BOARD OF SELECTMEN

P.O. Box 372
West Brookfield, Massachusetts 01585

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2023

PRESENT: Mr. Roland Sickenberger; Vice-Chair, and Mr. Eric von Bleicken, Clerk
ABSENT: Mr. David Pierce, Chairman
ATTENDEES: Chief Nathan Hagglund, Chief Richard Lapierre, Steven & Doreen Piechota, Liz Maher, Kelly Hitt, Heather Gough, Tammi Melanson, MJ Hasche, Kara Hartung, Chrissy Florence, Alexandria Florence, Mel Dorman, Lester Paquette, Barry Nadon, Robert Benson, Kathy Landry, Duane Cassavant, Mark O'Donnell, Wes Cassavant, Holly Takorian and Jessica Wemette

Opened the meeting at 6PM

CHIEF HAGGLUND – POLICY & PROCEDURES

Chief Hagglund addressed the Board this evening to discuss policy/procedures under Chapter 97A. The department is currently in the self- assessment stage and is looking for guidance to implement changes. The are 159 standards that the department needs to meet and updating is expected to take approximately 18 months to complete. Chief Hagglund provided four newly revised/drafted policies for the board's review. He asked if they would like him to present them for review as they are completed. Both Mr. Sickenberger and Mr. von Bleicken would like to review before final approval. The office will also send counsel an email making sure they (BOS) are within their authority.

WARRANTS & INVOICES

Motion to approve and sign Warrant No's 23 P 18 and 23 W 18 dated February 23, 2023, in the amounts of $84,768.21 and $82,619.29 respectively made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.

MINUTES

Motion to approve and sign the Minutes of February 15, 2023, and February 21, 2023, as written made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.

BOARD OF HEALTH – ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Members of the Board of Health were in attendance this evening to introduce Ms. Alexandria Florence as their new Administrative Assistant. She took over for Ms. Sarah Allen who retired December 31, 2022. Ms. Florence has her public health certification among other certifications. The Board welcomed her and is looking forward to the much needed changes. The BOH will be in touch in order to address the Selectmen at an upcoming meeting to discuss permit fees for town agencies.

PUBLIC HEARING – VOTE BY MAIL

Heather Gough, Interim Town Clerk requested that the Board of Selectmen consider opting out of Vote by Mail for the upcoming election. This can be done by a vote of the Board of Selectmen and must be done every year as it is not an automatic vote year after year.

Ms. Gough expressed concerns over the budget for the additional office hours and it is time consuming and a lot of work. Both Mr. Sickenberger and Mr. von Bleicken are concerned over restricting anyone's ability to vote. ***Motion to not agree to opting out of vote by mail made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.***

AFSCME – ESSENTIAL WORKER PAY

Ms. Wemette was in attendance this evening to discuss the essential worker pay. This matter has been discussed and agreed upon by the Board. There was a recalculation of the figures that needed to be done, however Mr. Sickenberger stated that he would have the numbers to the Accountant by April 11th. Ms. Wemette thanked the Board for their time.

WATER COMMISSIONERS – OPEN POSITION

The Water Commissioners met with the Board this evening to discuss a vacancy due to a resignation. They have advertised and did several interviews. The individual that they would like to present would need to be paid more than the starting salary provided for that position. The individual requested $30.00 per hour. He does have appropriate licenses in hand which lends to the argument of an increased starting salary. After a discussion, the following motion was made: ***Motion to offer the individual an hourly rate as close to $30.00 per hour as possible according to the AFSCME chart made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.***

McCLURE ENGINEERING INVOICES

At an earlier meeting of the Board of Selectmen, a vote was taken to pay McClure Engineering for work performed to date on the Leland Road Project. Counsel reviewed the final submissions and felt that three invoices were not in keeping with the intent of the project or contract, however would leave that up to the Board to decide. After a discussion and in order to keep the matter moving the following motion was made: ***Motion to rescind the previous vote and pay all invoices ($24,092.75) as submitted made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.***

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT/CORRESPONDENCE

1. The office received the resignation of Elise Kowal from the Common Committee. - ***Noted***
2. The office received a request from the Cultural Council seeking permission to hold a Community Drum Circle on July 17th, July 24th, July 31st and August 7th (rain date – the following evening) – ***Approved with no objections.***
3. The office received a request from Matt Koziol from the Asparagus Festival to lift the parking restriction once again on Maple Street and to further close School Street during the event which is scheduled for May 20, 2023. – ***Approved with no objections.***

4. The office received correspondence from town counsel on the McClure Engineering invoices. There is a dispute between the board's prior vote on what to pay and the position of the Water Commissioners. – ***See above note on this matter.***
5. The office received notice from MassDOT that contingent upon legislative approval, West Brookfield's Chapter 90 funds for FY 24 will be $229,903.79. - ***Noted***

WARRANTS & INVOICES

Motion to approve and sign Warrant No's 23 P 18 & 23 W 18 dated February 23, 2023, made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

The Board had an opportunity to review the TA job description with comments provided by town counsel. Ms. Acerra will provide a clean copy of the results of the discussion this evening for the Board.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. von Bleicken sent around comments on the draft handbook and would like to keep this matter on the front burner.

COMMENT & CONCERNS

As Interim Town Clerk, Ms. Gough is having continual issues with the files in the Clerk's Office, specifically the general and zoning bylaws. She stated that she will not put her name on any work that she has not done herself.

NEXT MEETING DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 14, 2023

Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Sickenberger – unanimous at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Acerra

Rebecca Acerra
Executive Secretary

Eric von Bleicken, Clerk

4-4-23

Date Approved