

Selectboard Special Meeting
Monday, September 16, 2019; 6:00 pm
Claire Teague Center
917 Main Street, Great Barrington

Present: Chairperson S. Bannon, B. Cooke, E. Abrahams, M. Pruhenski, Town Manager, L. Davis arrived (at 6:30pm)

Absent: Kate Burke

Andrea Lacass and Gordon Leedy - from Tighe and Bond Structural Engineers, Westfield, Massachusetts.

6:03 pm - Chair called the meeting to Order

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

FY 2020 Tax Classification hearing to determine FY 2020 property tax rates. (Discussion/Vote)

E. Abrahams advised that the public hearing was advertised in the September 11, 2019, Berkshire Eagle and September 13, 2019 Berkshire Record. He also said that the Town did not receive the final approval from DOR.

- a. Open Public Hearing
- b. Explanation of Project
- c. Speak in Favor/Opposition
- d. Motion to Close Public Hearing
- e. Motion re: Findings
- f. Motion re: Approval/Denial/Table

Motion: E. Abrahams made a motion to open the public hearing and continue it to September 23, 2019 at 5:30 pm at the Senior Center

Second: B. Cooke

Vote: 4-0

Meeting paused and reconvened by the Chair at 6:30 pm.

2. Citizen Input concerning Cottage Street Bridge

Background information by M. Pruhenski: the bridge was rebuilt in 1961. In 2018 the bridge was closed by the State. The Town had already received the monies for repairs. DOT (Department of Transportation) awarded 5 million dollar grant. There will be an additional 6 years for it to be completed due to placement on the list of bridges that need repairs (2019-2025). S. VanDuesen, DPW Superintendent said that by repairing early, the Town could forfeit the TIP list (Transportation Improvement Program) monies and the Town would then be responsible for entirety of the project costs.

3. Citizens Speak:

- A. Bernie Drew; Gilmore Avenue, Great Barrington, feels it's an inconvenience to the neighborhood.

Concertedly, there are 6 Town bridges “out”, over Housatonic River. Feels that the Brown Bridge is failing!

Additionally, the sidewalks are non-existing on Gilmore Avenue.

M. Pruhenski said that the Brown Bridge is to have steel work & repainting done in Spring 2020. DPW knows of needed sidewalk repairs on Gilmore Avenue.

- B. Martha Clay, Great Barrington, wants to recommend that the half million dollar in revenue from Marijuana shop be used for bridge repairs.
- C. Liz Hirsch, Cottage Street, Great Barrington said that if the Brown Bridge fails, what happens to traffic on East Street? She likes the idea of planters on bridge area. Uses walking path over the bridge. Would like to have babysitting for meetings.
Andrea Lacass pointed to the area on right of the drawing of the bridge, where the structural damage and deficiencies are. The bridge can hold pedestrians though too weak for over 100 pounds per inch: no traffic or large amount of people standing on the bridge. There are aesthetic choices with plants, benches, etc.
- D. Pat White, Russell Street, Great Barrington, she is very concerned about emergency vehicles arriving in a timely fashion to neighborhoods. She feels that the traffic is too congested with bridge out. Plants are nice, but it doesn’t solve the safety of transportation to her street.
- E. Nancy Gilketti, Avery Lane, Great Barrington; 6 years doesn’t seem to be a reasonable time frame for repairs.
M. Pruhenski said funding takes time. If the Town makes small changes or repairs, we could lose 5.5 million dollars in grant monies. It would cost under \$100 thousand to add plants, etc.
- F. Linda Lavoie, Great Barrington asked as to why it is in such bad repair?
- G. Michelle Loubert, Housatonic commented on poor quality of the sidewalks in town; said it’s supposed to be a “walkable town”.
- H. Martha Clay, Great Barrington said that the truck noise is too loud, they get stuck on a corner of Cottage and East Streets. She would like GBPD to enforce the tonnage signage, there are too many large trucks using streets.
L. Davies asked if speed bumps would help as a deterrent for truck traffic?
Gordon Leedy said “speed tables” are a better option. The road is built up to slow traffic.
- I. Pat White, Great Barrington asked if the Town will do a traffic study on East Street traffic?
S. Bannon said yes, if Town can find a sound reason to do so.

- 5. Citizen Input on 40 Grove Street: called to begin at 7:30pm.

M. Pruhenski; background information; July 2018, property was foreclosed on, due to back taxes (\$33,000.). Town thereby had ownership in 2019. House circa 1910, the property is 2.9 acres, single family home, on town water and septic system. Town has turned off utilities, removed trash and vehicles, grass cut, police monitoring for safety of property.

- A. Carolyn Ivory, 54 Grove Street, Great Barrington; lived in Great Barrington for 40 years, the building has never had good tenants. Home is beautiful, would like to see it restored, not torn down.
- B. Stephen McAllister would like to see the home to be restored. Appreciative of lawn maintenance.
- C. Jane McWater, Great Barrington; was there /is there a sewage leak in a home?
M. Pruhenski; yes, about 7 years ago.
- D. Linda Owens, Great Barrington is appreciative of yard cleaning. Doesn’t want it subdivided, friendly neighborhood, children play in streets and park.

- E. John MacGruer, Great Barrington; wants to know the "economics" of house/ property?
M. Pruhenski; \$ 33,000 in back taxes, as of 2016.
Three choices:
- a. Auction the property, one to three month process.
 - b. The Annual Town Meeting can transfer the property to the Housing Trust, with a 2/3 vote.
 - c. Selectboard can, at Town Meeting, put out an RFP (Request for Proposal) to bidder(s).
- F. Dan Seitz, Grove Street, Great Barrington also thanked the DPW for cleaning up the property. Concerned that more than one house could be built on the lot. Recommends that it remains a one family home, for the neighborhood.
- G. Trice Atchison, Grove Street, Great Barrington; home has beautiful character, would be acceptable if a two family dwelling. Their home was also affected by the sewage leak.
- H. Martha Archambault, Great Barrington said it would a shame to take down house, could be a two family house.
- I. Paul Ivory, 54 Grove Street, Great Barrington and member of the Historical Society. Home was placed on list of Historical homes. Home has good bones, he would like to see it stay intact.
- J. Dan Seitz; concerned that it might be divided into multiple homes.
- K. John MacGruer is there any process for the Town to get the money back?
M. Pruhenski - at the auction, the highest bidder, potentially the Town could re-coop the monies. More important for Town is not to have vacant home.

1

6. Adjournment: E. Abrahams made a motion to adjourn. B. Cooke seconded. Vote: 5-0.

The Meeting adjourned at 7:59pm.

Next regular scheduled Selectboard Meeting,
Monday, September 23, 2019, 5:30pm.at Claire
Teague Senior Center, Great Barrington.

Respectfully submitted,



J. M. Minacci
Recording Secretary