TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019  
Selectmen’s Meeting Room, Lawrence Memorial Hall

Present: Ed Boscher, Gail Gramarossa, Jen D. Turner, Brenda Q. Aldrich  
Absent: Nicholas O’Connor

Call to Order: Chairman Boscher called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2) Sign Documents:
   a) Warrant # was signed for $1,617,147.83 bringing the fiscal year total to
   b) Routine documents
   c) Approval of Minutes: The December 2, 2019 minutes can’t be approved tonight as Mr. O’Connor is not present for tonight’s meeting. Only three Board members were in attendance for that meeting and he was one of the three. Mr. Brougham remarked that these minutes are needed for the CDBG reserve grant application. We will send them as draft minutes with the application.

3) Additions to the Agenda:
   • Accept Clapp Memorial Library Technician Resignation: Keri Kelley has submitted a letter of resignation as a library technician at the Clapp Memorial Library effective Friday, December 6, 2019. The Board thanked her for her service to the town.
   • Appointment of Meals on Wheels Driver: Per the recommendation of Jessica Langlois, Executive Director of Council on Aging, Ms. Gramarossa moved the Board appoint Jennie Padilla to the position of Meals on Wheels Driver, effective immediately pending the outcome of the CORI check. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Motion passes 4 – 0.

4) Appearances Before the Board:
   • 7:20 p.m. Tax Classification Hearing with John Whelihan, Director of Assessments / Office of the Board of Assessors: Jay Whelihan, Director of Assessments was present for the Tax Classification Hearing.

Mr. Whelihan commented that this is the last part of the fiscal year tax rate. The budget has been set, revenues have been appropriated, and the State has estimated how much money they going to give us in terms of local receipts, State aide, and money for the schools. The tax levy has been established. The last part of the process is for the Board of Selectmen to determine what percentage of the tax levy each class of property will bear. The Board will be voting on a residential factor. The tax levy is revenue raised through property taxes. It is the largest source of revenue for cities and towns. Each year the town has the ability to tax up to its levy limit. Setting of the tax rate and finalizing the recap sheet shows that the budget is balanced. If the town adopts different rates the total share of levy does not change just the allocation would change.
Mr. Whelihan thoroughly went through the process of how they come up with the new rates. Every five years towns are required to have properties re-assessed through the State standards and that was done this year. Property values in town went up 4% from last year. The trend throughout the State is that residential property values are outpacing commercial values. After doing all the calculations he came up with a tax rate of $18.17 per thousand. He did remind the Board that there are limits on how much money the town can raise each year and a limit on how much money the town can raise overall and that is set through proposition 2½.

He presented tax rate comparisons to other surrounding communities from last year. The comparison towns all use a single tax rate for residential and commercial.

Mr. Whelihan went over the tax rates at various intervals of classifications for fiscal year 2020. For every dollar increase in the CIP rate, the residential rates only decreases $.08.

Mr. Boscher asked if Mr. Whelihan could provide the tax rate recapitulation form for all the comparison communities that he used. Mr. Whelihan will provide that information to the Board.

Ms. Aldrich moved the Board set the tax rate at one. Motion seconded by Ms. Gramarossa. Motion passes 4 – 0.

7:40 p.m. Steven Williams, Director of Public Works: Before Mr. Williams began his discussion, Ms. Aldrich thanked him for getting Carriage Drive open. She has received many calls from residents who are happy to have it open. Mr. Williams remarked that there were many areas involved in getting the road completed and opened and they all deserved thanks.

Mr. Williams came before the Board to talk about the transfer station. The recycling facility has made some changes. They will no longer accept shredded paper as a recyclable or aerosol cans. They will start accepting clear plastic egg cartons. Over the next few weeks he will be bringing in the solid waste transfer station regulations and ask that the Board revise them.

The solid waste disposal contract is up at the end of June. He is currently in negotiations with a new contract. He is hoping to have some final numbers in the next couple of weeks as to what the fee will be per ton. We currently pay $77.50/ton to dispose of solid waste and average approximately 1,200 ton a year. That fee could be going up considerably – in the 5 to 10% amount. In addition the recyclable rate is going up. That contract also expires at the end of June. He is also hoping to have that contract finalized in the new couple of weeks. The fee for processing recyclables is $93.50. The fee for disposing of recyclables is more than for solid waste. It has to do with the foreign markets and in politics.

A group of communities that belong to the Mass Recycling Facility (MRF) are trying to find any other options that are out there and how to handle recyclables. If you start traveling to facilities that are further away the hauling costs go up so you
don’t save any money. The town averages under 600 ton/year in recyclables. We will have to make up that money. Previously recyclables were either no cost to transfer or provided a small revenue stream. It will be a new line item in his budget and an incredible increase. He has reviewed all of his line items and needs to have a balanced budget. The transfer station is an enterprise system – it is self-supporting. It makes enough to cover the expenses for it. He is waiting for the final free cash amounts for the enterprise funds so he can finalize where he needs to be with fees. The only way to balance his budget is to do fee increases. Any proposals coming forward are going to be significant. There are two main revenue sources – the annual sticker sales and the trash bags. Annual sticker sales start after the first of the year and everyone is required to have a new sticker by March 1st. His priority is going to be trying to find out where he needs to be with the sticker prices and that works in conjunction with the bag prices.

He came tonight to give the Board an idea of where things are headed with increases at the transfer station. Sticker prices since 2009 have been $100/year. Any increases have gone to the bag prices to encourage more recycling. It could be anywhere from a $20 to $50 a year increase in the sticker prices. It will depend on what is available in free cash. He really wants to focus on the large bag prices. Currently the large bags are $23 a bundle. They would be looking to go up to $30 a bundle which is another significant increase.

Ms. Gramarossa asked if there was a difference in the price for seniors. He confirmed that there was. He will probably do a proportionate increase going forward. He is concerned about how many people they will lose because of the increases and people deciding to go to curbside trash pickup. He has heard that the private curbside pickup is going up as well.

5) Discussion/Action Items:

a. Accept Full-Time Police Dispatcher’s Resignation: Ms. Aldrich presented the details. Andrew Ronnau, full time-police dispatcher is resigning from the Belchertown Police Department, effective Sunday, December 15, 2019 at the end of his shift. He has accepted a position as a dispatcher with the Massachusetts State Police. The Board requested that a letter be sent to Mr. Ronnau thanking him for his service to the town and wished him well on his new position.

b. Vote to Renew Liquor Licenses for 2020: Mr. Boscher questioned if there had been any issues with any of the businesses over the last twelve months. Mr. Brougham commented that last week the town was notified by the ABCC that two package stores were cited for underage sales. One of them was the Grog Shoppe and the other was Town Mart. The violations occurred in August of this year. The ABCC is handling it and has scheduled an administrative hearing with each of the license holders sometime in January of 2020. There is no action required by the town at this time. He did notify Chief Pronovost of the violations. There have been no other violations. Mr. Boscher questioned when the licenses have to be approved. He was told they have to be in the license holder’s hands January 1st.
Mr. Boscher questioned how the Board feels about voting to approve the liquor licenses that didn’t have any issues tonight and get more information on exactly what happened with the violations. Ms. Gramarossa was in agreement. She wants to hear from them what they are doing to be sure it doesn’t happen again. Ms. Aldrich questioned if there is time to hear from the two businesses before the first of the year. Mr. Brougham will try to get them in for next Monday, December 16th. The owners from Town Mart he feels will be very receptive to coming before the Board. Mr. Brougham commented that he has been in Town Mart many times and has seen them deny sales. They are pretty strict about alcohol sales. Mr. Boscher asked the town administrator to try and get the owners in for the December 16th meeting.

Mr. Boscher moved the Board approve the remaining liquor licenses that did not have these violations (Town Mart & Ye Olde Grog Shoppe). Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Motion passes 4 – 0.

6) **Town Administrator's Report:** None.

7) **Review of Weekly Mail:** See Ms. Aldrich’s report.

8) **Individual Board Members’ Reports:**
   - **Ms. Aldrich:**
     - She thanked the Winter Night Light Committee – it was a fabulous afternoon and evening event. The gingerbread contest was fabulous.
     - The Belchertown Police Department is getting their accreditation finalized. The Massachusetts Police Accreditation Committee will be coming out in January. If anyone has questions about the process they should contact Chief Pronovost or Sgt. Beaupre as he is the manager of the accreditation.
     - Wednesday night the Citizen’s Academy will be holding their graduation. She plans on attending. She encourages all to attend an academy.
     - She helped man the volunteer table and while there were not a lot of people showing interest it was good for the community to see them.

   - **Ms. Gramarossa:**
     - Reminded folks that there is a Crafts and Carols event at Jabish Brook Middle School this coming weekend. It is from 10 am – 3 pm.
     - She will be attending the Planning Board public hearing for Evergreen Strategies for non-medical marijuana. That will be tomorrow night.
Ms. Turner:
- She will be attending the Planning Board meeting tomorrow evening to discuss the marijuana by-law.
- Winter Night Light was amazing. They are starting the planning for Art Week. The Cultural Council is having a meeting tomorrow night for Art Week.
- She saw a comment on social media about someone commenting on the decorations outside of town hall. She doesn’t think people understand they can do something to make changes that are not necessarily political.

Mr. Boscher:
- He thinks they all attended the Winter Night Light event. The gingerbread contest was hard to judge. There were some very talented contestants.
- He thanked the Winter Night Light Committee for putting it together.
- The big Christmas tree looks great and makes for a great photo op.
- The finance committee reorganized. Ron Aponte is the new chairman.

9) Questions from the Press: None.

10) Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: [December 10, 2019]

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

Ed Boscher, Chairman

Gail Gramarossa

Brenda Q. Aldrich

Jen D. Turner

(absent)

Nicholas O’Connor