TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TUESDAY, September 17th, 2024 – 6:00 PM

West Brookfield Town Hall, 2 East Main Street, 1st Floor Conference Room.

RECEIVED
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BY:

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

1. ***Motion to open the meeting***

   Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
   2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger
   Voted

2. Minutes of September 3rd, 2024, BOS Regular Session and Executive Session for approval.

   Motion to approve and sign the Minutes of September 3rd, 2024, of the BOS Regular Session and Executive Session.

   Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
   2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger

   Discussion: None

   Voted: Approved 2-0

3. Discussion/Possible Action: Possible Vote – General Permit to the Central New England Equine Rescue, Inc. for their Fall Festival at the Farm event to be held on Saturday, October 12th from 12pm - 4pm.
   Motion to grant a General Permit to Central New England Equine Rescue Inc. for their Fall Festival at the Farm event to be held on Saturday, October 12th from 12pm - 4pm.

   Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
   2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger

   Discussion: Question was asked about the location: New Braintree Rd.
   Voted: Approved 2-0

4. Discussion/Possible Action: Possible Vote - West Brookfield Fire truck fix/purchase presentation w/ Chief Lapierre.

Discussion: Ron San Angelo explains about the determined need for the replacement of Engine #1 as introduction to Fire Chief Rich Lapierre PowerPoint presentation.
Mr. Lapierre first explains what happened. Fire truck was emitting "excessive smoke" prompting a trip to Brookfield Motors. The mechanic indicated the need for a complete engine replacement. This is cost prohibitive. The Chief explains that Engine #1 is the main workhorse engine and that the loss is therefore, profound. Engine #1 is called for "270 calls per year" and now must be garaged. He further notes the condition and age of all other vehicles in the fleet. There is presently one working engine that would not be adequate for a larger fire.
Mr. Lapierre sites a recent example of a fire at Quirk Wire that was only luckily contained due to proximity of water and described a likely dire scenario that could have easily occurred. He noted that, without the main fire truck, the outcome could have been a disaster and would have placed fire fighters in potential grave danger.
The Fire Chief noted that, in addition to the engine replacement, due to the age of the vehicle it would not pass the "pump test" and that the NFPA standards were too high. The Chief attempted to find out if repair was feasible and "no one would touch it."
There was a consensus of agreement from all present that repair of the vehicle was not an option.

Mr. Lapierre then spoke of attempts to seek an alternative "used" vehicle to replace Engine #1. He presented a slide with some available options but none fit the criteria. They were unsuitable two-man cabs, would not fit into the outdated building garage, or were simply not available in the current market. It was also noted that the age of most of the vehicles would put our town in the same situation again within only a few years.
This option was also rejected by consensus.

The discussion then moved to the option of purchasing a new truck. Chief Lapierre explained that a "basic truck" could be purchased for approximately $730,000. This would break down to an estimated $70,758.92 annually for 3 years. It would break down per household to an estimated $46.10 per month. It was determined that the town would need to borrow about $530,000. Cammie Lamica suggested that the town could borrow at a better rate. Bob Brown expressed this should be the highest priority for the town.
Lt. Gagnon of the Fire Dept. pointed out the extreme concern for the safety of the men with the present condition of the vehicle fleet.
There was discussion that the department was extremely upset about the fact that the planned PowerPoint was not able to be presented before the Special Town Meeting articles were set and that therefore, no article about the purchase of a new vehicle was included.
Chair Roland Sickenberger felt that the correct decision was to "bite the bullet" and purchase the new truck.
David Brown asked what was on the warrant.
Ron San Angelo suggested that an article would need to be drafted with a debt exclusion for the fire truck. He also suggested the union contracts issue as possibly needing to be included on the warrant at the STM. Laurie Loughlin noted that contracts had never before been taken to town meeting for a vote.
Roland Sickenberger observed the fact that the proposed town meeting date was very rushed.
Ron San Angelo asked if the Chair would move up the discussion about town meeting. It was agreed that this would be an Article on the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

Cammie Lamica an Advisory Board member suggested it was clear that it was better to purchase a new truck.

5. Discussion/Possible Action: TA salary for profile.

Motion to establish a $100,000 salary for the position of Town Administrator.

Discussion The Town Administrator suggested that this was a base salary and even at this salary it would be hard to attract a quality candidate. Salaries for this type of position could be as high as $115,000. This is a critical position for the town and the town has received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant funds and saved countless dollars through better management of the Town. The Town Administrator suggested ways to fund the position for the current year but members of the Board of Selectmen felt for transparency reasons it should go on the Special Town Meeting Warrant.

Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken

2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger

Voted 2-0

6. Discussion/Possible Action: Vote Expected. Approval of using $3000 of ARPA funds to purchase Police uniforms for new members of the West Brookfield Police force.

Motion to approve using $3000 of ARPA funds to purchase Police uniforms for new members of the West Brookfield Police force.

Discussion The Town Administrator and the police chief explained that this was due to the fact that we lost a number of officers and needed new uniforms for the new members.

Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger
Voted 2-0

7. ***Motion to Open the Special Town Meeting Warrant.***

ARTICLE 1- UNION CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TOWN AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES' COUNCIL 1364 (HIGHWAY & CLERICAL).

To see if the Town will vote to approve the collective bargaining agreement voted on by the Board of Selectmen between the Town of West Brookfield and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 1364. Three-year contract between July 1, 2024-June 30, 2027; or take any other action relative thereto.

Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger
Approved 2-0

ARTICLE 2- UNION CONTRACT BETWEEN THE TOWN AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES' COUNCIL 93. (WEST BROOKFIELD FIREFIGHTERS).

To see if the Town will vote to approve the collective bargaining agreement voted on by the Board of Selectmen between the Town of West Brookfield and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 93. Three-year Contract between July 1, 2024-June 30, 2027; or take any other action relative thereto.

Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger
Approved 2-0

ARTICLE 3 - TOWN ADMINISTRATOR SALARY

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, borrow, or transfer a sum of money to increase the salary for the Town Administrator position for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, for the purpose of attracting a qualified candidate for the position; or take any other action relative thereto.

Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger
Approved 2-0

Discussion about a possible additional Article regarding the addition of adding the purchase of a new Fire Truck. Discussed need to put the money back into the Fire Stabilization account that was set aside for a potential grant. It was also recognized that we would need a Debt Exclusion Article for the Special Town Meeting. The Town Treasurer/Collector would have to look at various borrowing options.

Roland suggested that we needed to set the Election possibly for October 25, 2024. Even if the Fire Truck Article is not approved at the Town Meeting it is an important enough issue to be brought to all

town voters. The Chief was instructed to get a more accurate cost of the new truck and to look at the state bid list. The Chief said he would work on getting quotes and he would work with the Treasurer/Collector to find out the actual cost to taxpayers.

8. Treasury Warrants – Vote Expected
   Motion to approve and sign the Treasury Warrants as presented.

   Motion Made by Selectmen von Bleicken
   2nd by Selectmen Sickenberger

   Voted 2-0

9. TA Business/Comments

   Discussion - The Town Administrator talked about the fact that we have finished all Green Communities projects and will be applying for next year. Met with Chris Collins to develop next year's application and how to divide projects between the Town and the School System. Mr. San Angelo said the new TA will have to finalize the budget process, but noted that it was his plan to get the budget documents and the Capital Improvement documents to department heads prior to his departure. He said that they will be forming a screening committee who will be responsible for recommending final candidates for the job to the Select Board.
   Chair Sickenberger suggested the removal of language about a car for his use because of the controversy. He further noted that it should be clarified that the job involved a four-day week.

10. Other Business - **None**

11. Comments & Concerns - **None**

12. Next BOS Regular Meeting Date: October 1st, 2024 – 6PM.

10/15/24 @ 1805hrs

Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time

10/17/24 10:45 AM

~~Clerk~~ to BOS Date/Time