TOWN OF WEST BROOKFIELD

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Tuesday, March 18th, 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; Brad Merkel, Clerk; Theresa Cofske, Town Administrator Beth Gobeille, Exec. Asst. to TA/BOS; Matt Letendre, Sergeant; Cassidy Culver, Officer; Chief Nate Hagglund; Leah Shattuck, former AI/ACO.

GUEST: Wes Slobody, resident; Gary Simeone, resident; Ed Kurr, resident; Marc Chase, resident; Louise Chase, resident; Brid Murphy, resident; Roberta (Robin) Nagle, resident; Richard Murphy, resident; Addie Ducharme, resident; Susan Nelson, resident.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER IN OPEN SESSION

6:00pm: Motion to open the meeting

MINUTES OF March 4th BOS meeting (Open Session) FOR APPROVAL.
Motion to approve and sign the minutes of March 4th, 2025 (Open Session) made by Mr. Sickenberger, 2nd by Mr. Merkel – 2 yes, Mr. Merkel abstain.

HEATHER GOUGH/TOWN CLERK, RESIGNATION; APPOINTMENT OF KLARISSA ROSE/INTERIM TOWN CLERK
Motion to accept the resignation from the Town Clerk, Heather Gough, effective 3/28/2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.
Motion to appoint Klarissa Rose as the West Brookfield Interim Town Clerk, effective 3/28/2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

EARTH REMOVAL BOARD REP FROM BOH -
Motion to approve the appointment of Jason Paquette as Board of Health rep to the Earth Removal Board made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEMBER FOR APPOINTMENT -
Motion to approve the appointment of Dan Hamilton as a member of Historical Commission, replacing Michael Sroka (his appointment will be from March 18th, 2025 through June 30th, 2027) made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

CAPITAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT -
Motion to approve the appointment of Pamela Griffing as a member of the Capital Advisory Committee replacing Kim Chambers (she will fulfill a 3-year term from March 18th, 2025 through June 30th, 2025) made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

LAKE WICKABOAG SPECIAL USE PERMIT TO EAGLE HILL ROWING FOR A MIID-MORNING/EARLY AFTERNOON RACE ON LAKE WICKABOAG on May 10, 2025 at TOWN BEACH -

Motion to approve to Eagle Hill Rowing for a mid-morning/early afternoon race on Lake Wickboag on May 10, 2025 at Town Beach made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

BODY WORN CAMERA BATTERIES TO BE GIVEN TO BROOKFIELD POLICE DEPT. -

Motion to approve the donation of Body Worn Camera batteries to the Brookfield Police Dept. made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Chief Hagglund explained that these are 8 used batteries, but usable still. He had received 16 new ones with a grant.

IMPOUNDED LEXUS 1998 VEHICLE, TO BE MOVED TO ASSET FORFEITURE –

Motion to approve, in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 94C, Section 47, the auction or other appropriate disposal of a 1998 Lexus ES300 (VIN: JT8BF28G5W5014152), which was seized on February 24, 2018, and forfeited to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the District Attorney's Office. The vehicle has been held by the West Brookfield Police Department for purposes of education, investigation, and prosecution of cases, as permitted by law, including sale at public auction or through any other means of competitive bidding. All proceeds from the disposal shall be deposited into the Police Law Enforcement Trust Asset Forfeiture Account made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel - unanimous.

Chief Hagglund indicated that they have a forfeiture account, but not a lot in it. The sale of the vehicle is intended to be brought back to a police account. The car is at Highway currently and they would like to put it on Municibid. It was a drug vehicle and has been used for training purposes.

PICKLEBALL PERMISSION EXTENSION TO USE GREAT HALL FOR SPRING/SUMMER 2025 –

Motion to approve to use the Great Hall for Pickleball extended through Spring and Summer of 2025 made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Mr. Kurr explained that the program has been going well. They usually see 16/17 people there most days. They are still doing work at the Elementary schools on the outdoor nets, so he is looking to still use the Great Hall for pickleball through the Spring/Summer (June, July, August). Mr. Kurr also went on to explain that he and Ms. Gobeille have been coordinating events in the Great Hall and his crew routinely put chairs back when needed. He has asked for the creation of a revolving account for Pickleball to be added to the Warrant for the ATM. Ms. Cofske commented that she has added this already.

213 LONG HILL RD., LOT 4 BEING TAKEN OUT OF CHAPTER 61A. FIRST REFUSAL OPTION FOR SELECT BOARD – Mr. Slobody stated to the board that he has gone to Planning Board, Conservation Commission and the Assessors for first refusal on Lot #4, 213 Long Hill Rd. to be taken out of Chapter 61A. All 3 departments/committees have voted unanimously to not exercise their first refusal on the lot in writing. Mr. Slobody has also settled rollback taxes on the property.

Motion to remove Lot 4, 213 Long Hill Rd. from Chapter 61A status and first refusal has been accepted by the Select Board made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. Merkel – unanimous.

Ms. Cofske said she will provide Mr. Slobody with a letter indicating that the Select Board is not exercising their right of first refusal for the property with a pack of the other letters from Planning Board, Conservation Commission and the Assessors.

TREASURY WARRANTS -

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

TA REPORT –

Zoom: CMRPC pitch to pre-Master Plan for Community Engagement. Applying for a grant, which will put $139,000 towards the Master Plan.

Community Compact Grant: Dominique Turnbull will be here for a meeting.

Green Communities Grant: All documents required have gone back to DOER. Scheduling a meeting with Chris Collins to go over the projects to be done under this grant (would like to get up to speed on this).

Town Hall Restoration Contract: Reached out to the General Contractor to set up a meeting. No meeting date set yet, but this will be on site. Will bring in Historical Commission to be involved. Still need to discuss Phase II and come up with numbers. May need Capital Planning Committee's involvement.

ATM/STM: Warrants are almost done. Will go to Town Counsel soon.

Solar: 2 projects to start engagement.

1) Cronin – Started the pilot agreement in March 2024, had to go through the permitting process with multiple towns. Met with Pure Sky with the Board of Assessors. A draft has gone to Town Counsel.
2) Coy Hill / Beaman – Meeting on 3/27 to start this process.

Library Boiler: The project will be using state contract procurement. Many companies are interested in this project. Will look at the proposals and she is speaking with Jeff Robbins, Library Trust about this. A vendor was worried about the building being on the Historical register. Ms. Cofske is expecting the numbers to come back to be comparable.

Budgets: Meeting on the 20th with John Madden and again on the 26th with Advisory. More meetings with departments to come as well.

Fountain on Common: Extensive use of the water pump needs repair. Meeting with Common Committee and Water Dept last night. Guidance was given to Common Committee on how to fix it. The pump needs a replacement. All parties are in agreement to get it fixed.

Water: All departments will pay for their water use.

Union contracts: Currently working on the Patrolman's. Meeting with the Sergeant the following week. Quaboag: Meeting with the Superintendent. Possibility of joint procurement. Will discuss budget as well.

Cable TV: Meeting on March 28th at 10:30am with Counsel. Strategizing for ascertainment for the best outcome. Looking for a 4% for the town.

Community Compact IT Grant: This year we have applied for this to cover our Record Retention scanning initiative. The Warren Town Administrator had approached Ms. Cofske about an agreement w/ working on the next Community Compact Grant for IT for the Quaboag schools, although Ms. Cofske indicated that the next time we are able to apply for this Grant, we will be looking at IT needs here and not partnering with Warren. She asked the Board about their thoughts and they felt that we would need to focus on the needs of the Town.

Pizza place up for sale: Ms. Cofske asked if the Select Board would be interested in the Town purchasing a property next door to Town Hall, which had a pizza business previously there. No official response, but the Select Board felt they wouldn't be interested.

OTHER BUSINESS-

Mr. von Bleicken: He had a call from the First Congregational Church in Town re: a nearby pink house, which is in disrepair. They will be extending their storage area to house Food Pantry items, but are worried that there may be a vermin issue in the pink house and that could create a problem. Mr. von Bleicken was told to notify the Board of Health about this.

6:30pm

PUBLIC HEARING/DOG HEARING – Mr. Merkel announced to the room that we would be recording the dog hearing. (Transcription attached)

Hearing closed at 7:55pm.

Ms. Nelson: I'm another person with a dog problem on Central Street. It attacked me and it attacked a man walking his dog by my house at 25 Central a month ago. It bit his dog as he was walking and it bit him. Last week I saw that dog loose again. It is running through my yard. I am pretty sure it was running through my yard when it attacked this dog walking in front of my house. and was one of the dogs that had bit this man I would never be able to get a picture of this dog. So, you guys have a problem in this Town.

It was chasing another dog and there's a black dog in Town. You see I posted on Town Facebook all the time. They let that dog out without a collar on. I've had that dog in my yard a couple of times. I was going to catch it.

Mr. von Bleicken: Do you know who they is? The owner is?

Ms. Nelson: They're on Mechanic Street. I can't say which one because I think there's a couple of black dogs. The pitbull I've been told who the owner is. When the officers came, I called them that day after

the attack. They wouldn't tell me who the owner was, which I think is ridiculous that there's a pitbull loose in your Town and we don't get to know who the owner is.

Mr. von Bleicken: Well, they need to speak to the police.

Ms. Nelson: They did speak to the police. Here is the police report the day the attack happened. Last week when the dogs were running again through my yard again I came up here and did another report.

Mr. Merkel: I live on Central Street. He's always running around, that dog.

Ms. Nelson: The pitbull?

Mr. Merkel: Yea. The black one.

Ms. Nelson: Where do you live on Central Street?

Mr. Merkel: #48.

Ms. Nelson: You're in the green house. You don't have a little girl who walks a little dog do you?

Mr. Merkel: No

Ms. Nelson: There's a little girl. She's about 12 or 14 walking her dog down our street. The dog doesn't weigh more than 5 pounds. If that dog ever got hold of that dog that little girl would be traumatized forever, because I heard that pitbull attacking that dog and I heard an adult male that was walking that dog yelling out and you don't want to ever hear that.

Mr. Merkel: I've actually called our Animal Control Officer on that dog a couple of times because it ended up in my yard and I don't want to take my dog out.

Ms. Nelson: Something needs to be done about that dog. She is a part time police officer in another Town. I don't know which Town. Her name is on there I think. Obviously, she's not restraining that dog. I think she owns that black dog or the guy on the corner across from you owns that black dog.

Mr. Merkel: Correct, but not the High Street, but one, Mechanic and Central. .

Ms. Nelson: Mechanic and Central. He has a black dog and she has another, but I'm not sure which one is running around. I don't know if they're pitbulls.

Room noise.

Mr. Merkel: I have cameras all around my house.

Room noise.

Mr. Sickenberger: We need to clear the room. We still have issues to take care of.

Mr. Merkel: Ending recording, 7:58pm

NEXT BOS MEETING REGULAR MEETING DATE: APRIL 1st, 2025 – 6pm

7:26pm - ***Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Mr. Sickenberger. Second by Mr. von Bleicken – 2 yes***

Authorized Party for the BOS Date/Time

Clerk Date/Time