TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TUESDAY, October 15th, 2024 – 6:00 PM

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

MINUTES

RECEIVED
OCT 30 2024
BY:

PRESENT: Mr. Sickenberger, Chair; Mr. von Bleicken, Vice Chair; Mr. Merkel, Clerk; Ms. Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to the TA/BOS; Jillian Patch, Treasurer/Collector; Heather Gough, Town Clerk; Lori Loughlin, Advisory; Mr. San Angelo, Town Administrator (virtual).

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

Motion to open the meeting

Minutes of September 17th and October 1st BOS meetings for approval.
Motion to approve and sign the Minutes of September 17th, October 1st, 2024 made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Appointment of Brede Woods to the COA – Vote expected.
Motion to appoint Brede Woods as a member of the Council on Aging for a three-year term made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Mr. San Angelo indicated that the Town Clerk's office had created a great spreadsheet to track appointments for Committees/Boards, etc. and has started to stagger the appointments, so people aren't up all at once. The Select Board's office will maintain the spreadsheet going forward and update the Town Clerk's office with corrections/additions.

Discussion/Vote Expected: Appointment of Jillian Patch as Tax Possession Custodian.
Motion to appoint Jillian Patch as the Town of West Brookfield's Tax Possession Custodian for a one-year term made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.
Ms. Patch indicated that this was done to help procuring tax titles on properties for the Town. She added that there are new processes in place by the State before bringing properties to Auction, which include getting appraisals done on properties from a State list, have a perc test done and hiring Constables to serve papers (will be free from using Police officers from the Town). Properties will be listed by a broker. A bid less than 2/3 of the value will not be accepted. Properties that the Town owns will be grandfathered in at an interest rate of 16%, but new properties will be at 8%. When we sell, we would only get the Tax Title fees. These are held aside and have up to a year to be claimed by the previous owner of the property.

Discussion/Possible Action: Vote Expected: Borrowing for a new DPW plow truck.
Motion to approve borrowing in the amount of $170,000 for a new DPW plow truck made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Special Election Costs out of ARPA funds – Vote Expected.
Motion to allocate $4000 from ARPA funds to pay all costs associated with hosting the Special Election made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Mr. San Angelo asked Ms. Patch what type of loan and percentage would we be looking for on the new Fire Truck. She indicated that a 500,000 loan would be cheapest at 5% for a 10-year State House note (as we have no bond rating). Mr. Merkel asked if we could take money out of Stabilization, but Ms. Patch added that we would need $ in stabilization to get a bond rating. Mr. San Angelo added further that we need to keep the money in there.
Mr. Sickenberger added that we would most likely wait until mid-January to hold the Special Election as we would have the holiday season just prior.

Special Use Permits for Wickaboag Lake; Blackstone Valley Bass Anglers event 8/23/25 and Aluminum Rigs Fishing Derby 3/29/25 – Votes expected.
Motion to approve the Blackstone Valley Bass Anglers event at Wickaboag Lake on 8/23/25 made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.
Motion to approve the Aluminum Rigs Fishing Derby event at Wickaboag Lake on 3/29/25 made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

Discussion/Possible Action: MOU for Flex Officer position, Police Department including Lateral Transfer Prorating Vacation on time. ***HELD – MOU not ready.***

USING $7500 of ARPA FUNDS FOR CAC – Vote expected.
Motion to use $7500 of **ARPA funds for CAC broken out as $5000 toward legal costs to renew Spectrum/Charter Communications contract and $2500 to establish internet access for CAC made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.**
Mr. San Angelo explained that Paul Lapenas/CAC has been working tirelessly to get the CAC up and running and being able to livestream the Town Meetings and events. Mass legislation re: PEG did not pass and monies held there fall under Enterprise funds, which need to be certified each year at Town Meeting.

PROCESS FOR APPOINTMENTS FOR BOARDS AND COMMITTEES
Ms. Gough explained that often members of committees and boards, who are appointed do not show up to get sworn in or complete the Ethics trainings required, which is 30 days. She would like to add verbiage to the appointment letter, which indicates that they will not be sworn in until the Ethics training is completed. In addition, Mr. San Angelo has suggested that she and Ms. Gobeille can draft a letter to the Boards and Committees indicating that if they do not comply with the trainings in a timely manner and be sworn in West Brookfield could be fined up to $10,000 per day. Additionally, their vote would potentially not count at meetings with their Board/Committee.
Mr. Sickenberger asked Ms. Gough how the Town Clerk carpets are going/getting resolved. Ms. Gough explained that she is working with John's Paint. They are working up a new quote and Ms. Gough needs to connect with him to select a pattern of carpet tiles for the Town Clerk's office.

WARRANT FOR STATE ELECTION FOR SIGNATURE.
Motion to accept the Warrant for State Election for signature as presented made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

COMMENTS & CONCERNS
White Christmas/Common Committee issue re: tree for the Common. Mr. Sickenberger asked Ms. Gough her perspective on the tree not being planted and returned to the nursery in Sudbury. Ms. Gough explained that White Christmas contacted Asparagus Festival/Common Committee re: planting a new tree on the Town Common. Their committee sent several emails re: the issue and had no response from the Common Committee, so their last communication did not include them. The White Christmas Committee contacted Mr. Daley/Tree Warden, Louise Garwood/Historical Commission for her plant expertise to select the right place for the tree on the common. It was determined that they were going to plant it in the place, where the Christmas Tree on the Common originally stood. The Common Committee heard that this was happening and Mr. Richards, chair of this committee asked them to stop as they had not been given permission. In addition, Mr. DeMaio (previous Tree Warden) had thought the tree was not a good specimen and should not be planted. The tree was returned the following week to the nursery. The tree was going to be purchased equally by the White Christmas Committee and Historical Commission. All agreed there were hurt feelings with this event and Mr. Sickenberger urged the committees to work together. He mentioned that he and Diane Vayda with the Common Committee were going to meet the following week and wanted to include White Christmas. Mr. Merkel added that we don't want to be cutting down any trees on the Common but planting one where the previous Christmas tree stood was a good idea. Mr. San Angelo felt that other groups, which work with the Common, like Friends of the Bandstand Committee and Memorial Committee should be involved as well. Ms. Gough mentioned that Mr. Daley/Highway, Tree Warden would like to see a group formed (similar to the makeup of Stormwater) from members of groups which have events and interest specifically with the Town Common.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS ANNUAL TOOTSIE ROLL DRIVE – Vote Expected.
Motion to approve the approve the request from the Knights of Columbus Council 11080 annual Tootsie Roll Drive on October 19th and October 20th from 9am until 12:00pm noon. Rain dates October 26th and 27th made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

Architectural Insights Services and Fee Proposal – Vote Expected.
Motion to accept the Services and Fee Proposal from Architectural Insights. – HELD – contract not completed. Mr. San Angelo indicated that Heather/Petrini Law had send Al the contract template, but Al had made additions. They will work on an updated contract and should have this ready for the next Select Board meeting.

DISCUSSION/VOTE EXPECTED: RECOMMENDATIONS for STM

Article 1
To see if the Town will raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds sums of money to supplement appropriations previously voted under Article 4 at the Annual Town Meeting of June 4, 2024, for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2024, for various Town Departments, or take any action in relation thereto.

Roll call vote. Mr. von Bleicken - aye.; Mr. Merkel – aye. Mr. Sickenberger – aye. Unanimous. Recommended 3-0

Article 2
To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of $45,750 to the Fire Truck Stabilization Account, such amount having been transferred from the Fire Truck Stabilization Account for the 5% grant match towards a new Pumper/Tanker Truck, contingent upon receiving the FY 2022 Assistance to Firefighters Grant, or take any action in relation thereto.

Roll call vote. Mr. von Bleicken - aye.; Mr. Merkel – aye. Mr. Sickenberger – aye. Unanimous. Recommended 3-0

Article 3
To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of money from the Fire Truck Stabilization Account, such amount to assist in providing funding for the purchase of Fire Engine #1 pump one replacement, or take any action in relation thereto.

Roll call vote. Mr. von Bleicken - aye.; Mr. Merkel – aye. Mr. Sickenberger – aye. Unanimous. Recommended 3-0

Article 4
To see if the Town will raise and appropriate, borrow or transfer from available funds, a sum of money for the purchase of Fire Engine #1 pump one replacement , authorize the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen to borrow such sum of money pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 44, Sections 7 and 8 or any other enabling authority and issue bonds and notes therefor; provided further that any premium received by the Town upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any premium applied to the payment of costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 20, thereby reducing by a like amount the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs, provided, however, that this debt authorization be contingent upon passage of a Proposition 2½ debt exclusion question General Laws Chapter 59, § 21C(k) and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to accept any gifts or grants for such project; or take any action in relation thereto.

Roll call vote. Mr. von Bleicken - aye.; Mr. Merkel – aye. Mr. Sickenberger – aye. Unanimous. Recommended 3-0

TREASURY WARRANTS – Vote Expected

Motion to approve and sign the Treasury Warrants as presented made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

TA BUSINESS/COMMENTS

Mr. San Angelo mentioned that we are losing a great employee Tammi Kemp in Highway. Tammi has been with the Town for around 28 years. Anne Garwood-Hampp, who currently is the Town Clerk Assistant has been hired to replace her. She will train at Highway, then work at both departments when Tammi departs, so there is no loss of personnel in the Town Clerk's office during the election period.

Next BOS Regular Meeting Date: October 29th, 2024 – 6PM.

7:30pm - Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. von Bleicken. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time 10/22/24 2:37pm

Town Clerk Date/Time