TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN’S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2020
Belchertown High School Gymnasium and
Virtual Meeting/Remote Access

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

Call to Order: Chairman Boscher called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Boscher thanked Ms. Aldrich for her years of service on the Board as this will technically be her last Board of Selectmen meeting.

In case there are people who were not aware of it the Annual Town Meeting has been moved to Saturday, June 27th and will be held both in the Belchertown High School Gymnasium and outdoors in the area of the tennis courts. The final details are being worked out for this undertaking. The town clerk’s office, the town administrator’s office, and DPW are all working on it.

2) Sign Documents:
   a) Warrant # 2051 was signed for $593,529.36
   b) Routine documents
   c) Approval of Minutes:

3) Discussion/Action Items:
   a. Discuss Technology Advisory Committee: Mr. O’Connor presented the details to the Board. There had been concerns that members of BCTV who receive payment for their work were also members of the Technology Advisory Committee.

   ***Audio of this discussion was difficult to understand with every other word cutting out along with an echo***

   Lew Louraine, BCTV commented that there are two pots of money that the town gets from Charter. There is the pot that the town gets for _________ and then the pot the town gets for BCTV. It seems the issue is the pot that goes to BCTV as the rest of the contract is pretty much a boilerplate contract with the Town. There is not a lot of wiggle room in what can be negotiated. Whatever the decision the Board makes about negotiating the contract Mr. Louraine would like to be a part of the committee.

   Kevin Hannon, IT director indicted that ___________ is part of this contract.

   Ms. Turner stopped the discussion to let the Board members in the gym know that the audio was terrible and the town clerk’s office notified her that it needs to be fixed as this is not working – no-one that is listening online can hear what is being
said. A switch was made to the microphone that is on the camera and sound became much clearer.

Mr. O'Connor reiterated his comments from the beginning of the discussion. The Technology Advisory Committee's primary responsibility is to negotiate the Charter/Spectrum cable-internet contract here in town. Two members of that committee also work for BCTV and BCTV receives money from Charter. The money from the contract pays salaries at BCTV so it would be a conflict of interest for them to negotiate the new contract when the time comes to do so. There were several routes the Board can take. One would be to change the committee members from five to three, one would be to acknowledge the conflict and let all members of the committee negotiate or the Board of Selectmen could take over the negotiation. He thought the Board should take over as the Charter contract as it is very contentious and comes up all the time in town. He felt the community should be able to hear the Board discuss the contract negotiations.

Mr. O'Connor also indicated that Kevin Hannon, IT Director has expressed an interest in participating on how that contract comes together. The Board should also solicit input from Lew & Peg Louraine as well as Frank Lomanno as they work with BCTV which is not the same as Lew and Frank being part of the committee negotiating the contract. There is only so much we can negotiate – we can't negotiate rates or channel lineup. The contract is about a year and half away from needing to be renewed. He suggests the Board negotiate the contract with input from subcommittees consisting of various individuals.

Ms. Gramarossa had a number of thoughts. She agreed to wall off the negotiations piece but still utilize the expertise of BCTV folks. It is a major concern in the town. She suggests using the Advisory Committee but the actual negotiation should take place at the Board of Selectmen level. She also likes having the discussions being held publicly. She thinks that talking about the future of BCTV is a good thing. Eventually the current volunteers will move and we need to know what will happen with BCTV moving forward.

Ms. Turner was in agreement with both Mr. O'Connor and Ms. Gramarossa's comments. She also has concerns about the future of BCTV so this sounds like a good approach.

Ms. Aldrich commented that there is already a Technology Advisory Committee and questioned how this would be different. Mr. O'Connor commented the Advisory Committee today does all the negotiating for the Charter contract and sends their recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. The Advisory's Committee role now would be regarding technology, what's needed at BCTV in the future, what the PEG grant money would be used for – those kinds of things. Ms. Aldrich feels that the community needs to have input.
Mr. O'Connor indicated there are three members on the committee that are looking to be re-appointed plus the two members who also work for BCTV. There would be no conflict if those two members remain on the committee but are not part of the contract negotiations.

Mr. Louraine asked for confirmation that those two members would be talking to Charter but not negotiating and passing info to the Board. Mr. O'Connor wants everyone to be talking to Charter but those two members would serve in an advisory role for their expertise. Mr. Louraine indicated that getting Charter to come here is almost impossible and the times that they choose don't usually work. Mr. O'Connor hopes that if they have to talk to the Board of Selectmen they would be more accommodating.

Ms. Gramarossa recommended looking at the charter statement of the Technology Advisory Committee to see if it says anything about negotiations and if it does to remove that from the charter so there will be no conflict in the future. Mr. Louraine will provide the mission statement to the Board of Selectmen.

Technology Advisory Committee members will be reappointed at the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

b. Discuss Town Meeting: Mr. Boscher presented details to the Board. Kevin Hannon, IT Director is working on getting things to work technically from both inside and outside for the town meeting. The Town Clerk’s office is also making progress on putting a process into place. Mr. Boscher questioned if we need to have two different colored papers with a yes or no vote written on it as we will not be able to do a voice vote this year with the meeting being held in two different locations. Board members were in agreement. Mr. Boscher wants the piece of paper to be large pieces. Ms. Gramarossa agreed as we want people to be able to participate and we can visually see how the votes are going. It will help to keep the meeting moving. Mr. Boscher asked the town clerk’s office to get the pieces of paper with a yes and no vote on each page in contrasting colors.

Mr. Boscher commented that at town meeting the finance committee will state on the motions how they voted. Members of the community have asked him how the Board decides. He feels the Board should go through all the articles tonight so that the community knows where the Board stands on each of them.

The Board reviewed each of the articles for the annual town meeting. Ms. Gramarossa also commented that the articles are on the town's website. Board members voted 5 - 0 on all warrant articles for town meeting.

c. Joint Statement of the Board of Selectmen: Mr. Boscher thanked the Board for taking the time to come out with a complete statement. He wants to start the town meeting with each Board member reading one paragraph from their joint statement.
d. Miscellaneous Matters: Appointment of Wastewater Treatment Plant Laborer –
Per the recommendation of Steve Williams, Mr. Boscher moved to appoint Robert
Mileski, Jr. to the position of Wastewater Treatment Plant Laborer. Motion
seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

4) **Town Administrator’s Report:** None.

5) **Individual Board Members’ Reports:**

*Ms. Gramarossa:* The joint statement is on the town’s website. It is just the first step
in the process. She commits to analyzing and getting information regarding racism in
our community.

She also acknowledged the Farmer’s Market and asked residents to participate in the
market. The library is open for curbside pickup. Town election is coming up and call
the town clerk’s office with any questions.

*Ms. Turner:* She received notification that we applied for community development
block grants for assistance for a micro-enterprise fund. We will also be joining with
the Town of Ware for social services portion of the grant.

She is excited to say that the Recreation Department and Cultural Council are working
on logistics for a drive-in movie tentatively scheduled for July 11th. The Cultural
Council is co-sponsoring with the Belchertown Justice Collaborative. There are
details on Facebook.

*Mr. O’Connor:* Brought up opening the Skate Park and Jessica’s Boundless
Playground as other communities are opening up parks. We now have guidance so
this discussion should be added to the agenda for our next meeting.

He thanked Mr. Boscher for serving as chairman of the board and all the work he’s
had to handle during this pandemic.

*Mr. Boscher:* Thanked the Board members for all the help they provided to him over
the past year. He has also been getting a lot of questions about the parks. He spoke
with Judy Metcalf earlier today unless we can abide by guidelines we cannot open the
parks.

Town elections are coming up next week and town meeting next Saturday. It has been
a challenging year not just from a budgetary perspective but also from the unknowns.

*Ms. Aldrich:* She thanked the Board. She’s worked with a total of eight different
selectmen. They have come together to do what’s the best for the town. She thanked
everyone for all the calls and cards that’s she’s received. She thanked her husband for
all his support while she was on the Board. She will miss everyone and will miss not
being on the Board.
6) **Questions from the Press:** None.

7) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: 8/10/2020

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

_Ed Boscher, Chairman_

_Gail Gramarossa_

_Nicholas O’Connor_

_Brenda Q. Aldrich_

_Jen D. Turner_