

Present: Morris Klein, Lewis Major, John Hartnett, Selectmen's Rep Jay Ebbighausen, Bruce Bellville, Tina McCosker, James MacDonell, Peter Zavorotny. Excused: Michael Carrier. Absent: Joe Conroy.

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

He said the committee needed to determine officers for the ensuing year. Mr. Hartnett made a motion that the existing officers--Mr. Zavorotny, Chair; Mr. Major, Vice Chair; and Ms. Almann, Secretary--remain officers. Mr. Major thanked the committee for their support but asked that another committee member step in as vice chair. Mr. Zavorotny told the committee he would be happy to continue as chair but he wanted the committee to be aware that he would be away February 2015. He said he could telephone into the meeting that could be held as long as there was a quorum. Mr. MacDonell reminded the committee that if they had a telephone meeting every time a person spoke, he or she had to identify him/herself by name.

Mr. Bellville made a motion that Mr. Hartnett be vice chair. He was seconded by Mr. MacDonell and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hartnett made a motion to approve the committee's officers, was seconded by Ms. Almann, and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Zavorotny told the committee that minutes 631, 632, 633, and 634 needed approving. Mr. MacDonell asked that his name be spelled correctly in the 632 minutes. Ms. Almann said she'd be sure they were corrected. Mr. Major made a motion to approve all four sets of minutes incorporating Mr. MacDonell's edit. The motion was seconded by Mr. MacDonell. The motion passed with Mr. Ebbighausen abstaining.

Mr. Zavorotny welcomed Mr. Ebbighausen to the committee as the selectmen's rep and welcomed Ms. McCosker back as the school board's rep.

Mr. Ebbighausen told the committee that the bond for the police department has been increased to 20 years (from 10 years).

Mr. Zavorotny remarked that towards the end of one of the last meetings, Mr. Hartnett talked about the budget committee working together more closely with the selectmen and the school board. Mr. Klein spoke up, saying he too thought the idea was a good one. When a department needs a new machine, for instance, learning about this fact sooner rather than later might be helpful. Mr. MacDonell reminded the committee that they would best be served by having Mr. Ebbighausen and Ms. McCosker bring information to the committee from their respective boards.

Mr. Hartnett said he "would like to discuss things we could do together as a town, work on a common goal. What can we do to help the taxpayers?" Ms. McCosker said the school board gets monthly budget information that she'll bring to the committee. Mr. Zavorotny reminded the committee that anyone has the statutory right to request such information. Mr. Ebbighausen said he will inform the committee on the money matters related to the town--percent used/percent remaining, for instance.

Mr. Hartnett told the committee that a few weeks back he met a business developer from Fitchburg. They got to talking and the gentleman told him about what that city experienced when Westinghouse pulled out. "You can't cut your way out" of difficulties. What can the town do to grow its tax base? What can we do to be proactive?

Mr. MacDonell spoke up, saying this "sounds like a planning board issue." Mr. Klein replied that the planning board can make suggestions, but the planning board cannot make changes to private property.

Mr. Zavorotny said the town "is between a rock and a hard place until the bridge is built." Mr. Bellville spoke up, saying "online is growing". Mr. Klein said water and sewer is needed along Rt. 119 where business is setting up. Mr. Bellville told the committee about Charlestown's experience: An old mill was redone and ultimately went "belly-up" due to the economy. In the end they were unable to *give* land away for development. Mr. Klein said warehouses for online businesses seem promising, but Internet speed in our area "is terrible."

Mr. Zavorotny asked Mr. Ebbighausen if the town has inventory data on town vehicles belonging to the police, fire, water, and sewer departments and the town. Mr. Klein asked that mileage for the police vehicles be added to the report. Mr. Ebbighausen replied that he was sure the police chief has a schedule. Mr. Zavorotny agreed, saying "Todd and Frank are organized--they probably have these data." Mr. Klein said it would be wise for the town to start putting money away to replace expensive items. "Do we hold people's money?," Mr. Ebbighausen asked given the fact that "leasing seems to be the way to go" given present rates. Mr. Klein agreed "if we can get good leases."

Mr. Zavorotny observed "If we could put money away and pay cash, you'd save interest." Mr. Klein said starting a fund for a police cruiser would be a good idea with the goal of avoiding sticker shock. Mr. Bellville agreed, saying putting money away gets people to understand that spending money is necessary. Mr. MacDonell said the Federal Reserve chairperson said rates will be going up. Mr. Bellville said he would like to see the committee talk to the department heads. Mr. Hartnett wondered if money could be put aside and used equipment be purchased? Mr. Ebbighausen replied that "If the town puts \$60,000 aside each year, that's a heavy financial load." According to him, "until rates go up, buying new is better."

Mr. Zavorotny reminded the committee they would be meeting on April 16. Quarterly numbers will be available. He said the committee will go over the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) at that meeting.

Mr. Bellville asked if information was available on the dam. (No.) He asked that the committee be kept updated.

Mr. Ebbighausen told the committee that Ingram has been hired as contract manager on the police department. Mr. Klein asked if the job has a Clerk of the Works? He said the town needs someone to inspect the work. Mr. Ebbighausen replied that the contracting manager will be Clerk of the Works. Mr. Hartnett agreed with Mr. Klein that a Clerk of the Works is important to prevent loss of money. Mr. Klein asked if the architect receives a percentage. No, according to Mr. Ebbighausen.

Mr. Zavorotny told the committee that work is progressing on fixing the roof of the school. The project will be completed next year. Mr. Bellville asked about the second story fire escape. Ms. McCosker replied that the preschool will be housed in the SAU building, thereby making the fire escape unnecessary.

Bernie Rideout is the Selectmen's new chairperson.

With no more business to discuss a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Klein and was seconded by Mr. Bellville. The motion carried and the meeting ended at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorianne Almann
Secretary