

**TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON
SELECTBOARD AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
JOINT MEETING MINUTES
FIRE STATION, 37 STATE ROAD
February 25, 2015**

PRESENT:

SELECTBOARD

DEBORAH PHILLIPS
SEAN STANTON
STEPHEN C. BANNON
DANIEL BAILLY
ED ABRAHAMS

TOWN MANAGER JENNIFER TABAKIN
TOWN ACCOUNTANT LAUREN SARTORI

FINANCE COMMITTEE

SHARON GREGORY
MICHAEL WISE
LEIGH DAVIS
WALTER F. ATWOOD III
THOMAS BLAUVET absent

1. CALL TO ORDER:

Ms. Phillips called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

2. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS BUDGET FY 2016

Joe Sokul, DPW Superintendent, and Peter Soules, Highway Superintendent, were in the audience. Ms. Tabakin gave an overview of department activity, noting costs of street lighting and electricity are up, gas and diesel fuel down. Snowfall has challenged this year's budget. She said union bargaining resulted in some changes (i.e. bereavement time, plow truck scheduling). Last year had a 2% raise, this and next year, 2.5%. Sokul acknowledged the 2014 snow and ice account has gone over budget. He said the cost of salt is up 40%. Ms. Sartori noted vehicle maintenance costs are down.

Mr. Sokul said there still needs to be drainage work done on Main Street from Elm to Castle before the major street project begins this spring. Foundations for new light posts will be installed. When the actual project gets underway, he said, the road will be excavated down 30 inches and built back up. He said there be no work July and August. He said the Fire District will put in a new line from Castle Street to St. James Place. He said trees will be removed. Maximilian is the contractor.

In answer to a question from Mr. Bailly, Mr. Sokul said contractors for Housatonic Water Works post a bond and guarantee their pavement restoration will last 12 months. Sharon Gregory asked when the RFP for the Housatonic School will be issued, noting that it ceased to be a school ten years ago. Also, nearly two years ago, the Finance Committee had recommended expedited action to be taken because the building would deteriorate more rapidly after being mothballed. Town Manager said it would be done in this fiscal year. Ms. Gregory asked that a backup plan be put into place because there had been no viable interest shown in the previous two attempts to sell the building. In answer to a question from Ms. Davis, he said Housatonic School has been mothballed, only the

electricity maintained. He said the building will need roof work eventually. In answer to a question from Ms. Gregory, he said department needs and school district overlap so it is not possible for DPW departments to share equipment very often. He said parks, cemeteries and school grounds add up to 130 to 140 acres. Ms. Tabakin said there will be a savings when Housatonic Solar comes online.

Mr. Sokul noted that when Main Street is rebuilt, there will be trash and recycling bins from St. James Place to Cottage Street, meaning more overtime for weekend collections. Mr. Stanton asked about the town's salt and salt/sand mixes. Mr. Sokul explained when each was used. Use of more sand, he said, means more street sweeper time in the spring, and catch basin cleanups take longer. Ms. Tabakin suggested the town needs to look at alternatives to salt, out of environmental concern. Ms. Phillips suggested the town will at some point have to look at the transfer station's viability, and whether it should be kept open or closed.

Regarding buildings, Mr. Sokol said he contracts a variety of services, such as security, and anticipates increases in utility costs. Ms. Sartori said the town this year locked into a \$3.24 per gallon rate for heating fuel, but closer to July 1 will stop ordering fuel, let the tanks run down and after July 1 order fuel at presumably a lower rate.

Regarding cemeteries and parks, Mr. Sokul said there are two full-time laborers and two floaters during mowing season. He said fewer people were purchasing cemetery plots, instead using cremation. Ms. Sartori said interest from the perpetual care fund buys a new mower once in a while.

3. SENIOR CENTER BUDGET FY 2016

Director Polly Mann and Assistant Director Rita Schumacher were in the audience. Ms. Tabakin said the budget is relatively level, one expense being a new photocopier. Ms. Mann said a rising interest among seniors is healthcare, and several services are offered free, thanks to grants from various agencies. On a wish list, Ms. Tabakin said, are a dishwasher and a commercial kitchen. Ms. Davis suggested the center urge seniors to remember the center in their wills.

4. LIBRARIES BUDGET FY 2016

Library Director Amanda DeGiorgis and Ramsdell Assistant Librarian Talya Leodari were in the audience. Ms. Tabakin said the libraries now have two assistant librarians and some wage rates/salaries have been adjusted. Increases for the next two years will be 2.5%. Ms. Gregory commended the summer art show. Ms. DeGiorgis said a photo exhibit is in the works. Trustee Kathy Plungis said Ramsdell accessibility is still a concern. Ms. Tabakin said the plan now is to contract design for a ramp for the first floor. A young adult room is being turned into a community room. The second floor has been revamped for the Historical Commission archive.

5. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m. on a motion by Mr. Bannon, seconded by Mr. Bailly and voted without dissent.



Bernard A. Drew
Recording Secretary