

# TOWN OF MONSON

*"A town where friendliness is more than just a word"*

## January 9, 2020 – Select Board Meeting

Present select board members: Buddy Martin, Eric Vainio, Tyler Adkins Town Manager, Daniel Swain.

Townspople –Bobbi Crockett, Ricky Clawson, Brian Turner, David Bjork, Bob Jarvis, Jim Greenleaf, Jan Martin, Amelia Trader

- 1) Meeting opened at 7:00 PM
- 2) Select board reviews warrants and unapproved meeting minutes.
- 3) Buddy Martin officially opens meeting to public comment

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bobbi Crockett clarified that the Basketball Clinic will be starting next month, not next week as was written in the last meeting's minutes.

Ricky Clawson brought up the town trailer that was missing for 5 months. He stated that he and Eric Vainio had been to the transfer station to look for it 3 times and when it was brought up at a meeting, Daniel expressed that he did not know that the town had a trailer. Then, when the trailer was eventually found, Daniel stated that he had forgotten that he loaned the trailer to Chris. Ricky said that that did not sound right to him.

Ricky then asked what had happened with the shoveling of the gym doors as they are still not shoveled out. Also, the bottom of the State flag is still unhooked from the pole and the Doctor's Office is still being plowed. Brian Turner informed him that he had helped Chris fix the flag. Daniel stated that the Doctor's office is still being plowed because the town dumps snow there. Brian Turner explained that the town keeps any area plowed where they can dump snow. He used to put snow on Betty Bjork's lawn and in return kept the head of her driveway plowed. Buddy Martin feels that this is a fair and reasonable arrangement. Buddy also told Daniel that he should investigate using the Quimby lot as a snow dump in case there is a lot of snow this winter.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED**

## TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Daniel stated that he would like to add to his report that Roberta Jarvis has been helping with organizational projects at the Town Office. She has been getting a lot done and has been very helpful. Daniel also informed the group that he will soon be fostering a child and will therefore be changing his work schedule. He will no longer be working on Mondays but will be working all day on Tuesdays. Also, that the child will be coming to work with him on Thursday afternoons.

Buddy Martin stated that he has noticed that the sand pile seems to be going down rather quickly. He believes that residents have been taking excessive amounts of sand. Eric Vainio estimated that there is about 35% of the sand left in the shed, as well as the additional pile that is outside. He also mentioned that he spoke to the DOT and they told him that many towns keep a separate pile of sand for the residents to use.

Buddy Martin then mentioned the fact that the plow contractor still does not have his own loader. Daniel said that he spoke to Chad Davis, the contractor, recently and he has not yet found a suitable loader to purchase. Eric and Buddy both agree that he needs to have his own loader. Daniel stated that \$500 had been deducted from the January payment for the plow contract for the use of the town's loader.

Eric then asked if the contractor is required to have 2 trucks or 2 sanders as well. Brian Turner stated that Chad has 2 sanding trucks. Eric then mentioned the icy road conditions on December 27, 2019. All the roads were covered in ice and cars were either stuck or unable to drive on them. According to Daniel, Chad was also called out by the Sheriff's office to assist some deputies who were also stuck. Eric suggested that perhaps the town could go out and assist with sanding when conditions are that bad. Buddy Martin stated that he has no problem with the job that was done on December 27. The conditions were very bad, and the roads were sanded as soon as the storm was over. Eric feels that Chad is doing a very good job with the plowing.

Daniel then explained that he had had a conversation with Jenny from the Appalachian Mountain Club and that the club wants their club houses and surrounding areas to be "Dark Sky Reserves". He explained that the Monson area is one of the last areas where stars are clearly visible at night due to lack of light pollution. The club would like to conduct surveys in town and has offered to pay for and provide lights to whoever wants them. They are trying to get all street lights and residential outdoor lights to point downwards in order to keep the sky dark. Tyler mentioned that the new street lights should already be Dark Sky compliant. Buddy Martin stated that while he understands the benefits, he feels that the initiative infringes on his rights and encroaches on his way of life and is therefore not in favor. David Bjork stated that the only light is in town and that as soon as a person leaves town there is no more light. Tyler asked what it is that the club is looking for from the town. Daniel said they would like the town to

assist with the surveying and that they would also like support to change the ordinance to only support Dark Sky compliant lighting. No support was expressed for the AMC light project.

## **SELECTBOARD REPORTS**

Tyler Adkins posed the following questions to Daniel:

Are the online car registrations available yet? Daniel said, no, not yet. He's waiting for more paperwork.

Is there anything that can be done to expedite putting in a crosswalk? Daniel said that he has spoken with the DOT and they will give the town flashing lights for a crosswalk area, but the town will need to install and maintain them. Also, a crosswalk can be painted on the road, the town just needs to let the DOT know about it and it needs to be ADA compliant.

What is happening with the WiFi? Daniel has received the grant money and it has been paid out to Axiom. Whereas all the hot spot locations belong to the Libra Foundation, Craig Denekas was contacted and had a lot of questions. Daniel sent Axiom the email to get answers to Craig's questions.

Any progress on the Splash Page/advertising? Daniel said there are no updates.

What is the progress on the streetlights? Daniel stated that he has received the lights and is waiting for Affinity LED to install them.

What is the progress on the Road Plan? Daniel stated that he has not finished the Road Plan.

Whereas the Town Meeting date has been moved, what is the plan for Employee Performance reviews? Daniel stated that the reviews will be done closer to the time of the budget process in case there are any changes to cost of living etc.

Has any progress been made on repairing the town clock? Daniel stated that it was determined that the clock has power but the clock needs to be accessed from the outside so it will be looked at more closely when the weather gets warmer.

What is the town doing with all the medical equipment stored in the basement? Daniel explained that the equipment needs to be kept and loaned out to those who need it. Jim Greenleaf said that the legion has a motorized wheelchair that he would be willing to loan out if needed.

Eric Vainio asked when the budget meetings will start. Daniel stated that the Fire Department has already started working on their budget and that he will begin working on the rest and form a committee in April. Eric asked if it could begin at the beginning of April as he felt that the process was rushed last year. Buddy Martin agreed that more time is needed and stated that people are concerned about what the revaluation will do to their tax bills. Daniel stated that he has spoken with Josh at Hamlin Associates and that the loss of certain Libra properties will help offset by increased taxes on lakefront properties. He also stated that the Town Meeting will be held on the second Thursday in June 2020 and the valuation book will be released once the taxes are committed after the town meeting.

Regarding the discussion at last month's meeting about the use of town equipment, Eric stated that Brian Turner had asked about the Monson Utilities District using the town loader. Eric spoke to the attorney and was told that this would not be a problem but that there should be a written agreement, liability insurance and an indemnification clause in case of an accident. The lawyer did not want to discuss the snowmobile club using the trailer.

Eric then stated that the town has a right to know that the Fire Department and Public Works Department have been fined by the Bureau of Labor Standards for non-compliance issues. He then asked if the fines have been paid. Daniel said the fines have not yet been paid but that the issues have all been addressed and therefore the fines may be reduced by up to 90%.

Bobbi Crockett mentioned that the Festival Committee had a meeting in the meeting room last Monday and that the back door to the office was unlocked but no one was in there.

Eric then asked about Shirley residents using the Transfer Station. Daniel explained that Norman Beckwith, selectman from Shirley came to the office to ask about disposing of some demo as their relationship with the Greenville transfer station was terminated. He has since spoken to Norman again and Norman expressed that Shirley currently has curb side pick-up but that they may be interested in joining with Monson for recycling and demo. Daniel feels that Monson can meet their needs. Further discussion will be had with Shirley.

Eric stated that he and Ricky Clawson had put the bleachers back in the gym but about 10 of them were not able to be set up because some of the braces are missing that secure the bleachers to the metal frames. There are some old bleachers in the basement that still have the braces, but it would have been too much work to get to them. Someone will ask Dee Adams about it because she is the one most familiar with the bleachers.

## **TOWN COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**RECREATION COMMITTEE:** Bobbi Crockett stated that the Basketball Clinic will start next week and run for 3 weeks.

**FESTIVAL COMMITTEE:** The Snowroller Festival is coming together. There has been good response for event sponsorship They are hoping that the Recreation Committee will be able to pay for any events that do not get sponsored. Bobbi posted a sign at the Post Office directing people to the Town Office if they would like to sponsor an event.

**BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE:** Daniel stated that a meeting will be held next month.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Approval of Emergency Operation Plan:** Eric stated that he has an issue with page 11 of the plan. He feels that the Selectboard is mentioned a lot of times and has a lot of responsibility. He asked by what means will they alert the special needs population, children and elderly? Daniel explained that the “special needs population” is essentially Hebron Heights and that there is a section in the plan that lists radio station contact info, Facebook, web page, etc. Daniel also said that the State Offices and Governor’s Office can also send out alerts.

Eric feels that the plan does not give enough information on what the procedures are, and he also feels that secondary groups of people are needed to get the word out. Daniel explained that once the plan is approved, the County Emergency Management Director will come and train all people listed in the plan as to their responsibility.

Buddy Martin asked if the Selecbboard should have to get together in the meeting room to make decisions. Daniel said yes. Buddy then expressed that he believes they should take care of family and neighbors because that may be all someone can do.

Tyler Adkins motioned to accept the Emergency Operations Plan as written, seconded by Buddy Martin. Bobbi Crockett also offered to help any way she can.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Special Town Meeting Warrant:** Daniel presented a warrant for a Special Town Meeting to make up the difference in the Public Works budget, which is short due to the remainder of Herrick’s contract not being budgeted, additional expense for the new plow contractor and repairs made to Homer Hill. He suggests taking \$80,000 from the surplus to offset these expenses without raising taxes. Eric asked why the issue with the Herrick’s contract wasn’t brought up months ago and Daniel stated that no one realized that it had not been budgeted

correctly. Eric then asked Daniel to confirm that the money in the surplus is money left over that was not spent in the past. Daniel said yes, that is true.

Daniel then read the warrant aloud and reiterated that he feels this would be the best option as it would not raise taxes. Eric then brought up the money that was spent on the Barrows Falls Road last summer. He stated that the project had not been approved by the selectboard and it cost approximately \$12,000 that did not need to be spent because it was just done 5 years ago. Daniel then asked Brian Turner how often ditching should be done. Brian said it should be done every 5 years and that the last ditching job on the Barrows Fall Road was not full ditching but light ditching.

Eric stated that it takes 2 selectmen to approve the warrant but that he would not sign it. Buddy Martin motioned to approve the warrant for a Special Town Meeting to be held on January 23, 2020, seconded by Tyler Adkins.

**Tax Acquired Properties:** Daniel informed the selectboard that the town now owns 5 tax acquired properties. 2 of them are land only and 2 are residences. One property, located on the Steward Rd has been in foreclosure for some time and in order to move forward the town would need to contact it's lawyer. Buddy Martin recused himself from the matter. Daniel asked if the selectboard wanted to put the properties out for bid or see if the owners want to buy them back for taxes owed. Buddy asked if the lots are buildable and it was determined that they are. Whereas one of the properties is located right behind Jason Smith's property on Tenney Hill, Buddy Martin suggested keeping the property in case the town ever needs it for anything. Eric Vainio and Tyler Adkins agreed. Buddy then stated that since the Dickison property, also on Tenney Hill, has road frontage, the town should consider selling it. As for the Steward Road property, Tyler would like to discuss the matter in executive session after a lawyer has been contacted. Daniel will contact the town lawyer.

**Poverty Abatement Policy:** Daniel stated that the town does not have a poverty abatement policy. He drafted a policy and submitted it to the selectboard for review. He explained that the town must have a policy that allows residents to apply for a poverty abatement and have the selectboard decide. The selectboard decided to take time to read the proposed policy and discuss at the next meeting.

The meeting then moved into Executive Session to discuss poverty abatement.

The executive session adjourned at 9:00 PM. Buddy Martin motioned to accept payment for the 2017 taxes from Amelia Trader and to give a redemption period of 6 months for remaining outstanding taxes. When all back taxes are paid, the selectboard will issue a quit claim deed, turning the property back over to Amelia. Seconded by Eric Vainio.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 9:10 PM**