TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN’S MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 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 #2015 is in the amount of $603,889.29. Ms. Gramarossa asked the board to come to consensus about signing the warrant. Ms. Gramarossa is here to sign as she is in town hall for the meeting. Mr. Boscher indicated that last week Ms. Gramarossa suggested we vote on the warrants again as was done in the past. His view is that unless they are available electronically it doesn’t make sense to make the Board members to go into a building closed to the public during these times of Covid. He asked if there were capabilities to digitize the warrant and if not he is comfortable leaving it in the chair’s hands every week.

   Mr. O’Connor asked if the question is about signing the warrant or voting on the warrant as part of the agenda. He was told the question came up if the chair was neglectful in not voting on the warrant. Discussion was also held about continuing to have the chair endorse the warrant weekly, as has been the past practice. If the board is doing a consensus approval, the warrant is available in their private office for board members to come in and look at.

   Following further discussion, it was decided that the chair would continue to endorse the warrant weekly. It will be available for board members to come in and look at.

   b) Routine documents

   c) Approval of Minutes: Minutes of June 8th and June 16th were on the agenda for signature. Ms. Turner was not able to review the minutes of June 16th prior to tonight’s meeting so those will not be voted on this evening. Mr. O’Connor moved the board approve the minutes of June 8, 2020. Motion seconded by Mr. Boscher. Roll call vote: Gramarossa – yes, Turner – yes, Barry – abstain, O’Connor – yes, Boscher – yes.

3) Appointment:
   • 6:35 p.m. Patrick Center Committee and Recreation Committee – Discuss Basketball Courts; Master Plan: Ms. Gramarossa began the discussion reminding everyone about the key points and that tonight was to get all the key parties involved in the discussion.

   Mr. O’Connor provided an update on the Patrick Center Re-Use Committee and the discussion that the members had regarding the use for that property. The property was awarded to the Town in fiscal year 2019 and it is now fiscal year
2021. There was concerns that the money had not been spent so he went to Senator Lesser’s office to see if it was still available to the town. He was told it was because it was already in our funds so we could execute it. We also needed clarification that it could be used for any recreation or only at the Chestnut Hill area. It is specific to the Chestnut Hill area and we have $75,000 to spend on that area. Last year the town applied for a PARC grant that was denied. A master plan was developed for part of the PARC grant and basketball courts were part of that master plan.

He detailed how he worked with Steve Williams, Director of Public Works and the former Chairman, Mr. Boscher, to remove the fencing around the old tennis courts, as they were an eyesore. Additional money had to be spent on removing the rubble due to the hazardous material on the courts. Basketball courts were priced out. He spoke with Senator Lesser back in February who had some concerns that there was no visible progress being made on spending the money that was earmarked for us. It is harder for us to get grants if we are not showing progress with the money that we received. Back in March the Board discussed the basketball courts going in. The recreation committee discussed it back on May 6th.

He continued that we have $50,000 and are ready to develop the basketball courts in an area that has been underdeveloped for the last 10 – 15 years.

Mr. Brougham commented that the Patrick Center Re-Use committee has not held a meeting since the PARC grant application was submitted. They discussed many plans and eventually came up with the master plan. After the PARC grant the discussions were held more on the side of the recreation committee along with their liaison, the chairman of the board and the former chairman of the board of selectmen.

Kyle Thibeault, Recreation Director provided additional logistics. He has no concerns about building up that area of Chestnut Hill. His understanding was that people were happy to have a plan even without the PARC grant approval. His concern is that the basketball courts were never discussed as going in where the former tennis courts went. He is okay with it but there was an overwhelming outreach from the community about having bathrooms in that area. He had begun to look at material to upgrade the bathrooms so that they could be used. He also spoke with Steve Williams about locking them after office hours to stop vandalism. He was unaware that basketball courts were going in until he heard from Steve Williams about it. He would like to be included in any meetings regarding recreation areas and spending.

Nancy Kwiatkowski, Chairman of the Recreation Committee feels that they were left out of discussions. There needs to be better communication. The Recreation Committee feels they need to be involved going forward.
Steve Williams commented that approximately $12,600 was spent disposing of the coated tennis court surface that had to be disposed of as a hazardous waste. He has a balance of $60,710 to work with. He has an up to date estimate on lighting upgrades and new basketball courts. He received an estimate of $15,850 to repair the lighting to get it up and running with another $4,900 for a LED upgrade, which could potentially be, included in future grants. It was put on hold when the basketball discussions began. He first called Vermont Surface about an acrylic surface with a cost not to exceed about $15,000 for one court. He looked into paving and looked at possibly paving two courts at a cost of $32,890. If one court was done now and another later it would cost about an additional $10,000. Goal posts, backboards, rims and nets cost is about $6,000 for one court. The posts for the second court would be about $3,000. We have the money to do two courts but not the lighting. The bid he received is only good for another week.

Mr. O'Connor feels we should proceed with the courts. The bathrooms will cost more money and may not be accessed due to Covid. He feels that both courts should be poured and be visible.

Mr. Thibeault questioned if just one court should be done and the rest of the money put toward updating the bathrooms. He questioned if was a conversation that should take place.

Mr. Boscher mentioned the board has talked about this several times. He mentioned that Mr. Thibeault said something about the courts not being made the right way and wanted to make sure he was not insinuating that Mr. Williams wouldn't make a good basketball court. Mr. Thibeault responded that he was referring to the CPA money that people previously had an issue with prior to him becoming the recreation director. That money was put into it and it was not done the right way. Mr. Boscher made everyone aware that the recreation department had been in charge of that court and wanted to make sure that there was no issues with Mr. Williams getting the job done right. Mr. Thibeault agreed again that he had no problem with Mr. Williams doing the courts. Mr. Boscher also questioned if Mr. Thibeault had spoken with any contractors regarding the bathroom renovations. Mr. Thibeault has only looked into replacing toilets and things that the DPW would be able to do. He has not gotten anyone to come out and look. He just researched materials. Mr. Boscher commented that this is not a new project and it's been discussed for a while. He also questioned if he had spoken with Mr. Williams about repairs. He was told he has not except to discuss about vandalism.

Mr. Boscher questioned the chances of applying for a PARC grant this year. He was told that the recreation department did not apply this year because it needs to go to town meeting for a vote and with everything going on with Covid he did not feel it was appropriate to apply at this time. It is a reimbursement grant that requires a town vote. Mr. Boscher agreed the town needs to show progress. He doesn't feel bathrooms could be properly disinfected during Covid. He has
spoken with Mr. Williams about the basketball courts and the lights. He also commented that as Kyle reports directly to the town administrator who hasn’t missed any meetings he should have known what was going on in regards to the basketball courts. He feels they should have been talking about it. He didn’t understand Mr. Thibeault’s motivation is in bringing up the need to be involved at this late date. Ms. Gramarossa as the chairman stopped the discussion at this point.

Ms. Gramarossa questioned when the next recreation committee meeting is. She was told it is Wednesday evening. She wants to know the board’s feelings and wants the recreation committee to discuss it one more time. Mr. Williams feels it will be okay if he gets back to the contractor a few days late. He will log into the recreation committee meeting on Wednesday. Mr. Williams added these are asphalt courts and will be paved by a paving contractor. Vermont Surface is requesting a 30-day drying period before the surface can go down. The later in the year this happens the harder it will be to finish before winter sets in.

Mr. Boscher doesn’t feel it makes any sense to delay the decision any further. Mr. Thibeault supports the basketball courts and doesn’t see the Recreation Committee going against it. Time is an issue and feels the board should move forward. Mr. O’Connor commented the funds are in the town’s general fund so the recreation committee doesn’t have the opportunity to vote it out only the board of selectmen does. He also feels that these basketball courts are not as costly as those proposed in the master plan that was submitted for the PARC grant.

Mr. Barry thinks it would be appropriate to wait to vote on this next week to allow the Recreation Committee time to hear about what was discussed this evening at their meeting this week. Mr. Boscher questioned if Mr. Barry was voting no on it. Mr. Barry indicated he was not ready to vote yes or no on it this evening. He wants to hear more. Ms. Gramarossa supported waiting until next week to vote on the basketball courts to allow the recreation committee time to discuss it.

Mr. Boscher questioned what happens if the low bidder will not extend the deadline for the bid. He thinks the board should vote tonight, let the recreation committee vote at their meeting, and come back to the board. Ms. Gramarossa reiterated that she is more comfortable with the board voting next Monday night.

Ms. Turner questioned who controls the money. She was told it is the board of selectmen. Ms. Gramarossa recognized that and recognized the recreation committee is a key player. Ms. Turner is disappointed that the PARC grant wasn’t pursued this year. Basketball courts are a part of the master plan. She is in support of moving forward and that the board has already talked about it. The money has been sitting there for a long time and it should be used now. Mr. Williams thinks that the low bidder will wait a couple of days.
Mr. O'Connor feels there is consensus with the board and doesn't see why the vote couldn't be taken this evening and not take action until the recreation meets on Wednesday.

Mr. O'Connor moved in support of spending the $50,000, for erecting the basketball courts as has been detailed in minutes, in the Sentinel, which is two courts, the poles, the goals going on the existing tennis court area with the funds earmarked for that location be spent. Motion seconded by Mr. Boscher. Roll call vote: Turner – yes, Boscher – yes, Barry – yes, O'Connor – yes, Gramarossa – yes. Roll call vote 5 – 0. Ms. Gramarossa encouraged the recreation committee to discuss it thoroughly on Wednesday.

4) Discussion/Action Items:

a. Discuss Phone System Upgrade: Kevin Hannon, IT Director provided the details to the Board. We have the opportunity to upgrade the phone system. It should be eligible for reimbursement through the Cares Act to better support remote work during this pandemic. It will increase the wireless capacity if we require social distancing within the buildings. It is a high cost item at about $205,000 but it has some benefits, as it will end up reducing our annual support costs and networking by about $21,000 a year. It will increase our security, as it will better integrate with our firewall. He went into detail about the new phone system.

Ms. Gramarossa questioned which physical buildings would be getting this phone upgrade. She was told it would be all of the town buildings excluding the school buildings. He is confident that it will qualify for reimbursement through the Cares Act.

Mr. O'Connor questioned if this is a Cisco upgrade. Mr. Hannon commented that it is not as it will be considerable more expensive to continue with them. It will be the same system that we use with our firewall solution and he has spoken with people that use it and has had good feedback on the system. Mr. Hannon indicated we should be able to have this in place by the middle of September. Mr. O'Connor confirmed that this would just be for the town side and would not include the school side. Mr. Hannon confirmed that he was correct. Mr. O'Connor questioned if for buying power and wonders if the schools should be included if the Cares Act is going to reimburse for this. Mr. Hannon feels there would be a considerable delay in the project to add the schools.

Mr. Barry questioned the cash flow and if it's reimbursable do we have the money to spend. Mr. Hannon commented this is a reimbursement through the Cares Act money. He had involved the town accountant who felt this is a doable thing. He does not know the specifics of how the money gets there. Mr. Brougham has some concerns about taking the leap of faith with no guarantee that we will be reimbursed. If the board is okay with moving forward, we can try to identify interim funding and proceed.
Mr. O'Connor agreed that if the phone system is in need of an upgrade we should take advantage of being reimbursed through the Cares Act while we can be reimbursed instead of waiting two years to do so and get no help in paying for it. Ms. Gramarossa was in agreement with Mr. O'Connor in that we should take advantage of the reimbursement through the Cares Act.

Board members agreed that Mr. Hannon should move forward with upgrading the phone system. Mr. Hannon will do more research on the reimbursement through the Cares Act. He will also look more into the video capability on the new phones.

b. Revision to Transfer Station Rules & Regulations: Steve Williams came before the board asking for a revision in the definition of brush at the transfer station. Brush is accepted as part of the transfer station sticker but it seems that every year the definition of brush is changed by the users. Most recently, they have seen people bringing in who trees as "brush". It's costing a lot of money to dispose of and we shouldn't have to spend it. Residents should find another way to dispose of a wood much of which is re-usable cord wood. He asked the board to define brush as no larger than three inches in diameter or equal to or less than three inches. If board members have concerns regarding the three inches, he would be willing to go up to six inches in diameter.

Ms. Gramarossa moved the board approve the revised transfer station regulations to indicate brush no greater than three inches in diameter will be accepted. Motion seconded by Mr. O'Connor. Roll call vote: Gramarossa – yes, Turner – yes, Barry – yes, O'Connor – yes, Boscher – yes. Motion passes 5 – 0.

c. Discuss Pool, Beach Reopening: Ms. Gramarossa commented that since the board made the decision many weeks ago to close the town beach and pool there have been many comments from concerned residents about those decisions. There has been a request for the board to think about the pool and moving forward.

Mr. O'Connor feels it is too late to open the beach. The board had agreed to discuss reopening the pool at the board's first meeting in September. Part of that decision was to see what the schools would be doing and no decision has been made there yet. It was his understanding that the recreation department had begun working on a plan for reopening and should be refining it in anticipation of what the schools are doing.

Mr. Boscher agreed that we should wait to see what the schools are doing before we reopen the pool. There are also some repairs that needed to be made at the pool.

Mr. Barry spoke with the recreation director this week. It is too late to open the beach this year. He questioned the repairs that were supposed to be done at the pool. Mr. Brougham commented that the pool deck was supposed to be repaired while the pool was closed. Mr. Thibeault responded to the question about repairs. He had a pre-bid meeting last week with everyone that is involved. Questions
were asked and answered. Hopefully by next week some of the bids should be in.
It is moving forward they are just waiting to see what happens with the bids.

Mr. O’Connor is concerned that if we are only in pre-bid now there is no way the
pool will potentially be open in September. Mr. Thibeault responded that the
repairs should last a week to a week and a half.

Ms. Gramarossa mentioned that tomorrow night the school committee would
finalize what they are doing with reopening the schools.

Mr. Brougham commented that it is definitely too late at this point to open the
beach for any part of the summer. The pool deck project is not a large project but
is somewhat complex because of a structural element. He would like to have a
plan in place so that when the pool deck is done we can proceed with opening if
that is possible. The recreation director and the aquatics coordinator should be
working on having a plan in place for reopening. They could come back in the
next couple of weeks with their plan.

The board will discuss the reopening plan in late August or early September.

d. Discuss Green Communities: Mr. Barry commented that he hopes to have a draft
application for the board’s review next Monday.

e. Miscellaneous Matters: None.

6) **Town Administrator’s Report:** There has been a lot of email exchange with the new
operator of the restaurant at Cold Spring Golf Course. The new restaurant’s name is
Joseph’s At Cold Spring. The former restaurant operator renewed his license for this
year but his lease at the golf course was not renewed. As there is already a license
issued to that location another liquor license cannot be obtained.

Earlier this year the town was asked to get involved in the dispute between the owner
of the golf course and the Club House restaurant regarding the liquor license. Town
Counsel and ABCC advised the town to stay out of it, as it was a private matter. Town
Counsel is now advising that the Board of Selectmen can hold a public hearing to
revoke that license. If we schedule the hearing the license holder can come in, the
property owners can also come in. If the board revokes the license the current license
holder can appeal to ABCC and their decision would be final. If the board likes we
can move forward and hold the hearing to revoke the license or the board can wait
until the end of the year and not renew the license.

Mr. Boscher questioned if ABCC had been contacted again and if so has their position
changed as has town councils? Mr. Brougham indicated he has not spoken with
ABCC. He received town counsel’s opinion in writing today.

Ms. Turner google searched to see if there is precedent if select boards had revoked
licenses and there is. She feels it’s unfortunate that the liquor license is being held
hostage when there is a new operator in town that wants to do business. She thinks we should pursue the option of revoking the license.

Mr. Barry questioned what changed with town counsel in saying we shouldn’t do it earlier this year but now are saying we can do it. He questioned what it would cost the town to get involved.

Mr. O'Connor also questioned the town’s liability. It is a private matter and is concerned about the town getting involved.

Ms. Gramarossa also wants to find out the town’s liability and should the board schedule a public hearing to revoke the license.

Mr. Brougham commented that town counsel changed their position as it has been almost six months since it was first discussed. Town Counsel is pointing out that in a prior case ABCC pointed out that where there is no activity with the license it is cause to revoke it. It wasn’t until July that we learned there was a new tenant for the restaurant.

Mr. Boscher commented that he would like to know what the ABCC says about this situation now. If they are in agreement with town counsel, we can discuss this at our next meeting. If not then maybe we need to stay out of it. Ms. Gramarossa asked the town administrator to check again with ABCC to see if their position has changed.

Ms. Turner agrees with the sentiment about liability. However, she feels disappointed that this is really happening and it is unfair to this new business.

Mr. Brougham received draft RFP’s for Sportshaven today but he has not had a chance to look at them yet.

Things continue to be almost unbearable for the residents near the Granby Bow & Gun Club. We have submitted letters to the Granby Board of Selectmen, there was a cease and desist order from the Granby Zoning Officer, etcetera. Abutters continue sending letters and emails that it is stifling. He wrote a letter last week to the Granby Board of Health asking if they can do something to bring relief to the abutters. There is some fear that someone could be hit by a stray bullet.

Last week he spent time on a remote meeting with the Belchertown Cultural Alliance and them accessing 6 Berkshire Avenue. That conversation is ongoing.

** Mr. O'Connor wanted to follow-up on the Granby Bow & Gun Club conversation that is very frustrating. Long-range gun shooting at that club is banned and their appeal was denied. No long range shooting should be taking place there. He does not understand why no person in authority in Granby can make them stop. They are legally operating in an illegal way. He lives on the far side of Turkey Hill and he hears it every Saturday all day long. They are not grandfathered in and they try to turn
it into a second amendment issue, which it is not. He questioned why the Town of Granby can’t enforce their own rules.

7) **Review of Weekly Mail:**

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

**Ms. Turner:** She did participate in the meeting with BCA. She is looking for more information from Gary to formulate a memorandum of understanding between all parties. She has a vested interest in making all this happen.

This Thursday is a kickoff meeting for the PVPC project with the DLTA funding. This is a project to look at the economic development portion of the master plan and what steps need to be taken to move forward.

**Mr. O’Connor:** He was on vacation last week. The first food truck event is happening this week and the truck will be Rustic Fusion. The menu looks amazing. It is Thursday from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm on the town common. They will be serving food for take home from 3:00 – 7:00, they will have Rolly Polly Guacamole streaming from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm and from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm it will be the Psychic Brothers streaming live.

**Mr. Boscher:** Mentioned the construction going on down by the police department. There are a lot of projects underway. Director Williams is already starting to pivot towards planning for the Main and North Main project. Mr. Boscher is on vacation this week.

**Mr. Barry:** He is continuing to get to know his liaisons. He is starting to work on his list for the Saturday session. He questioned if he should be sending them in advance of the meeting to the chair or just have them ready for the goals and objectives meeting.

#5 on the incoming mail was a letter from Mass Development – PACE letter. He would like to see this on a future agenda.

**Ms. Gramarossa:** She thanked the community and to remind residents to be mindful of escalating Covid cases. She sees a huge number of people in town wearing their masks and social distancing.

The school committee is meeting tomorrow and they have a huge task on their hands putting together the schools reopening plan.

As part of her liaison duties, she is getting to know the board of registrars and more about how to do voting, early voting, mail in voting and day of voting. There is a primary on September 1st.
Later this week the Belchertown Team for the Age Friendly/Dementia Friendly group is meeting.

As part of her liaison duties, she is hoping to meet with the town moderator.

BOAT is looking to do some additional distribution of Narcan – the overdose reversal drug as there has been an uptick of drug overdoses during Covid.

9) **Questions from the Press:** Melina Bourdeau from the *Sentinel* questioned if the Saturday meeting will be one or two meetings. She was told it was undecided right now. There has not been a follow-up date set.

She also wants to follow-up with Ms. Turner or Mr. Barry regarding the Thursday meeting.

She was curious about how the town beach topic came up again. Ms. Gramarossa indicated that a number of residents had called and emailed expressing their concern and disappointment that the town beach was not open. Recently questions came in about town beach and the pool. At this point in time, it is not even feasible to open the town beach.

10) **Adjournment:** Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Gary L. Brougham, Town Administrator

Board approved/endorsed: *September 14, 2020*

Board of Selectmen - Town of Belchertown

Endorsed by a majority:

Gail Gramarossa, Chairman

James A Barry

Nicholas O'Connor