TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, January 21st, 2025 – 6:00 PM

West Brookfield Town Hall, 2 East Main Street, Conf. Room (1st floor).

MINUTES

PRESENT: Roland Sickenberger, Vice Chair; Eric von Bleicken, Chair; Theresa Cofske, Town Administrator; Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS; Nathan Hagglund, Police Chief; Jim Daley, Stormwater member; Dave Brown and Tim Morrell/Planning Board; Rich Lapierre/Fire Chief; Joe Borlikoski/Drop Off Center, resident; Mark O'Donnell, Highway.

GUEST: National Grid spokesperson.

ABSENT: Brad Merkel, Clerk

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

6:01pm: Motion to open the meeting

MINUTES OF January 7th BOS MEETING FOR APPROVAL -
Motion to approve and sign the Minutes of January 7th, 2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes

APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATE PLUMBING INSPECTOR, TROY ALLEN –
Motion to appoint Troy Allen as the West Brookfield Alternate Plumbing Inspector for the term January 21st through June 30, 2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.
Ms. Gobeille indicated that the inspector role is only for plumbing and not gas. This will be addressed next year with budgets.

APPOINTMENT OF PAMELA SEARAH AS ELECTION CLERK -
Motion to appoint Pam Searah as Election Clerk for the term January 21st through June 30, 2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

APPOINTMENT OF ANNE GARWOOD-HAMPP as STORMWATER AUTHORITY CLERK -
Motion to approve the appointment of Anne Gardwood-Hampp as the Stormwater Authority Clerk for the term, 1/21/2025 – 6/30/2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

SPECIAL PERMIT FOR WICKABOAG SPORTSMANS CLUB ICE FISHING on LAKE WICKABOAG 2/16/2025: Vote Expected.
Motion to approve a special permit for the Wickaboag Sportsmans Club to hold an ice fishing event on Lake Wickaboag on 2/16/2025 made by Mr Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken.

Joe Borlikoski stated that he has seen snowmobiling on the Lake and open water fishing. There are open-water areas. He also suggested that we put a sign at Town Beach about the "fishing/swimming at own risk, etc." Others indicated that we need to put information on the Town's website. Mr. von Bleicken indicated that we need to emphasize that the Town is not responsible for any injuries, etc. Chief Lapierre said he will make it known on the website about the rules of being on ice. Mr. David Brown asked if we want to "monitor the site" and would this be either the Lake Association or the Town? Chief Lapierre indicates that as it is a State Boat ramp, we should reach out to the State for a sign.

6:05pm POLE HEARING/CEDAR DRIVE: Possible Vote – (National Grid spokesperson indicated that they will be running poles down to bring electrics so RVs can have power. Mr. Daley indicated that Cedar Drive is a private road.) *Started reading this agenda item, then waited until 6:15pm to finish, as it was the advertised and posted time.

Motion to install 4 JO poles on Cedar Drive beginning at a point approximately 150 feet East of the centerline of the intersection of Forest Drive and continuing approximately 550 feet in a North direction. Extend pole lines for meter pedestal – West Brookfield, MA made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

CIVILIAN TRAFFIC UNIT DISCUSSION/TRAFFIC CONSTABLES CONTINUED FROM January 7th, 2025's BOS meeting.

Chief Hagglund indicated that he added a line or 2 in the MOU. He was also working with our current insurance company to get a figure on how much it would cost to insure this worker. Berry insurance used a different code. It will be listed under our Worker's Comp policy and will cost $1,100 to add the Traffic Constables to our current policy.

Joe Borlikoski asked about hiring other town employees for these positions. Chief Hagglund said that he'd like to see how the pilot program works first, but added that there will be a hierarchy for this position. First will be West Brookfield retired police officers, then officers from communities. Part time Fire will be next. Mr. Sickenberger asked if other groups would be allowed to apply for these roles. Chief Hagglund added that the communities that he would recruit from would be Warren, Ware, North Brookfield, Palmer, Spencer, Leicester, where they currently receive mutual aid from and that he is not about to add other groups to apply for these roles. He added that this role's duty would be Monday to Friday from 7am-3pm, every day and would most likely be from 2028 – 2030, when the Rt. 9 project is under way.

Mr. Daley asked if they would be paid the same detail rate as police officers. Chief Hagglund answered yes. Mr. Borlikoski asked how they would get the same rate of pay. Chief Hagglund stated that firstly, we need to create the job, then vote for the policy. He also stated that the Traffic Constables would get paid by the Commercial Detail Company, not the Town (i.e. MassDOT). He added that the Town would pay the Workers' Compensation component with extra funds he has for this fiscal year. Ms. Cofske added that we will need to set up an account for this in FY26.

Motion to create the position of Traffic Constable in the Town of West Brookfield using the job description as presented made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

Mr. O'Donnell stated that when their Union was bargaining, they brought flaggers up. They would like to be in the group of folks training for this new role. Mr. Sickenberger responded that we will add other groups to train along the way, but he agrees with Chief Hagglund that we should start slow. Mr. von Bleicken agreed with Mr. Sickenberger.
Chief Hagglund indicated that the duty would be from 7am-3pm and full-time highway staff would not be able to work both jobs (their current job and the traffic constable one). Chief Hagglund added that Fire is used more often with these types of details.

Motion to approve the 4.41 Traffic Constable policy with the understanding that after 6 months of being enacted the policy will be reviewed and potentially add Highway personnel to the list of groups who can train and participate made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

MassDOT Project No. 609049 ORDER OF TAKING, DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION OF DAMAGES; SECOND AMENDMENT TO LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME – Vote expected.

Motion to approve the Order of Taking and Dedication on the properties associated with the MassDOT Project No. 609049; to determine the award of damages as set forth in the Order; to approve the Second Amendment to License Agreement with the Department of Fish and Game as presented; and to authorize the Executive Secretary to execute all required notices in connection therewith made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

RECOGNIZING MILLBROOK CIRCLE AS A PRIVATE ROAD AND ADDING IT TO THE TOWN'S INVENTORY – Vote Expected.

Motion to recognize Millbrook Circle as a private road and adding it to the Town's road inventory made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

Mr. Daley indicated that Millbrook Circle is currently included in Madden Rd. for the Town Clerk/Elections. Post Office does deliver to this address as they know where Millbrook is, however the Pole Workers consider Millbrook as 46 Madden Rd. for voting purposes. This is a problem and needs to be corrected. Mr. Daley also indicated that MassDOT has Millbrook Circle in their information. He indicated that there is a form to fill out line. Ms. Gobeille to find this form.

HIGHWAY VEHICLES FOR AUCTION – Vote Expected

Motion to approve the auctioning of 3 Highway Vehicles as presented made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Ms. Gobeille – 2 yes.

RESIGNATION OF ERIC VON BLEICKEN AS BOS REP. TO THE STORMWATER AUTHORITY. BRAD MERKEL TO TAKE HIS PLACE – Vote expected.

Motion to accept the resignation of Eric von Bleicken as the BOS representative to the Stormwater Authority and to appoint Brad Merkel as the new BOS representative made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.

TREASURY WARRANTS -

Motion to approve the Treasury warrants as presented made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken 2 yes.

TA REPORT – Ms. Cofske indicated that for the first 2 weeks she's been working on the Budget, working with John Madden. On January 30th Anne Gobi will be coming to the offices in West Brookfield. CMRPC will be pulled in as well. She's been looking at the Town's Master Plan and is connecting with David Brown to discuss Capital Planning needs for the Town. There are also several grants she is looking at, Compact Community Grant, IT Grant. For the grant, they need to know what it will cost to carry it forward after the initial digitizing documents/permits cost. She is currently gathering data for your information. We will be committing to funds for what we will need ongoing after the initial plan. This is one item, which could qualify for Capital Funding (needs to be $10,000 or more). Ms. Cofske added that going forward we need to have good records management, moving to digitizing files.

Ms. Cofske added further that she was planning on attending the MMA show this coming Thursday and Friday to reconnect with folks.

She has also sat in on the Cable Committee and their interview with the 3rd candidate (legal counsel) for the Charter Communications contract renewal negotiations. Mr. Brown asked if they were renegotiating this. Ms. Cofske indicated yes, we are renegotiating this and it could take years. She also added that we do have leverage. She asked the 3rd candidate questions and strategies. West Brookfield has also not used PEG fees. It has gone away from being on the agenda for the State. There are many questions about what we will have held in the PEG accounts. We also have the % of what Spectrum (Charter) makes on servicing the Town. We have just under 1.5% of residents viewership, earning just under $20,000. The money we made can be only used on showing meetings, groups, etc.

Ms. Cofske found a group of Towns going together for negotiations on contracts. Conference call on Tuesday, 10am with help of CMRPC and the Municipal Broadband Institute. Mr. Sickenberger added that traditional broadcast cable is dying. Mr. Brown asked if the contract renewal, cable contracts bundling is part of the contract renegotiating. Ms. Cofske answered, no.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Cofske – Historical Commission has received gifts from J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust each year.

Mr. von Bleicken – Went to a CMRPC event the other day with Nathan Hagglund re: public safety (crosswalks, etc.). He asked Mr. Daley if they could add crosswalks along the location where a resident was struck by a car the other week by the common. Mr. Daley indicated no, but he would like to have blinking lights/flashing beacons across to the common. He is working on a street grant now. He added that there have been several close calls, adding push buttons to the crosswalks. There is also a possibility of creating a safety zone (20mph) in Town. He is looking to put on of the blinking signs near to the Farmers Market.

Tree Hearing Update – Mr. Brown and Mr. Morrell/Planning Board update on Tree Hearing.

Mr. Brown indicated that this was continued twice now. Initial proposals from National Grid/Rt. 9 for lines to carry the power morphed to a conversation of how many trees can be "cut down." Planning Board is not happy with the new poles to be installed are taller and wider. Residents are concerned with the scenic roads. They are worried about any litigation kickback. Mr. Morrell added that he was on the Planning Board when National Grid began to write the plan of having solar at Coy Hill. National Grid does not show the final drawing of the placement of the poles.

Mr. von Bleicken added that he thought that Warren won a lawsuit against National Grid and they had backed off.

Mr. Morrell added that there is a section on Coy Hill that is not passable by a truck. Mr. Brown added that solar is a generator of power and National Grid wants to get this on the grid. He added that if Planning Board says no to the placement of the poles, what recourse do they have? Mr. von Bleicken said he will speak with Rich from Warren to see what happened when they were dealing with National Grid.

7:22pm – ***Motion to adjourn meeting made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes.***

4/1/25 4/2/25

Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time Date/Time