

New Ashford Select Board/MLP Meeting
New Ashford Town Hall
February 3, 2020

Board Present: Jason Jayko (Chair), Ken McInerney (MLP Manager), Mark Phelps
Others Present: Keith Lacasse, Richard George, Lori Jayko, Jason Hoch, Chris Lamarre, Pete Rancourt, Carlanne Rancourt, Joan Wilkinson

Meeting opened at 6:30

1. Approve the minutes from January 21: On a motion by Mark, seconded by Jason, the minutes from the 1-21-2020 Select Board/MLP Meeting were approved as amended to correct the spelling of Hoch. Ken abstained.

2. Williamstown Town Administrator Jason Hoch: Jason Hoch and Assessor Chris Lamarre presented the Board with their report on assessing services for the past year. Chris detailed the work he did and pinpointed some areas for improvements in efficiency and data quality. He explained that sharing the laptop access with the Tax Collector and Patriot Software requires two different team viewer versions that need to be reinstalled every time. He recommended that the town start doing data quality studies over the next couple of assessment cycles to get in line with DOR's cyclical inspection standards. The motor vehicle excise billing is a challenge, as the person doing it now is having trouble with the RMV's new ATLAS system. Chris recommended that the town switch to Kelly and Ryan for its Deputy Tax Collecting. They will charge fifteen cents per bill, as opposed to the fifty-nine cents currently charged. The Tax Collector, Joan Wilkinson, agreed with this change and will make the appointment. Chris had trouble last year getting building permits to determine new growth. Also, there is no record of the town's annual meeting vote for accepting any elderly tax exemptions. The Board may want to add this to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Chris estimated spending 40 hours learning the Patriot Software. Williamstown is converting to Patriot this year and this learning time will not reoccur. To provide the current standard of assessing, taking care of the efficiency issues, Chris expects the job to require 160 hours of his time. Jason Hoch shared a document with cost options for FY21. Option A to maintain assessing services as they are, without making improvements for efficiency, is \$16,300. Option B, with enhanced efficiency: eliminating the uninstall and install remote software for the laptop, improving efficiency and data access for motor vehicle excise tax, ensuring daily backup of data, providing copies of building permits to the Assessor upon issuance, and initiating a plan over several years to review and enhance data quality would be \$13,050.

Mark asked Jason Hoch about Williamstown's providing a police presence should there be a cannabis facility in town. Jason explained that Williamstown cannot, since Mass state police have primary presence.

3. Public Comment: Lori Jayko gave an update on the School Committee. Richmond wants to leave the union and join with Berkshire Hills. New Ashford and Hancock are advertising for a shared Superintendent. The Special Education Director is retiring and that position is being advertised as well. Peter Dillon got a \$45,000 grant to assist all three towns with the transition. \$10,000 of the grant is to cover Amy Scott's salary for one day of administrative support a week.

Lori asked if the Building Inspector has responded to the letter sent in the fall concerning the long-term rentals that are occurring at the Carriage House. Mark will contact her.

Lori gave the Board the workmen's comp audit report from MIAA for review.

The bid opening for the tanker truck for the Fire Department will be February 24th at 6:30.

Pete Rancourt told the Board he has been mowing the Town Hall lawn for 44 years. He now has extra mowing and weed whacking and would like to get \$10 more a week. He mows 24-27 times a year. The Board thanked him for his work. The mowing will be a separate line item from the Town Hall Expense on the budget.

Lori asked if town legal counsel could help Fire Department members who gave money for badges that never arrived. The Board offered the town legal counsel's assistance.

The Fire Chief in Lanesborough mentioned someone driving to emergency calls with lights on in Lanesborough, and said you can only have lights on in your own municipality.

Jason talked to the Police Chief about fire arms licensing delays. Another resident reported calling three times with no response.

4. Road Commissioner: Keith Lacasse reported that Greylock Road needs work in the spring, including attention to the ditches. Some of the spots he filled in look good and others washed out. Adding more blacktop this year would be helpful. Ingraham Road also needs attention. The Mohawk Trails Woodland Partnership grant is looking good. Keith will try to close the north end of Roys Road this week. The last time he tried there was a snowbank in the way. He noticed that a plow truck from John's did not have flashing marker lights as required.

5. Budget: Jason has been putting numbers into the budget sheet. Berkshire County Sherriff's was added. Based on the assessor number, option B will be put in the budget. Money for the quality update for the cyclical assessments will be added. Town mowing will be set at \$1,600, per Pete's request. The MLP budget needs to be done.

6. Community Host Agreement: Legal Counsel responded about the Town Police section and said we could change it to whoever provides coverage. Jason will get the square footage and the annual community benefit payment in Section B from Hop Cultivators. They need to get a special permit from the Planning Board.

The 3% option tax for cannabis will be added to the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.

7. Any other Unforeseen Business: Jason revised the Special Town Meeting Warrant and shared it with the Board. He added the SCBA grant request of \$2,166.66.

Do the people who handle the money at the Fire Department have to be bonded?

The Mohawk Trails Woodland Partnership Board met and adopted a set of bylaws on January 28.

The Chairman is Hank Art from Williamstown. The bylaws require a minimum of two meetings per year, but they will likely meet quarterly. Mark said there is money available to update the town's vulnerability preparedness plan and hazardous mitigation plan.

Forester, Peter Grima, told Mark that the roads and water bars on White Road are in pretty good shape. Peter would like to hold a 3-6 hour program for about 45 loggers, and use the Town Hall in the event of rain. The Board agrees.

The Representative to the Mohawk Trails Woodland Partnership will be added to the Town Appointment list for a three-year term. Mark will compose a report for the Annual Town Report. The salt from the Salt Shed is depleting quicker than it should. The Board will put up cameras to monitor usage.

8. Warrant: The warrant was reviewed and signed.

Meeting closed at 8:26