

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday September 23, 2019

Claire Teague Senior Center

Great Barrington Massachusetts

Selectboard present: S. Bannon, E. Abrahams, B. Cooke, K. Burke, L. Davis, and Town Manager, Mark Pruhenski

Also Present: Shaun McHugh, Principal Assessor and Sue Carmel, Finance Director

1. Call To Order: Meeting began at 5:30pm. with a motion to open by E. Abrahams, 2nd by B. Cooke; Vote: 5-0.
2. Public Hearings:
 - A. Continuation of September 16, 2019, Fiscal 2020 Tax Classification Hearing.
 - a. Explanation of Project by Principal Assessor, Shaun McHugh on the Executive Summary provided, copy attached.

Mr. McHugh, went through the four types of exemptions and discount options; Open Space, Residential Exemption, Small Commercial Exemption, and Single or Split Tax Rate.

Open Space Discount: Board of Assessors does not recommend adoption of Open Space Discount.

Residential Exemption: Board of Assessors does not recommend adoption of the Residential Exemption.

Small Commercial Exemption: Board of Assessors does not recommend adoption of the Small Commercial Exemption.

Single or Split Tax Rate: Board of Assessors recommends adopting and maintaining a Single Tax Rate.

Notables for Fiscal Year 2020 Re-evaluation:

 - Levy: \$23,993,431, an increase of 2% over FY 19 levy of \$23,500.999.
 - Total Taxable Value \$1,523,392,459.
 - Tax Rate: \$15.75 per \$1,000. of valuation, an increase of \$.03, from last year rate.
 - Excess Levy Capacity: \$980,206.
 - New Growth: \$194,274. in tax levy growth or new tax dollars to the Town.
 - Median & Average Single Family Home Values: \$ 313,650./ \$398,754.
 - Median & Average Commercial Values: 3.5%new growth) \$489,000/ \$804,169.
 - CPA Revenue \$543,555. (6th year a 3% surcharge will be levied against 3,872 eligible real estate property parcels.)
 - Fiscal Impact: Not applicable beyond the FY20 property tax levy that be maintained at \$23,993,431.

Principal Assessor, Sean McHugh said the tax rate being kept low was due to the Town's tax levy being maintained and new growth.

-Next Steps: FY20 tax bills to be mailed on or before October 15, 2019.

-Recommendation: Adoption of a single tax rate of \$15.75 per \$1,000. of valuation for all classes of property for FY20.
 - b. Speak in Favor/ Opposition:
 1. Micheal Wise, Castle Street, Great Barrington; 5 years ago study done, average home was \$ 253,000.

2. Anne O'Dwyer, Housatonic, would like the Finance Committee involved, though not possible at this late date.
3. Chip Elitzer, Alford Road, Great Barrington. Feels that M. Wise has some good points, doesn't go far enough. Feels that least able to pay taxes are those renting. They are not able to own homes in the town. If the tax rate goes up, the increase is transferred into rent cost, then it's a future strain on these citizens. Once the Town makes an exception, it's a slippery slope in the future.
4. Vivian Orlowski, Lake Buel Road, Great Barrington, said older residents bought homes many decades ago, their incomes are fixed now, yet appraisal value grows on these homes, as does their taxes, and subsequent costs of ownership. Selectboard needs to be careful.
5. Peter Frank, Lake Buel Road, Great Barrington, his livelihood is dependent on the health of economy and the fair assessments on real estate in town. Feels taxes are too high. Unclear if redistribution of tax would help, feels it is a job of State and other agencies to provide affordable housing monies.
- c. Motion to Close Public Hearing: Motion to close by E. Abrahams, 2nd by B. Cooke. Roll call: L. Davis, K. Burke, B. Cooke, E. Abrahams, and Chairmen S. Bannon all yes.
- d. Motion re: Findings Motion to accept Findings, made by E. Abrahams, 2nd B. Cooke, roll call, L. Davis, K. Burke, W. Cooke, E. Abrahams, & Chairmen S. Bannon, all yes.
- e. Motion re: Approval/Denial/Table;
E. Motion: E. Abrahams to adopt the single tax rate at \$15.75 for all classes for FY20 2nd B. Cooke, roll call, L. Davis, K. Burke, B. Cooke, E. Abrahams, & Chairmen S. Bannon – all yes.

3. Old Business:

A. Recommendation from W.E.B. DuBois Legacy Committee re: Indigenous People's Day. (Discussion/Vote)

1. Randy Weinstein and Gwen Van Sant, Committee members, spoke to the purpose and definition of Indigenous people, and setting appropriate date for celebration of Indigenous People's Day. They would like to designate the 2nd Monday, in October for celebration.
2. Steven Good Man, Native American, was a guest speaker. He spoke of his Native American heritage, mentioning that his grandparents were not considered American citizens until 1921. He described Indigenous as not being of race, color, gender, religion, that children are included, and this proposed day would begin and end in a native prayer of gratitude.
3. Motion: E. Abrahams, made motion to accept the proposal of the 2nd Monday in October, for Indigenous People's Day; 2nd B. Cooke, All in favor (5-0).

4. Acceptance of Minutes:

August 29: All yes (5-0) with a change in 4th paragraph "other than ".

September 4: All yes (5-0)

September 9: All yes (5-0) with as change from Opened to Open.

September 10: All yes (5-0) with spelling of last names: Eric Limon, Susie Howell and Tim Geller.

5. Selectboard's Announcements/Statements:

A. General Comments:

Burke asked when possible to follow up on the Citizen's Meeting in Housatonic and the Cottage/ Grove Street Meetings?

6. Town Manager's Report:

A. Department updates

B. Project Updates

7. Old Business, continued,

A. Continuation of August 26, 2019 and September 9, 2019 Fulcrum Enterprises LLC Host Community Agreement (HCA) for Marijuana Cultivation and Manufacturing establishment in an Industrial Zone at 22 Van Deusenville Road (Discussion/Vote)

8. Public Hearings continued,

A. Continuation of September 9, 2019 Special Permit application from Fulcrum Enterprises, LLC, for a Marijuana Cultivation and Marijuana Manufacturing Establishment in an Industrial Zone, at 22 Van Duesenville Road, Great Barrington, in accordance with Section 3.1.4C(13), 7.18 and 10.4 of Great Barrington Zoning Bylaw. (Discussion/Vote)

9. Licenses or Permits:

A. Ken Roht/ Daniel's Art Party and Patrick Hollenbeck/ Great Barrington Libraries at Mason Library parking lot for a Disco Party, as follows:

~ for Permission to Close Dresser Avenue from Main Street to the 2nd parking lot next to 15 Dresser Avenue from 6pm.- 9:30pm.

*E. Abrahams made motion to close Dresser Avenue from Main Street to second parking lot next to 15 Dresser Avenue, B. Cooke 2nd, All in Favor (5-0).

~ for One Day Weekday Entertainment License for Saturday, October 12, 2019 from 7:30pm. – 9:30pm.

*E. Abrahams made motion for One Day Entertainment License for October 12, 2019 from 7:30pm. – 9:30pm., B. Cooke 2nd, All in Favor, (5-0).

~for One Day Sunday Entertainment License (Rain Date) Sunday, October 13, 2019 from 7:30pm. - 9:30pm.

*E. Abrahams made motion for One Day, Sunday (Rain Date), Entertainment License on October 13, 2019, B. Cooke 2nd Motion, All in Favor (5-0).

B. Hayes Gilman/ Wrenegade Sports for permission to use Town roads (Seekonk, Round Hill, Seekonk Cross, Locust Hill, Pumpkin Hollow, Seekonk Cross, Long Pond, and Division Street) on Sunday, September 29, 2019 for Farm to Fork Fondo Berkshires.

* E. Abrahams made motion to grant permission to Hayes Gilman/ Wrenegade Sports on September 29, 2019, B. Cooke 2nd, K. Burke withdraw vote, conflict of interest, (4-0 in favor, one abstention).

10. Old Business, continuation:

A. SB- Lake Mansfield Road Paving – Recommendation from the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF). Discussion/Vote:

~ M. Pruhenski, Town Manager, gave some information about road pavement project/ proposal: 900 feet to pave, on road alongside Lake Mansfield, no current funding for work, approximately \$50,000, have bridge projects still underway, causing concern and traffic delays for Towns people, and the road can't be plowed this winter in its current conditions, according to DPW. Colder temperatures coming, and the decision is needed for DPW planning purposes.

1. Citizens Speak:

- a. Mike McGuere, Great Barrington; 1. Wants to know what message does it send to pave road 2. What is the alternative 3. According to LMITF Minutes need to improve Lake health. Feels that by paving would cause more asphalt in in the Lake.
 - b. Christine Ward, Castle Avenue, Great Barrington; wants collaboration with Town on this issue. Pavement is already falling into the Lake, winter salt accumulating in the Lake, freezing-thawing causes more damage. Wants road closed.
 - c. Steve Farnia, Great Barrington; asked if SB has read the LMITF report. 3 surveys done, 70% want the road to stay open. Could use Techno posts for retention, Bank could be built up and a Boardwalk would help with pedestrian safety.
 - d. Peter Frank, 16 Lakeview Drive; problem is with the sub-base of road, no foundation. If pavement is added to poor foundation, it will end up in lake.
 - e. Dale Abrams, Great Barrington; Task Force Member, volunteers have worked deliberately and with great thought, they want the road closed to save the Lake and for use for recreational purposes.
 - f. David Ryel, Christian Hill Road, Great Barrington; read report that approximately 2000 cars travel from Route 71 to Great Barrington. Feels that there is a conflict of interest with the Task Force, they will benefit most from closing of the road. Thinks this should go to the next Annual Town Meeting for vote.
 - g. Ron Banks, Hollenbeck Avenue, Great Barrington; feels that Great Barrington roads are too smooth, causing speeding problems. If paved Lake Mansfield Road, speed and accidents problems will more likely occur around the Lake.
 - h. Jenna James, Sumner Street, Great Barrington; Don't repave.
 - i. Katie Killner, Dehon Road, Great Barrington; keep the road open for emergency vehicles. Patch up the road.
 - j. David Anderson, Dehon Road, Great Barrington; close the road, pave it to make it safe for pedestrians, open to emergency vehicles.
 - k. Elizabeth Berliner, Division Road, Great Barrington; keep it open. All roads should be maintained.
 - l. Steve Bannon read email letter from Brandee Nelson, Great Barrington; wants to close the road, too much sand and salt into lake, misuse of monies, for the health of Lake.
2. SB questions / comments:
- B. Cooke; If road is repaved, will DPW sand and salt in winter months?
~ S. Van Duesen, DPW; yes, less.
 - E. Abrahams; will it be helpful to repave?
~ S. Van Duesen, DPW; as is, trucks will plow pavement into the lake in its current condition due to the cracked surface. Not really able to plow this winter, too damaged. To keep open for emergency vehicles need to pave completely.
 - L. Davis, Emphatically wants to follow recommendations to close the road immediately.
 - K. Burke; can it be a one lane road?
~ S. Van Duesen; anything is possible.
 - L. Davis; recommendation to follow LMITF.
3. Motion:
- A. L. Davis made motion to close the road, as is the LMITF recommendation, on November 15, 2019; 2nd B. Cooke. Vote 3 against (S. Bannon, E. Abrahams, K. Burke) / 2 for (L. Davis, B. Cooke); Motion failed.
 - B. K. Burke made motion to repave road as a one way road, South to North (boat launch to parking lot), with pedestrians on lake side of road, E. Abrahams 2nd Motion, 3 for (K. Burke, E. Abrahams, S. Bannon)/2 against (L. Davis and B. Cooke); Motion passes.

11. Citizen Speak:

- A. Steven Farnia, Great Barrington; surprised at decision.
- B. Peter Frank, Great Barrington; feels muddled decision.
- C. Christine Ward, Great Barrington; puzzled over decision. Reminded everyone of Land Conservatory events coming up.
- D. Dale Abrams, Great Barrington, one way is difficult and complex.
- E. Jennie Clark, Great Barrington, sad about the pavement.
- F. Dave Ryel, Great Barrington; likes paving, maybe change direction N-S.
- G. Michelle Loubert, Housatonic; speed on roads too fast, wants to enjoy her property too, Town spending too much money on lawyers about Marijuana issues.
- H. Trevor Forbes, Housatonic; went to California and Colorado on fact finding mission, about Marijuana issues.
- I. Doug Stevenson, Great Barrington; wants SB to go to Sheffield to see Marijuana Cultivation happening there.
- J. Maureen Quigley, 9 High Street, Housatonic; Who is water expert? Has DEP been contacted directly?
- K. Ms. Lord, Housatonic, what is to be expected at October 21 meeting?
- L. Denise Forbes, Housatonic; emailed SB report from Maine would like them to read.

12. Selectboard Time:

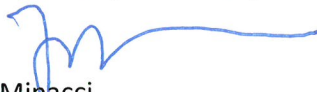
- L. Davis; concerns over DPW making Lake Mansfield a one way road.
- E. Abrahams thanked Town people for sharing concerns tonight.
- S. Van Duesen, DPW, will contact traffic engineers about creation of one way road.

13. Media Time:

- Eileen Mooney wants to have the Town website as the official posting for meeting agendas.

14. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn, E. Abrahams, B. Cooke, 2nd, All in favor, (5-0); Meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

Respectfully submitted,



J. Minacci
Recording Secretary