fiscal years 2018 – 2021 saw Monadnock Disposal as the contractor for the Transfer

Station. There was a significant increase in their cost; so the Town is investigating similar vendors that can provide the same services at a competitive price. Finance Committee member Mr. Kent asked what the Town is incurring annually for the cost of cleaning up trash that is dumped in Town. Hickey stated that the DPW budgets \$7,500 a year, which has not yet been used in full, but would be charged to pay a contractor to clean trash disposed of in the public way.

Hickey asked if there were further questions or comments; none were heard. He thanked the Department Heads for their assistance in helping develop the budget and their concern for the amount of money they ask for and what is being asked will be used wisely.

Charles Corts moved to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting; Keith Kent seconded. By a vote of all aye, the Finance Committee adjourned at 8:42 PM.

Barbaro called for a five minute recess; Anderson seconded. By a vote of all aye, the meeting recessed at 8:42 PM.

The meeting reconvened at 8:50 p.m.

7. NEW BUSINESS:

Right of First Refusal Affordable Housing Deed Rider for 558 River St. - Tracy Murphy, Director of Community Planning & Development, came before the Board. She explained that the Town had been contacted by the homeowner regarding their purchase through the Affordable Housing Program through the Greater Gardner Development Corporation funded by CDBG. As part of the deed, the homeowner agreed if they were to list the house for sale, they are first to contact the Town and offer a Right of First Refusal. The house is located on River Street and Murphy is required to notify DHCD how the Town wishes to proceed. Anderson asked if the sale of this house jeopardizes the recent CDBG grant awarded to the Town to which Murphy answered no, she just needs to notify DHCD of the Town's wishes so the homeowners can move forward with the sale of their property.

Barbaro moved the Board of Selectmen not exercise the Right of First Refusal for the purchase of the home at 558 River Street; Ward seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS: There was no Old Business this evening.

9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

1. Financial Updates-

- a. There are no financial updates this week.

2. Personnel Updates-

- a. John Vanderhamm, an Equipment Operator for Public Works broke his foot off duty and will be out for six weeks. Former Equipment Operator Mike Breau has been hired as a temporary Equipment Operator for approximately one month to fill the opening.

3. Project Updates-

- a. There are no project updates this week.

4. Miscellaneous Updates –

- a. Senator Gobi and Representative Zlotnik reached out recently seeking a list of projects to include in the upcoming Transportation Bond Bill filed by Governor Baker. I proposed including the extension of Commerce Drive at \$1.5 million, sidewalk improvements to address ADA noncompliance at \$500,000 and the Blair Square roundabout at \$1.5 million.
- b. I, along with members of the Police and Fire Departments, participated in the Read Across America Day on Friday, February 28th at the Memorial School.

The Town Manager informed the Board that Tracy Murphy has filed the CDBG application for Railroad Street. He expects to hear something by July.

Anderson asked when the new Public Works position would take effect. Hickey explained that should the proposed new position be approved by the voters at the May Town Meeting, the new position would take effect on July 1, 2020.

10. **MINUTES:** There were no minutes prepared for approval this evening.
11. **COMMUNICATIONS:** There were no communications this evening. LaBrie indicated that the next scheduled meeting is March 23rd.
12. **AGENDA ITEMS:**
13. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** There was no Executive Session held this evening.
14. **ADJOURNMENT:**
Barbaro moved to adjourn, seconded by Anderson. With a vote of all aye, the Board adjourned at 9:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Taylor Tower

Taylor Tower
Recording Secretary