

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: October 31, 2022 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Peru Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman/ACO  
Bruce Cullett, Selectman/Police Chief  
James Welch, Town Administrator  
Terry Walker, Administrative Assistant  
Jesse Pelkey, Fire Chief  
Nanette Mone, Board of Health

Public Attendees: Sam Haupt, Kim Wetherell, Charlene Steele, Charles Goyette, Coralee Pelkey, Charles Wood, Susan Morrison, Sara Adams, Dawn Pelkey,

**Item 1: Call to order:** 6:00 P.M.

**Item 2: Roll Call:** Chairman Leach present, Selectman Cullett present, Selectman Haskins absent

**Item 3: State Recording status:** Selectman Leach for personal use, Kimberley Wetherell is also recording

**Item 4: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag:** Led by Selectman Leach

**Item 5: Review and Approve BOS Meeting Minutes for 10/3/2022, 10/17/2022, 10/20/2022:**

Selectman Leach motion to approve 10/3/2022 on hold.

Selectman Leach motion to approve 10/17/2022 minutes pending changes, Selectman Cullett second, 2-0

Selectman Leach motion to approve 10/20/2022 on hold

**Item 6: Updates of Departments:** Emergency Management Director Cullett presented Henshaw's well drilling proposal for working on the well at fire station. Missing from quote was the installation of two state filter stations for an additional \$500.00. EMPG Grant is due November 20<sup>th</sup> and EMD Cullett spoke with Former EMD and Bob Barry from MEMA about the possibility of utilizing the grant funds to convert existing snowmobile trailer into an ATV rescue trailer and the purchase of a steel litter. Response from MEMA is favorable. Police Chief Cullett held the department's biannual firearms qualifications and training on Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

TA Welch received a resume and cover letter for a candidate that is interested in the Principal Assessor position. The candidate is a Principal Assessor for the City of North Adams, Town of Clarksburg, Lanesborough and Great Barrington. He understands that this is a part time position, he is very interested and would like to do the data entry remotely. This candidate has all the qualifications and the board decided to meet with him for an interview or formal conversation. The Board of Selectmen received an email from the Tax Collector/Treasurer recommending setting a preliminary tax rate to help with the cash flow. Patriot Properties is making progress and the new accounting firm will be working collaboratively with the Assessors to set the tax rate. TA Welch mentioned that he received a \$600.00 invoice from Priority Cleaning dated May 2022. Selectman Cullett suggested that TA Welch look into another cleaning company. TA Welch will attend a meeting on Thursday to finalize a Green Communities grant which is due November 4<sup>th</sup>.

Fire Chief Jesse Pelkey questioned the items that he should include on the inventory sheet. The Board of Selectmen stated that the inventory will be items that have a serial number and covered by town insurance. Also, the format for the inventory that Fire Chief Pelkey created is fine. Chief Pelkey mentioned that the pump house heater has been installed for the winter. Chief Pelkey mentioned that he has applied for several grants including one to assist seniors. The FEMA grant for a mini pumper has not been denied and Peru is still in the running. Chief Pelkey questioned why highway garage permits were not signed. Highway Superintendent Russell had concerns about the diesel permit stating

the capacity was not correct, but the Transfer Station permit has been signed. The Selectmen suggested Fire Chief Pelkey, and Highway Superintendent Russell have a conversation during a Board of Selectmen's meeting regarding the diesel tank permit. Chief Pelkey heard that the Board of Selectmen were in possession of a business license that may need to be signed off by the building inspector and fire chief. Selectman Cullett mentioned that is a used auto dealership and he doesn't have a retail business. Kim Wetherell noted that the business license for an auto dealership needs a class and location. Kim Wetherell also mentioned that the Board of Selectmen cannot issue a Business License without a location and class. The auto dealership license is a class II and the location is the residence of Mr. Munch at 44 West Main Road.

Fire Chief Pelkey is submitting a mileage reimbursement for 462 miles for EMT training -2 days in Hancock, plus lettering for the command vehicle in Pittsfield. The lettering on the command vehicle was paid for by the Fire Association at no cost to the town. Chief Pelkey mentioned that new fire codes are coming out and he is required to take classes and that fire and safety codes need to be updated. Pelkey mentioned that there is a wide variety of classes, and he picked classes geared toward Peru. Chief Pelkey is requesting to take command vehicle to the training classes. Some discussion about whom should pull permit for dumpsters. Fire Chief Pelkey and Selectboard had mixed feelings as to who should pull permit the homeowner, contractor or Dumpster owners such as Casella. Chief Pelkey stated that a 6 yard dumpster or greater needs to be permitted in Massachusetts. TA Welch questioned who the deciding factor will be and who should pull the permit. Fire Chief Pelkey stated that the Fire Chief will decide who will pull permit. Selectman Cullett suggested the homeowner or contractor performing work on a property should be made responsible for pulling permit because it is too difficult to communicate the requirement to out of town commercial haulers. Cullett stated that a building permit is the responsibility of the contractor or homeowner. TA Welch mentioned that there should be consistency on the website with the application and the Fire Chief should have a copy. Fire Chief Pelkey stated that if permit eyes was in force that would not be a problem. Fire Chief Pelkey offered to do additional research to see what surrounding towns are doing and report back at a future meeting.

The Board of Selectmen mentioned that next week the mileage log is due for the Fire Chief's command vehicle.

In response to an email Chief Pelkey sent the BOS, Selectman Cullett stated that the Selectmen are not trying to make Chief Pelkey feel slighted by referring to the Fire Chief position as part time. He explained that the position is a part time, non benefited position that receives a stipend. Cullett stated that the Department is comprised entirely of volunteers with the exception of the Chief and works on an on-call basis. Cullett reiterated that the reference to part time was related to employment only. Chief Pelkey stated he has never received a policy for part time employees. Selectman Cullett mentioned that the Board is working on an employee handbook, but that it has not been completed. Chief Pelkey mentioned that TA Welch sent him a newly adopted vehicle policy on October 6<sup>th</sup> that was an unsigned draft and no date on the policy. Selectman Cullett stated that town owned vehicles are specifically for emergency use and not personal use. Selectman Leach mentioned that when Police Chief Cullett has any training he lets the Selectboard know ahead of time, and this is what was being asked of Chief Pelkey. TA Welch mentioned that the policy is a baseline, and Chief Pelkey should request to utilize it when the use falls outside what is approved within the policy. Sam Haupt mentioned the meeting with TA Welch and Chief Pelkey was productive. Although Sam Haupt mentioned that an email Chief Pelkey received from TA Welch suggested he should watch himself because further violations would be taken. The BOS and Fire Chief previously agreed that the Fire Dept Association would cover cost of EMT classes and once the individual passes EMT class and associated tests the Association would be reimbursed by the Town. Fire Chief Pelkey stated that these classes are mandated in his job description. Selectmen Cullett stated that the job description was written by the Selectboard and a preference is not a mandate. The BOS reminded the Fire Chief to ask them for an interpretation of his job description if he had any questions. Selectman Cullett noted that when attended the Police Academy he did not receive any compensation or mileage reimbursement from the Town and he traveled to Springfield three days a week for a six month period.

Dawn Pelkey, mentioned that Chief Pelkey is trying to do his best and be transparent. Dawn also mentioned that Chief Pelkey is so afraid of doing something wrong. She mentioned he is trying to follow the rules and is constantly afraid of being attacked. Dawn also mentioned that Chief Pelkey will keep a log because he is afraid of being attacked and does

not want to get a violation for using the command vehicle. Susan Morrison understood that preapproval by the Selectboard before Chief Pelkey attends the next class is required. Selectman Cullett again stated that Chief Pelkey should talk to the Board of Selectmen before attending any classes. Everyone agreed that communication is essential in resolving these issues. Charlene Steele mentioned after all this discussion she is still not clear whether Chief Pelkey can use the command vehicle for inspections. Selectman Cullett stated that the current compensation the inspectors receive (Building Inspector, Wiring inspector, plumbing inspector, smoke alarm/oil burner/fire related inspector) is 90% of the permit fee and historically inspectors are required to furnish their own transportation because they receive this fee. Additional discussions must be held to determine if this should be modified to allow the Fire Chief to utilize a town vehicle for these inspections. Selectman Cullett reiterated that everyone should use common sense in using town owned vehicles. Coralee Pelkey stated at the Annual Town Meeting the discussion stated that the command vehicle could be used for Fire Department business or mutual aid. Coralee Pelkey also stated that she felt that Fire Chief Pelkey should use the vehicle to attend school and all training for the Fire Department. Plus, all mutual aid calls the chief should use the command vehicle. Kim Wetherell felt that the Fire Chief should be able to use the command vehicle for everything it doesn't make sense to piece it out. Kim Wetherell also mentioned that the Police Department and Highway Department use the vehicles for all uses. Kim Wetherell reiterated that the Fire Chief in an inspector that is responsible for saving lives. Police Chief Cullett stated that when a police officer works a traffic detail and uses a police vehicle the contractor hiring the traffic detail pays the Town a fee for use of the cruiser. Otherwise the police officer uses their own vehicle and receives no additional compensation. Sue Morrison stated that this should be hashed out. Chief Pelkey is the fire chief, and it is a fire department vehicle. TA Welch mentioned that the town owned vehicle policy was not developed just for Fire Chief Pelkey and TA Welch though it was a good time to put a policy for town owned vehicle in place. Charlene Steele mentioned that the building inspector does not have any emergency calls and she felt the Fire Chief should use the command vehicle while he is doing inspections to shorten the time of response to an emergency. Sara Adams mentioned that the elderly feels safer when the Fire Chief uses a town vehicle to go to homes for inspections. Kim Wetherell said a discussion at Annual Town Meeting mentioned where the command vehicle would be stored. Kim Wetherell stated that when she requested a recording from Annual Town Meeting, she was told the recorder had malfunctioned and she couldn't obtain the recording. Chief Pelkey mentioned that he found a windshield for Engine 3. Fire Chief Pelkey will be on the November 14<sup>th</sup> agenda to clarify issues from tonight.

Board of Health: Nanette Mone mentioned that a grant for \$2,000 is in the works for permit eyes. Hopefully the grant gets approved and will expand to all departments: Board of Health, Fire Department, Wiring Inspector, Plumbing Inspector and Building Inspector will all utilize permit eyes modules.

**Item 7: Discussion regarding upcoming Auction for Town Owned Properties:** The board has an understanding that the town will never recoup all taxes owed on these properties. The plan is to get these properties back on the tax rolls and accept any reasonable solid offer. There are 6 properties in Tax Title that will be auctioned off. The auction is planned for December 1<sup>st</sup> and Sullivan and Sullivan will be the auctioneers.

**Item 8: Update and discussion on Procurement Cards and Vendor Accounts:** The town has been approved for credit cards with Adams Community Bank. Amazon account no progress at this time.

**Item 9: Public Input:** Coralee Pelkey mentioned that a pan is missing from the kitchen at town hall and wants this documented. Coralee Pelkey also mentioned that the rugs in the kitchen are a safety hazard. She stated that a couple people tripped over the rugs, and she would like the Selectmen to have the rugs removed. Coralee Pelkey also asked the Board of Selectmen why the Town of Peru didn't have a Special Town Meeting to vote on the high school track and how much money was being returned to the town. Selectman Cullett stated that the BOS decided that it wasn't a cost-effective approach to schedule a STM. The board explained that no money is being returned to the town. The total cost to complete the high school track is approximately \$3,200 per year for the Town of Peru.

Some discussion regarding cash flow and sending out preliminary tax bills will be discussed at a later date. Selectman Leach was against Preliminary Tax Bills and Selectman Cullett was in favor of Preliminary Tax Bills to improve cash flow for the Town.

**Item 10: Review and Approve Accounts Payable, Treasury Warrants and Payroll Warrant: 23-9P, V10-2023**

Selectman Leach motion to allow Henshaw to complete the work on the well, Selectman Cullett second, 2-0. Town Treasurer mentioned that the credit cards have arrived. TA Welch will be in charge of distributing to department heads. Town Treasurer also spoke about the auction which will be conducted by Sullivan and Sullivan. The owners with property in Tax Title will be notified in advance. The purchasers will receive a Treasurer’s deed. The auction is scheduled for December 1, 2022.

**Item 11: Adjourn:** Selectman Leach made motion to adjourn the 10/31/2022 BOS Meeting, Selectman Cullett second, Vote 2-0. The 10/31/2022 BOS Meeting adjourned at 9:06P.M.

**Articles used:**

- Minutes- 10/17/2022
- Warrant 23-9P ,V10-2023
- Properties in Tax Title
- Town owned Vehicle Policy
- Resume for Assessor position
- Email from Collector/Treasurer regarding Preliminary Tax bills

Respectfully Submitted,

*Terry Walker*  
*Administrative Assistant*

Verne Leach, Chairman

  
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Doug Haskins, Selectman

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Bruce Cullett, Selectman

  
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Date Approved: 11-28-22