TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JULY 13, 2020
Virtual Meeting/Remote Access

Present: Gail Gramarossa, Jen D. Turner, James A. Barry, Nicholas O’Connor, Ed Boscher

Call to Order: Chairman Gramarossa called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2) Sign Documents:
   a) Warrant #2102 was signed for $239,207.35. Ms. Gramarossa mentioned that the
town accountant had brought to her attention that the previous chair had been
authorized to sign the warrant with just his signature. She is happy to continue this
practice if the Board is okay with it. She will be in town hall on meeting nights. Mr.
Boscher moved the Board approve having Gail Gramarossa, Chair as the single
signatory. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Mr. Boscher confirmed that the warrants
would remain in the private office if the Board wants to look at them. He was told
they would be there. Motion passes 5 – 0.
   b) Routine documents
   c) Approval of Minutes:

3) Appointments:
   • 6:35 p.m. Belchertown Cultural Council – Follow-up RE: Food Truck Events:
Ms. Gramarossa questioned if board member had a chance to review the most
recent revised plan for the food trucks. She also acknowledged that April Jasak-
Bangs has stepped down as chair of the cultural council and thanked her for
having held that position.

Melissa Mann from the Cultural Council presented the details to the board. They
have come up with a plan to get people to not congregate on the town common
once they’ve picked up their food. The cultural council thought about not having
the truck on the common but rather in the overflow lot of town hall so that it
would encourage people to go home rather than congregating on the town
common. They would also be open to other locations in town. They will be
streaming on-line programming to encourage residents to get their food, go home,
and watch it live on facebook. They have also changed the day from Friday to
Thursday as restaurants have indicated that Friday is their busiest day and they
don’t want to take away from that. The time has changed and will be from 3 pm
to 7 pm. and it will be every other Thursday rather than every Thursday. The
proposed dates will be in August and September. The trucks that responded to
their survey are willing to do a program like this and they will be serving types of
food not found in town. They are confident that their program supports business
in town.

Mr. O’Connor feels this is almost a home run. He was thinking a Monday night
for the food truck as some of the restaurants are closed on Monday. He is
supportive of this plan. Mr. Boscher agreed with Mr. O’Connor’s comments. He
also thought of Monday nights. Melissa indicated they did talk about having Monday as the food truck coming to town. They don’t think that people want to eat out on a Monday and therefore it’s not such a benefit to the food truck.

Mr. Barry has spoken with some of the restaurant owners and their current 2020 business has not been good. They asked him to let the Board know they would like to not have the food trucks this year. We are losing the Fair for this year and they feel the food trucks could also stay away this year.

Ms. Turner commented that the people are eating out of town and they don’t have access to these types of food in town that the trucks serve. She also believes that having the trucks come to town brings business into town. The liquor stores do better, gas stations and other local retailers in town benefit. It shows the commitment that Belchertown has to the community bringing in these opportunities for diverse cuisine. She feels it is a win-win situation and is a huge proponent for it.

Trista Hevey, Cultural Council member, commented that it has taken a long time to build the relationships that they have with the trucks. If Belchertown doesn’t hold onto some of those relationships, then next year those trucks will go to places that that they frequented during all of this. The relationship is important – we don’t want to lose it.

Melissa understands the concern for the restaurants. They have reached out in the past to see about collaborating with them. She is not sure that the lack of a food truck event will put patrons in the restaurants. The CC wants to see them be successful and they are willing to participate in any events with the restaurants that want to plan an event.

Mr. Barry questioned how many local restaurants the CC spoke with in the last two weeks. He indicated that he was told they did not contact any of the restaurants. Melissa indicated she had not spoken to any of them but that they have also not reached out to the cultural council to see how they could assist them.

Jocelyn Walker, Cultural Council member, commented that Mr. Barry suggested partnering with the restaurants and do events with them but that does not fall under the cultural council umbrella to put time and energy into planning events for the restaurants. It should be up to the restaurants to plan events and then reach out to the CC who would be happy to partner with them.

Ms. Gramarossoa questioned who is going to monitor and enforce the safety plans – the social distancing and guidelines. She expects that the food trucks are going to be busy serving the food. She also wants the board to reserve the right to talk about the food trucks if after the first event the guidelines were not adhered. Melissa indicated they have touched on this a few times, isn’t sure if they have picked a specific person but they have discussed it, and if the board feels strongly they will discuss it further. Trista Hevey commented that the agreement is up to the truck to follow the guidelines and enforce them. Members of the CC will be
there at some point but she doesn’t feel like the CC as volunteers can mandate. They are looking for the agreement with the trucks to follow all the guidelines. The CC is responsible marketing the event. The trucks should really be responsible for it.

Ms. Gramarossa commented that as people are doing more and more activities are looking for the marking on the ground letting us know where to stand, masks on until you get your food. She wants the board to have the right to revisit. Trucks must check in with the board of health prior to the event and will remind them of the guidelines to follow.

Ms. Gramarossa asked for consensus from the board. Mr. Barry commented if it is on town property the board needs to take a vote.

Mr. Boscher questioned if Tuesday could be the day for the food trucks. Ms. Jasak-Bangs indicated they avoided Tuesday because Chubby’s does Taco Tuesday. He also questioned what happens if things go wrong with the first event. Ms. Gramarossa indicated that she is okay with supporting the first event and that the board would have time to revisit the food trucks if the guidelines weren’t followed especially with the events happening every other week.

Mr. Boscher commented it is a dramatically scaled down event as compared to the past. If it is one truck every other week, he is okay with having it.

Mr. O’Connor commented it does create incubation opportunities for other businesses and as these trucks will be serving food not available in town he is okay with having the food trucks.

Mr. O’Connor moved to approve the food trucks as documented. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Mr. Boscher moved to amend the motion to include an after event review. Amended motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Mr. Brougham questioned where the location was going to be. They proposed to use the town hall parking lot as the event is beginning at 3 p.m. and town hall is still in business. The trucks will need to obtain liability insurance as required by the town. Melissa prefers to use the town common. Mr. O’Connor agreed the common is the best place. Ms. Gramarossa amended the motion further to include the events to be held on the town common and the board will review following each event. Amended, amended motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 4 – yes, 1 – no (Barry).

4) **Discussion/Action Items:**
a. Review Liaison Duties for Assignment: Ms. Gramarossa spoke held in-depth conversations with board members as well as staff and community volunteers. She also suggested that if the members have new liaisons to consult with a member who formerly had them. She asked for comments from board members from the draft that she sent out.

Mr. Boscher responded that someone else should be on the finance committee, as he believes that someone else should get to know that committee. Ms. Turner
commented that she would accept that committee as she has dropped the cultural council and didn’t pick anything else up.

Ms. Gramarossa will get a revised edition to office staff.

Ms. Gramarossa noticed when the office staff had sent the list of liaison duties to her there are no email addresses specific to board members. Residents can use a generic selectmen@belchertown email. She questioned if board members wanted an @belchertown.org email address. Mr. Boscher has spoken with Kevin Hannon, IT Director, who brought up legitimate concerns such as how to handle open meeting laws. He feels the board has been getting all the emails from the selectmen.org email and feels the members have done a great job of not replying to build consensus. Mr. Hannon also feels that if one member does it they all need to do it. Mr. Boscher wants to have the @belchertown.org email address. Ms. Turner feels it adds a level of professionalism in their roles to the town. If they don’t do that, she would like the selectmen@belchertown.org to be forwarded to all members. Mr. O’Connor indicated when he got on the board the members had them but they were not used. He doesn’t want to wait two weeks to see emails also wants to have one. He feels all board members should have the @belchertown.org email. Ms. Gramarossa agreed. Mr. Barry feels it is appropriate for each board member to have the @belchertown.org email address as residents want to be able to email the board members. He also thinks the selectmen@belchertown.org emails should go to each member’s email address.

The consensus is that all board members will get the @belchertown.org email address and that the selectmen@belchertown.org email will be forwarded individually to each of the member’s email. It will also be on the town’s webpage so the public can find them.

b. Endorse FY21 UMass Bus Transportation Agreement: Ms. Gramarossa commented that this is the same agreement that the Town signs every year with UMass Bus Transportation. Mr. Brougham agreed that it is the same agreement that is signed every year. It lists the number of trips per day, etc. and is a standard contract.

Mr. Boscher moved the Board authorize the chairman to sign the FY21 UMass Bus Transportation Agreement. Motion seconded by Ms. Turner. Motion passes 5 – 0.

c. Appointment of Firefighter/EMT: Ms. Gramarossa presented the details. Per the recommendation of Fire Chief Ted Bock, Ms. Gramarossa moved to appoint Nathan Marean to the position of full-time firefighter /EMT-basic, effective July 6, 2020. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

d. Municipal Transfers: Ms. Gramarossa presented the details to the board. Mr. Boscher moved the board transfer $17,384 from the fire department expense to fire department wage account. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.

Ms. Gramarossa moved the board transfer $5,000 from highway department wage to general insurance. Motion seconded by Mr. O’Connor. Motion passes 5 – 0.
e. Spending from Reserve/Revolving Funds: Mr. Boscher presented the details to the board. The past practices in town the board has not taken a lot of action in this area leaving it up to the town administrator and other town officials to spend the money from these funds. Under MGL, it is the responsibility of the board of selectmen. He asked the board members if this is something we want to continue and if so the board needs to vote on a number that they feel comfortable allowing the management team to spend. Ms. Gramarossa asked if there had been a number in past practices.

Mr. Brougham commented that there has never been a limit or oversight by the board of selectmen. Not all departments have revolving accounts or funds and he doesn’t believe there has been any abuse. He went on record stating that he feels this concern came about because of a truck that was purchased for the recreation department in an emergency. It was a warranted expenditure as we had a truck with a broken frame and no other vehicle available for the employees to use. It was a safety issue – we cannot put our employees in danger. The town auditor indicated it was okay to use the money for that expense if the vehicle was being used for that department. The town follows Chapter 30B which has specific plateaus for soliciting quotes, sealed bids and RFP’s. He feels management does quite well with managing the town’s money. He questioned if this would apply as well to the school department that has a much larger revolving funds.

Mr. O’Connor isn’t questioning if the truck was warranted (and it was) but it was a surprise and a significant amount of money. He doesn’t need the town administrator and management team jumping through hoops but he would like the heads up. He agrees that the school committee should be aware of large expenditures from their revolving accounts. If we implement something on the town side, we should talk to the school committee. Again, he just wants to have an awareness of the large expenditure.

Jill Panto, Town Accountant commented that under MGL Ch. 44, Sect. 53D it is the recreation committee that runs the programs that funds are set aside for. They are the ones that decide what expenditures are appropriate with the written approval of the board of selectmen. The written approvals of the selectmen under these expenditures are considered the warrant. She wanted to clarify that it is the recreation committee that is in charge of that revolving fund. Pool expenditures could not have come out of the recreation revolving fund as it has its own revolving fund. She also commented that in all of the 32 years she’s worked here there has not been a spending limit with the recreation revolving fund. She feels the recreation committee should be included in this discussion. Mr. O’Connor commented that the recreation committee did not vote on this truck. He also wasn’t suggesting that the money be used to pay for the pool expenditures but that there were many things going on at that time when the budgeting process was starting and things were a little confusing. He agreed that by the board signing the warrant they are approving the expenditure. He just would like to have a heads up.

Mr. Barry commented that there are a lot of revolving funds that town meeting approves. His understanding is they collect money into a bucket and they have approval to spend that money. He agrees a heads up is a good thing but doesn’t
think a dollar amount is necessary. If the board thinks other groups need to be involved, then this might be a discussion for another evening.

Ms. Gramarossa agrees that a heads up is a good thing. She suggested the board might want to talk with the groups and committees that have revolving funds. We may even want to have a conversation with the school committee.

Mr. Boscher commented he wasn’t just starting a conversation and didn’t expect it to be decided this evening.

Ms. Gramarossa commented the board might also want to consult with the finance committee. If the board is going to continue this conversation, we may want to think about what other branches of government we want to talk to about it. Talk to the school committee and see what they do – do they have any parameters on the revolving funds.

f. Update on Social Media Policy: Mr. O'Connor commented that the policy is complete. Department heads reviewed it multiple times and town Counsel has reviewed it. It didn’t make sense to put it in place if the procedures weren’t ready to be put in place. One of the criteria is to post on the website and link to social media as opposed to spreading content all through the sites and we wanted the website to be updated prior to doing that. There will be a couple of training sessions for the employees who will be updating on the website prior to going live. The new website is going to go live on August 14th.

The IT Director needed to purchase software that would allow the town to backup social media posts on Facebook and twitter, which he has done and it is now in place.

Once we go live on the website the board will need to talk about how to roll out the procedures. There will need to be training for employees and elected officials on the new social media policy.

Ms. Gramarossa commented that maybe some public education would be useful so the public is aware of the parameters of the interaction between the employees, public officials and the public.

g. Update on Green Communities Grant Status: Mr. Barry presented details to the board. A grant is due on August 20th and asked the chair if he could speak with Steve Williams and Eric LeBeau from the school department. This grant is only for $12,000 to hire someone for technical assistance so if we ask for more money next year we have backup and proof that we actually need it. Both Mr. Williams and Mr. LeBeau have a vague idea of what they would like assistance with. They had a preliminary conversation last week and will meet again this week. They may decide that they don’t qualify for the grants that are available.

Mr. Boscher asked for clarification that we would have to ask for technical assistance for a specific program. Mr. Barry commented that Mr. Williams might want to do a more detailed audit of town hall to see if there are ways to make it more energy efficient – maybe it’s more insulation.
Ms. Turner mentioned that there are many grants that come down the pike. She wondered what the formalized process is in deciding to go for grants. Ms. Gramarossa had mentioned to her that some towns have a grant writer.

Ms. Gramarossa mentioned we have specific grants that come before the board when a particular department knows of one and decides to apply for it. It’s something the board can do a little research to find out how their liaisons find out about grants.

Mr. Brougham commented that there are many grants secured by town departments on a yearly basis. The schools receive many grants. On the town side the fire department, police department, DPW, conservation are all very active with applying for grants. Not all grants are accessible every year. Some are only every other year and grants can be very competitive.

Mr. O’Connor mentioned he has brought up having a grant writer. They could potentially bring in a lot more funds if that was their sole position. The board should investigate the concept of having a grant writer.

Mr. Barry believes that any grant opportunity comes through town hall. Mr. Brougham commented that some do. The federal ones typically come to town hall but others go directly to the department. Mr. Brougham also added that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is always available and we have up to an “x” number of hours of technical service to use.

Mr. Barry commented that the incoming mail folder was something he always used to look at. If it were in that folder, any member would see it and could say something. Mr. Brougham commented that the mail folders would again be available in the selectmen’s private office over the weekend. Mr. O’Connor commented they were available until Covid hit.

Ms. Gramarossa commented that as the board thinks about a strategic planning session they think about grant writing, grant writing, and grant identification into the mix. The board could also leave a spot on the weekly meetings to update/discuss any grants that may have come across our radar.

h. Miscellaneous Matters:

5) **Town Administrator’s Report:** He mentioned the firefighter promotions. When the town renegotiated the collective bargaining for the Firefighter Rescue unit prior to July 1st of last year it was included that as of July 1st this year we would promote 4 firefighters to the level of captain. Chief Bock sent a letter indicating that 4 members of the Fire Rescue Unit – Scott Chapman, Robert Van Zandt Jr., Jeffery Haughey and Daniel Driscoll will serve as captains. He thinks it’s an important step for the department. It brings a lot of accountability to the day-to-day operation of the department. This department is going to continue to grow. He congratulated them. They are all deeply invested in the town and feels they will do a fine job representing the department in their new position.

Mr. O’Connor congratulated all of them. Ms. Gramarossa also thanked them.
6) **Individual Board Members’ Reports:**

**Mr. Boscher:** He let the residents know that Ms. Gramarossa is the new chairman.

**Ms. Turner:** The DLTA funds that the town planner has secured are moving forward. There was a scope call last week. It is looking at the economic development portion of our master plan and must be completed by December 31st. Many of the conversations they are having are centered on helping the restaurants and businesses in town during the Covid. There is no business association here in town and how do we provide opportunities moving forward.

The town planner sent out information that the town is awarded the Housing Choice Designation Award, which will help the town in applying for grants.

There’s been some discussion about the Commonwealth Places Grant which is a partnership between businesses and non-profit and the Cultural Alliance was tackling that.

On Friday, the recreation department is having a drive in movie at the high school in partnership with the cultural council. Tickets sold out rather quickly.

**Mr. Barry:** He is looking forward to finding out the contacts for his liaisons. He will reach out to everyone in charge of his groups.

**Mr. O’Connor:** It is the new fiscal year. There is a meeting with the vendor for the disk golf course behind Constantino Field. There will be some additional fundraising. The meeting is Thursday at 2:00 pm at the Recreation Department.

He also mentioned the passing of Donald Slessler. He was 97-years-old and served in all five branches of the service over a 30-year period including World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. He has over 12 medals and accommodations and in the Korean War is responsible for missions that saved thousands of lives. He wanted to recognize Mr. Slessler.

**Ms. Gramarossa:** We will be participating with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission around an age friendly, dementia friendly community initiative. There is a meeting next month on how to implement this in Belchertown.

She asked that members come to the next meeting regarding end of summer plans so the dates can be decided for strategic planning meetings.

At a future meeting she wants to have a conversation about inaugurating a public comment period during the selectmen’s meeting.

She thanked the individuals in the police department that helped with the military banners.

***Mr. Brougham just received a text from the Belchertown Fair Committee that the Fair for this year has officially been cancelled.***
7) **Questions from the Press:** Melina Boudreau from *The Sentinel* asked to be emailed the new proposal from the cultural council regarding the food truck events. The office staff will get that sent out.

10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: **August 24, 2020**

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

Gail Gramarossa, Chairman

Nicholas O'Connor

Jen D. Turner

James A. Barry

Ed Boscher