

# TOWN OF MONSON

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

## February 13, 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, Andy Stirling, Bob Jarvis, David Bjork, Dee Adams

- 1) Meeting opened at 6:55 PM
- 2) Select board reviews warrants and unapproved meeting minutes.
- 3) Buddy Martin officially opens meeting to public comment

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

David Bjork mentioned that he appreciates the bump signs being out and that the roads look good. He then asked if there was any update on the canal fence repair. Daniel said that he has included it in the budget in case Libra does not pay for it. David then asked if the extra money for the paving contract has been budgeted as well. Daniel said that he did not include it because the selectboard did not want to pay the extra money. Tyler told the group that the plan will be to speak to a lawyer prior to the budget process. David then noted that the chip seal is starting to come off on the Steward Rd. Ricky Clawson noticed it as well. Buddy Martin thinks that the cutting edge of the snow plow is probably peeling it up. David asked if they were supposed to put down 2 inches of chip seal and Buddy said they put down a shim coat, which is anywhere from 1" – 4", depending on the contour of the road.

Bobbie Crockett asked when the second half of the taxes are due and was told they were due on February 29<sup>th</sup>. Daniel said that reminders will be sent out next week.

David Bjork mentioned that there is quite a bit of snow piled up at the corner of Garage St. and North Guilford Rd. Daniel told him that Chris had removed the snow earlier today. David then suggested that the town get started on planning the brush cutting sooner rather than later before the contractors get booked up. He said that he had submitted some pricing to Daniel last year and that the pricing was reasonable. Eric asked if the contractors had rubber tracks and David did not know.

Eric asked if the State flag had been fixed yet. Ricky Clawson said no and mentioned that the light is not shining on the flag.

David then asked about the siding on the gym. He stated that the town had spent \$75,000 on the gym and should be able to fix the siding. Eric asked Daniel if any money had been budgeted for the gym and Daniel said yes.

Ricky asked about the foreclosed properties, he thought there were four. Daniel told him that the fourth property belonged to Amelia Trader and that it has been resolved.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED**

## **TOWN MANAGER REPORT**

Daniel stated that he did not print off a spreadsheet but would answer any questions about his report. After looking over the report. Eric mentioned the fact that Willimantic hasn't paid their Fire Department contract. Daniel said that the deadline had been December 31, 2019, but that their treasurer had resigned and someone new is learning the job. They hope to have the payment included in their next warrant.

Street Light Conversion update – Daniel informed the selectboard that all of the new street light vendors were called by the state because they were not following the installation rules. Apparently, the linemen are not qualified to work on the lights because they are owned by the town. The linemen are only allowed to work for utility companies. Affinity employees are now being trained to work on transmission lines. The president of Affinity will call Daniel tomorrow and give him an installation date. The contract says that the installation will be done by March 31, 2020.

WIFI Update – Daniel stated that Libra does not want their buildings to be used as hotspots for the WIFI. He mentioned the possibility of using the Town Hall and the Gym as hotspots. Tyler asked if the whole downtown street can be covered by 2 boxes. Daniel said there may be a gap. Bob Jarvis suggested using the church as well. Daniel will talk to Pastor Dave about it.

The solar panels are now operational, and the town buildings are now being powered by solar.

Daniel stated that Joy Bueschen has taken charge of writing the grant for the Maine Community Foundation Pilot Program.

## **SELECTBOARD REPORTS**

Tyler Adkins posed the following questions to Daniel:

Any update on the tipping fees? – Daniel said that he spoke to Fiberight and they gave him a printout of what can and can't be recycled. A copy of the printout will be hung at the transfer station and posted online. Daniel was told that certain plastics can still be recycled but #1 and #2 plastics and glass will go in the compactor and be charged as trash. Everything other than recyclable plastic will also go in the compactor and be charged \$2.00 per bag. Tyler asked Daniel to please find out exactly what needs to be done and come up with a plan for the town.

Which is cheaper, PERC or Fiber Right? Daniel stated that Fiberight costs a little more, but that PERC had offered a deal to those customers who stayed with them.

Any update on the Beautification Committee? Daniel had no update.

What is the policy for posting public notices? The Town Clerk explained that public notices will be posted at the Post Office, the Town Office, Robinson's store and online. The town office also has a group email list to which the notices will be sent.

Eric Vainio asked Daniel the following questions:

Is anything happening with the handicap access (ramp) for the town office? Daniel stated that he's not sure how much money is left in the budget.

Will the town need to buy more salt and sand? Daniel believes the salt and sand that the town has will be enough.

What's happening with the solar? Daniel said that the solar is now operational.

How is the transfer station budget? Daniel said the budget is not good. Eric then stated that some residents are interested in having the town pay all trash fees. Brian Turner then said that when the transfer station first opened, it was determined that the only way to break even was to charge for the trash.

Snow Plowing – Eric noted that at the last meeting Daniel had stated that the current price that Monson is paying for snow plowing is comparable with what other towns are paying. Eric stated that he had checked with other towns and presented some pricing for other plow contracts, on average and pointed out that Monson is actually paying more. Daniel said that if certain other towns had been included, the average would be much higher. A short discussion ensued

regarding the fact that the county pays much higher prices for plowing in the unorganized territories, but Eric explained that he was comparing “apples to apples”. Daniel replied that a snow covered road is a snow covered road and it shouldn’t matter if the state pays more.

David Bjork then asked if the plow contract is negotiable for next year. Eric explained that the contractor is plowing on a trial basis for this year and the town will decide if the contract should be extended for next year. Davis wondered if although Chad is doing a good job, does the town want to spend the extra money to keep him. Buddy Martin suggested bringing the matter up at the budget meetings.

Eric asked if there would be a limit on the number of people on the budget committee. Buddy suggested considering having a limit so as not to have too much discussion and to keep the meetings moving along.

Mike Witham from Spring Creek Bar-BQ submitted the paperwork to have his liquor license renewed. The selectboard signed the renewal.

## **TOWN COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**RECREATION COMMITTEE:** Dee Adams brought up the discussion from the last meeting regarding kids using the gym. There was some discussion about Dee and/or Bobbie supervising the gym while kids are using it. Dee stated that if the gym is not supervised, plenty of kids will use it, but if it is supervised, they will not. Therefore, she is not willing to sit in the gym to provide supervision. She suggested installing a camera. Buddy Martin replied that a camera will only record what’s been done, after the fact when it’s too late. Daniel stated that since the last meeting, people have been calling the town office to request use of the gym and that Evaughn has been opening and closing it for them. That policy will remain in place for now.

Basketball clinics are winding down and soccer clinics will be starting soon.

**FESTIVAL COMMITTEE:** Dee informed everyone that the Jammers will be kicking off Snowroller on Friday night. Their door prize is dinner for two at The Quarry. The snowroller is on display in front of the Historical Building and the lake will be groomed tomorrow for the kick sleds. There was a press release on channel 5 this morning. Dee also spoke to Jeff Ryan who had contacts at LBZ. If a reporter is available, they will cover a little bit of the Snowroller Festival. Eric asked if there will be any cost and Dee said no. Eric then asked if the town paid, would they be willing to cover the event. Dee stated that there is no money in the budget for that. Dee then mentioned that the sponsorship for the festival events worked out great and that she had even been able to have the rented equipment delivered and picked up.

**BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE:** Daniel stated that the scheduled meeting had been snowed out and will be rescheduled in March.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Poverty Abatement Policy Discussion:** Daniel stated that the abatement would be only for the house and the building lot (2 acres). Taxes on any additional property would not be abated. Also, ATVs, boats, etc. will be considered income, in which case the selectboard could temporarily deny an application and inform the applicant that if the assets are sold, they can reapply. Dee asked if applicants should be made to get scrap pricing for any junk metal on the property. Daniel stated that he does not know. Eric Vainio asked if only people 65 years or older could apply and Daniel replied no, anyone that owns property in Monson as their primary residence can apply.

Eric wondered if setting up the policy would encourage people to take advantage of it. Daniel explained that it is the law to have the policy but that there is also a procedure to prove where the applicant's money is being spent. Buddy feels that the application process itself will be enough to deter a lot of people. The selectboard signed the Poverty Abatement Policy.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Budget Meetings Timeline/Process:** Daniel stated that the selectboard needs to choose a date to start the budget process and decide how often to meet. Eric Vainio would like to have 10 meetings. Daniel noted that this will mean having a meeting every week for the 10 weeks. Eric wants people to have a chance to compare the numbers with those from previous years. It was suggested to start the budget meetings the second week in March, but Buddy stated that for the first 5 weeks he will not be out of work in time to start the meetings at 6:00. Daniel suggested having the budget meetings at 6:00 pm on weeks that there is a selectboard meeting and starting them at 7:00 pm on the other weeks. He then asked the selectboard to give him some names of budget committee appointees so he will have time to notify them.

Daniel stated that TRIO has a way to adjust reports and that he is currently working on a new report. He also noted that the sooner a report goes out, the less information it will have.

**Contract Signing: Hunt Quit Claim, Septic Debris, 2019 County Tax Assessment:** Daniel stated that Andrew Hunt has paid the taxes for the foreclosed property on the Steward Rd and that he will transferring the property into his name. Daniel also stated that the septic dump fee (Pattersons) went up and that the contract needs to be signed. The selectboard signed the quit claim deed and the septic contract. The selectboard reviewed the paperwork for the county tax. Tyler Adkins motioned to acknowledge receipt of the county tax assessment for the amount of

\$105,356.00, seconded by Buddy Martin, the selectboard signed the assessment and it will be paid by September 1, 2020.

**Possible update(s) to personnel policy:** Daniel explained that he would like to change the personnel policy to state that an employee who leaves their job before 1 year will be required to reimburse the town for training expenses. The selectboard agreed. Daniel will draft the change and submit for approval at a future meeting.

**Disposing of former rescue vehicle:** Daniel informed the selectboard that Ryan LaPlant offered to pay \$400.00 for the old rescue vehicle. Buddy asked what the value of the vehicle is, and Daniel stated that it basically has no value and is in very poor condition. Buddy stated that he is in favor of getting rid of the vehicle while the town has the chance. Tyler Adkins stated that the vehicle has approximately 239,000 miles on it. Buddy Martin motioned to sell the rescue vehicle to Ryan LaPlant for \$400.00, seconded by Eric Vainio.

Daniel then asked the selectboard if they will all be available to attend the EMS training which is scheduled for February 27 at 9:30 am. Tyler will not be available until after the first week of March. Daniel will try to arrange a new date for the training.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.