

# TOWN OF MONSON

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

## November 29, 2018 – Select Board Meeting

Present selectboard members: Buddy Martin, Eric Vainio, Brita Cronkite and Town Manager, Daniel Swain.

Various Townspeople

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

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tyler Adkins requested an update on the cell phone tower petition. Daniel Swain stated that the Planning Board is working on it now. Tyler asked what is the next step for the Planning Board. Daniel explained that they will have a meeting to decide on the best spot. Brian Turner then stated that it is not up to the Planning Board to decide on the location. Buddy Martin noted that the tower will not be placed in a spot that will obstruct views. David Bjork wondered if Rt 15 would indeed be the best spot for the tower as it would be very visible on the landscape. Buddy Martin explained that it would be the best spot as there are beautiful views to the North, East and West, which wouldn't be obstructed. Tim Bueschen stated that the lack of cell phone service in Monson is also a safety issue as people may not be able to access EMS services. Tyler Adkins then stated that people have been trying to get this done for a long time. He feels as though nothing is being done and he wondered what the select board is doing about it. Jim Greenleaf stated that it is a private enterprise issue and if cell phone companies felt that they could make money, then they would be installing a tower. Jim asked Tyler why he feels that the town should be doing something. Daniel Swain stated that there is another company that makes towers and leases them to the phone companies. It was determined that the Planning Board doesn't really have anything to do with it except to provide zoning advice. Brita stated that the first step would be to reach out to the 2 major providers in the area, which Daniel will do. Bob Jarvis asked if Libra would have any interest in the situation and if they have been approached. Tyler stated that Libra representatives had signed the petition. Buddy Martin then stated that he does not feel that it is in his job description to work on these projects, and if it was in his job description he would resign. He does not have the time to dedicate to these matters. Brian Turner then questioned why the petition signers did not form their own committee. Tyler Adkins stated that he started the ball rolling by submitting the petition and that he would be happy to start a group, however, he feels that there have now been 3

meetings about the matter, over the course of at least a month and he feels that this is unreasonably slow. Eric Vainio stated that the board will try to have a report by the next meeting.

David Bjork expressed concern about sidewalk plowing issues. He stated that after 5 PM there are no cars on the road and the sidewalks are full of snow. When he goes for a walk in the evening, he has to walk in the road. He feels that the snow plowing should be done at night or early in the morning when there are no cars on the road. Daniel Swain explained that there had been a tire issue with the town equipment so it took longer to clear the sidewalk. Buddy Martin stated that he has seen Chris out at night during the last 2 storms. Brian Turner stated that it makes no sense to plow the sidewalks until the State is finished plowing.

Jim Greenleaf questioned whether or not the bulletin board at the Post Office is on town property. He would like to use it for the Legion Hall Honor Roll. Eric Vainio stated that the land is probably owned by the state due to the right of way. Tyler Adkins suggested that Steven Tatko would probably know.

David Bjork questioned why the town is paying \$8,500 to the library which the town does not own. He wanted to make sure that people were aware of this. Daniel Swain explained that it is a separate entity and that the librarians are employees of the town as we are currently still acting as their "payroll service". He also stated that the money will now longer be given to the library after this fiscal year and that the town will then give them an annual donation. Eric Vainio said that when Van Wentworth was running the library, she put in a lot of her own money but when she retired, the town put in the money to pay the staff.

Public comment closed.

Gym Committee – No update

Recreation Committee – No update

Festival Committee – Bobbi Crockett stated that there had been a Snow Roller meeting and that the gym will be full of things for the kids and the ice will be blocked off for activities. Planning is going well, and everything just needs to be finalized.

Bicentennial Committee – Daniel Swain stated that had been more volunteer sign ups. There are now 4 people signed up for the committee and that is enough to get started. Current volunteers are John Wentworth, Cindy Ranta, Bob Jarvis and Amelia Trader.

OLD BUSINESS

**Burning Moose Festival** – Daniel Swain spoke with Buddy Martin and explained that this is not a town event so the town really doesn't have any say in the matter. Buddy asked if Daniel had checked with MMA to confirm. Whereas there is no town funding and it is not on town property, it is not a town event. As for liability, Daniel is quite certain that the town also would have no liability, but he did not speak directly with Risk Management, so he is not 100% sure. He will confirm.

Bobbi Crockett expressed concern about ice space for Snow Roller. Tyler Adkins stated that it seems as though it's only a permit issue and all the group would have to do is obtain a permit in order to hold their festival. Buddy Martin stated that they had asked for the town for an opinion and the town made it clear that they don't want any association with the Burning Man Festival. Daniel Swain stated that he had spoken with Katahdin Fitzgerald and requested that they consider changing the name of their festival.

David Bjork inquired about the Burning Moose festival and Buddy Martin explained what it is all about. David feels that it sounds like a good idea to boost the town. Buddy then explained the Burning Man Festival and again expressed his concern that the 2 festivals might be confused due to the similarity of the name. Jim Greenleaf stated that Libra had also spoken with Katahdin and told him that they did not want to have any association with the festival and they do not want it to coincide with Snow Roller. Eric Vainio agreed. The town has suggested the name "Monson Art Moose Festival". Katahdin will consider it. Bob Jarvis noted that the Business Association would like them to consider changing the name and is also against having the festival coincide with Snow Roller. Tyler Adkins suggested that the town just 'let it go' for now as there is no way that the group will have enough time to organize a huge festival over the course of the next 2 months. Buddy Martin requested that Daniel Swain follow up with Katahdin and check on the progress and remind him that the town wants the festival to be family friendly, have the name changed and be held on a different day than Snow Roller.

**Gym Rental Policy** – Daniel Swain submitted a new rental policy for the gym. The only change made was the cost of the rental. It will cost \$100 for Monson residents and \$150 for non-residents. He also added a checklist of tasks to be completed at the end of the rental and if all tasks are completed, \$50 deposit will be refunded to the renter. Eric Vainio expressed the importance of having a point person to review the check list and make sure that all tasks have been completed. Daniel asked Evaughn Holyoke to be the person in charge of checking the checklist and cleaning after events. Bobbi Crockett asked if customers will be responsible for replacing any supplies that are used during the rental. The select board determined that the supplies will be included in the rental fee. Bobbi then questioned what the temperature on the thermostat should be kept at. She stated that she had been in the gym and the thermostat was set at 66 degrees and that it had been very warm in there. Brita mentioned that perhaps a box for the thermostat could be purchased to cover the thermostat so that it cannot be adjusted. Or, perhaps there is a way to control it remotely such as through a phone app. Buddy expressed

concern that if it is set too low, the pipes may freeze. A discussion was had, and it was determined that all the plumbing is on the interior of the gym. Buddy stated that the thermostat should be left on 58 degrees and could be adjusted on an as needed basis.

David Bjork mentioned that he has noticed that sometimes the lights are left on in the gym.

The discussion then moved to the topic of loaning out the tables from the gym. Marti Gagnon explained that she had a discussion with Cindy Turner and Cindy suggested numbering all of the tables and keeping a list for better accountability. In the past there has been an issue with tables not being returned or being returned in dirty/damaged condition. After a brief discussion, it was decided, per Jim Greenleaf and Daniel Swain, the town will no longer loan out the tables.

**Gym Repair** – Daniel Swain spoke to Killam’s regarding the continuing issues with the doors. Gary Killam explained that they had stopped working because the budget was all used up. He will submit a quote to finish the doors.

Front door – Local resident, Tim Aldrich has offered to weld the handle on the front door so that it will work properly. Daniel also explained that he is waiting on a quote to replace the door with a steel door. The \$5000 quote was to replace with an aluminum door. Daniel and Chris Later will be putting a cover over the damaged siding to protect it from winter weather. Jim Greenleaf stated that Libra had committed to repairing the flashing on the roof but that it had not stopped snowing long enough for them to complete the project. Buddy Martin stated that the roof is a priority and needs to be addressed. He asked Daniel to stay on top of it.

**Updated Personnel Policy** – Daniel explained that he had calculated the earned time incorrectly and that he would change it. Eric Vainio expressed concern regarding the earned time and bereavement time. He feels that it may be excessive. Daniel explained that he had had Brita and MMA review the policy but that he would provide additional copies to the board for further review. Jim Greenleaf asked if there was a stipulation as to when earned time can NOT be taken and Daniel explained that it has to be approved by the supervisor.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Fire Department Wages** – Daniel explained why the fire dept. pay exceeded the budget. In the past, the budgeted amount had been divided up among the employees, but it turned out that the amount was below minimum wage. Eric Vainio would not sign the payroll warrant because all that was submitted was a summary and no signed time cards or back up documentation. He feels responsible to see documentation that everyone has is required to provide. He has no problem with going over budget due to the circumstances. Eric Melia stated that the Fire Dept employees are required to sign time sheets and that he has documentation. Daniel Swain requested documentation on all calls, what type of calls they were and a roster of employees

that are signed by employees. Brita suggested an excel sheet to keep track. Eric Melia said he loves that idea and stated that it would make it much easier than trying to do it all at once, once a year. Daniel Swain then suggested the possibility of the Town Clerk take over the administrative roll in the Fire Dept. He also stated that they need to be paid at least twice a year.

**Budget Committee Formation** – Daniel Swain stated that last year the budget committee consisted of the people who were present at the meeting. He wondered if the select board/townpeople would like to leave it the same way this year or if they would rather have people sign up and then have the select board appoint members. After a short discussion it was determined that anyone who wants to participate may do so. Daniel also stated that in the past the meetings were held weekly. The first meeting will be held mid- January. The consensus was that this will also remain the same. The date of the first budget meeting will be set at the Jan. 13 selectman’s meeting.

**Spring Creek Snow Dump** – Mike Witham was not present at the meeting. Daniel explained that the previous contracts stated that the sand and debris in front of Spring Creek will be removed by Memorial Day weekend. Mike Witham has requested that it be done by May 15<sup>th</sup> (weather permitting). Daniel also add to the contract that It was valid for 2018/19 but that a verbal agreement annually will be acceptable in the future. The select board feels that the “verbal” portion of the agreement could prove to be problematic. Daniel will remove it and a new contract will be signed every year.

Mike Witham has also expressed concern that the contract is late being signed this year and has therefore submitted a bill for \$500 for snow dumping for the month of November. Daniel pointed out that all of the prior contracts have been signed mid to late November and the original contract states that only a verbal agreement will be required to renew future contracts. David Bjork stated the town has done a great job cleaning the snow from the Spring Creek BBQ during the past 2 storms, which is part of the agreement. Jim Greenleaf stated that every year there is an issue with Mike Witham and the snow contract. He says that every year Mike has complaints and calls the town manager incompetent. He wonders why the town continues to put up with it. Brian Turner then stated that he has been involved for 20 years and that this snow dump agreement is beyond ridiculous. The town used to have snow dump agreements with 5 – 6 landowners. Lucas Butler wrote the first agreement with Mike Witham. Brian suggested the following options:

- 1) Continue as usual
- 2) Do not plow the snow from the old Spring Creek to the new one, then there will be no need for a place to put the snow. (Brian likes this idea the best)
- 3) Pay Mike the \$500 per month, which would have to go before Town Meeting

Brian also stated that it would create a little more work, but the snow could be dumped across from Homer Hill Rd. The town could also dump a little bit in front of the Pie Lady's house, and some just beyond Jarvis's on Pleasant St, as long as Libra doesn't mind. Buddy Martin stated that the town needs to explore all options to get rid of snow before deciding not to work with Mike Witham. Daniel informed the group that if the select board opted to sign the contract, he will not deliver it to Mike by himself. He will only talk to him over the phone or in person as long as someone else is present. If the contract is not signed tonight, he will speak to Tyler Adkins' aunt tomorrow to begin exploring other options. Eric Vainio wondered if dumping snow behind the gym would be a possibility. Brian Turner stated that it would be too far away. Daniel informed the group that Chris Later would like to continue using the Spring Creek property for snow. Bob Jarvis mentioned that Jarrod Hester, owner of Shaw's Hiker Hostel, has been trying to get rid of some bamboo on his property for a long time, and that perhaps the town could work out an agreement with him to rid the property of bamboo in exchange for using the space for snow removal. There was a short discussion about whether to plow all of the sidewalks except for in front of Spring Creek. Jim Greenleaf suggested stopping the plowing past the old school, as this was the way it had been done for years. David Bjork expressed concern about children living in the area that need to use the sidewalks. Brita feels that to not plow the Spring Creek area would be punitive. Buddy Martin reiterated that the town needs to figure out what the options are prior to making a decision. Brita also stated that if Chris feels strongly about the location of the snow dump, he should attend the select board meetings and discuss it. The final consensus was that the town will look for an alternative snow dump, the contract will not be signed, the town will continue to plow in front of Spring Creek, for now, and the bill for \$500 will not be paid as there was never any agreement regarding billing or cost to dump the snow. Also, the town has continued to hold up it's end of the bargain.

#### ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Daniel informed the select board that he will be unable to work for the next 2 Mondays and Tuesdays, but that he will be in on Wednesday for those 2 weeks.

Eric Vainio suggested that if the prospective buyer for the Homer Hill property does not move forward within a certain time frame that the house should be put back out to bid. Daniel explained that she is still interested in the property but has been dealing with some family issues. Bob Jarvis mentioned that the house probably would not sell in the winter time anyway. Jim Greenleaf suggested telling her that the town is not shutting her out but is just opening it back up to other potential buyers.

Hospital update – Per Bobbi Crockett, a consultant has been hired to go around to the various communities to make sure they fully understand the proposed merger. Per Gerald, the court has dropped the stay and required more paperwork to be submitted. Senior management of the hospital has approached the legislature for input. Bobbi Crockett feels that the hospital

administrators may not be disclosing all information. They are saying that the towns needed to vote to join H.A.D., but they do not need to vote to merge or dissolve. Brita feels that it should be up to the townspeople to decide on the merger. Daniel informed everyone that there will be a meeting at the Cambridge Town Office regarding the matter, that he will attend.

Plowing/Sanding – No concerned citizens attended the meeting, however, Bobbi Crockett did mention that her road, while good at the moment, has had some issues. Daniel explained that Herricks has been short handed and has also had vehicle issues, but that Zack Herrick has been very responsive and cooperative. Brian Turner stated that this is the first time in 6 years that they have scraped the roads when it needed to be done.

Eric Vainio asked Daniel if Roberts would be hired to do the tree cutting on the roads, Daniel said that he has not spoken to him yet. Eric also inquired about the Mitchell lot survey – Daniel has called them but has not yet gotten a response. Eric's final inquiry was regarding the ISO rating of the fire dept. Daniel stated that he has asked the ISO office for a full report and that they told him that the rating was mostly due to dry fire hydrants.

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM