BOARD OF SELECTMEN

P.O. Box 372
West Brookfield, Massachusetts 01585

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, October 11, 2023

PRESENT: Mr. Roland Sickenberger; Chair, Mr. Eric von Bleicken; Vice-Chair, Mr. Brad Merkel; Clerk and Mr. Ronald San Angelo; Town Administrator,
ABSENT:
ATTENDEES: Advisory Committee -Catherine Lamica, Ronald Garceau, Michael Audette, Melinda Czub and Lori Loughlin

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

1. **APPOINTMENTS** – Public Safety Complex Committee

Motion to appoint the following individuals to the Public Safety Complex Committee; Steven Rust made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Merkel von Bleicken – unanimous.

2. **Special use permits for 2024:**

Requesting party	*Date*
Gofishan LLC	Saturday May 11, 2024
Bass Seekers	Saturday June 1, 2024
NEBKS- Central Ma	Saturday July 27,2024
Lat Cast Anglers	Saturday October 5, 2024

Discussion was initiated by Chair Mr. Sickenberger. Discussion was had about the possible effects these events would cause to lake residents. After brief discussion it was determined these events would more than likely be over by noon and would cause minimal interruption with lake residents during these tournaments.

Motion to approve the following Special user permits as requested: made by Mr. von Bleicken; second: Mr. Merkel von Bleicken – unanimous.

3. ***6:15 p.m.*** Meet with the Advisory Committee to begin discussion on anticipated Prop 2/12 override.

Town Administrator, Ron San Angelo brought the following concerns to the Advisory Committee:

1. Free Cash – The town has utilized approximately **$380,000** of Free Cash to balance its FY 2024 Budget. We must add more revenue so that the budget is balanced without using Free Cash. **Cost $380,000**

2. **The salaries for Town Employees** have long been recognized to be inconsistent (Lower in many cases) with the salaries of other towns' employees. This results in a high turnover of employees and reduced morale. The Collins Center is in the process of examining all town employee salaries to give us a road map of how to modify our salaries to fix the inequities and make us more competitive in the marketplace.

3. **The Police Union Contract** was developed with 5 patrol officers and 1 Sargent to meet the requirements of all the shifts. In 2021 a patrol officer left, and the union was told that this would be temporary. The position has still not been budgeted or refilled. This means that the Chief is using Overtime to fill shifts at a high cost.

4. **The Education Budget** – The simple problem is that we cannot continue to provide funds over and above the limits imposed upon us by Proposition 2 ½. In FY 2024 we told all departments to limit spending to 2%. However, the School Budget that was sent to the Town Meeting was at a 5% increase. At the Town Meeting it was increased again and more Free Cash was utilized to fill in the gap. The Town must decide that if it is going to give the school system funds beyond the limits of Proposition 2 ½ it is going to have to do so through an Override process.

Based off these statements' conversation began between Selectboard members and Advisory Committee whether what would be needed for a Pro 2 ½ Override. There was discussion whether it would be a Capital Expenditures Override or Operational Override. Conversation was had between both boards regarding what issues were needed within the next few years for the town etc.: building maintenance, Route 9 project, School budget, water project, equipment purchases, and the need to bring the Police Department to full staff. The main concern is the fact that if free cash is not used the school district can come after it.

A second issue was brought up if Prop 2 ½ is addressed do we bring about two proposed budgets to the town. It was determined two budgets be proposed: one budget as a level funded budget with out any increases or free cash being used to balance. This would mean significant cuts to staff, faculties, and services provided to the town. That being said it is unfortunate but due to the towns current financial status it is necessary to propose this budget to the town as it has been mentioned numerous times by Advisory staff during town meetings.

The second budget proposed would be approximately 6% higher off 380,000 to eliminate the use of free cash to and account for a 2 ½ increase in budget expenditures to town departments. These two budget proposals were in agreement with both boards.

The third issue on the Prop 2 ½ override is having the school committee on board with addressing our concerns with the Town's financial status. It was determined to extend an invite to the School Committee, Advisory Board, Select Board (West Brookfield), Warren Selectboard, and School Superintendent. E-mails will be sent out requesting a meeting to discuss upcoming fiscal year concerns and to be on a united front. This meeting was requested as of October 25, 2023, at 6:15 p.m.

No further comments or concerns were had at this point and a Motion to adjourn was made.

Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. Mekel; second: Mr. von Bleicken – unanimous at 7:48 PM.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE: October 17, 2023 – 6 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Acerra

Rebecca Acerra
Executive Assistant to the Town Administrator/
Board of Selectmen

Brad Merkel, Clerk

10/17/23.

Date Approved