

TOWN OF MONSON

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

March 26, 2020 – Select Board Meeting

VIA CONFERENCE CALL

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

Townspople –Bobbi Crockett

- 1) Meeting opened at 7:03 PM
- 2) Tyler Adkins officially opens meeting to public comment

PUBLIC COMMENT

The first topic of discussion was the signing of warrants while “social distancing” during the Coronavirus outbreak. Daniel informed everyone present that warrants now do not need to be signed in public prior to accounts payable checks being sent out. After a short discussion it was decided that Marti will continue to do the regular monthly accounts payable in a timely fashion. Any new or unusual accounts payable will be discussed prior to checks being sent out. Also, all A/P warrants will be scanned to the selectboard, prior to the meetings so they can be reviewed and discussed if needed.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED

TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Daniel stated that Monson is one of three towns selected by the Community Grant Program to receive grant money for a downtown plan. The initial amount of the grant will be \$10,000 to be used to prepare a plan and to get ready for a site visit, then another \$25,000 - \$32,000 to implement the plan.

Bobbi asked if there has been any activity on Monson’s disaster plan. Daniel explained that the County has been providing updates on a daily basis and that larger towns have begun to implement their plans. Greenville holds meetings at least once per week but has not yet implemented their plan. Daniel also stated that all town managers are tracking virus related expenses for government reimbursement.

SELECTBOARD REPORTS

Buddy Martin stated that he is keeping track of all the trash that he is throwing in the dumpsters while the transfer station is closed, and he will reimburse the town.

Eric Vainio asked if Public Works is still working full time. Daniel stated that he believed so, up until today and that he will be talking to Chris about it.

Eric then stated that David Bjork had called him and mentioned plow damage on the Steward and Willimantic Roads, and that David did not think that the contractor had the plow shoes on. Eric looked at the roads and did not see any notable damage however, he did notice that the sides of the road had some damage. Buddy noted that the crowns of the roads are scuffed, and he believes that this would happen even if the plow shoes were on. Daniel said that he spoke to Chad and that the shoes are on.

Daniel then stated that he had an addendum to the plow contract which states that the plow contractor is not liable for right-of-way damage and that the town will take care of it. Buddy Martin does not feel that the town should repair any plow damage that occurs in the town right of way, but he does feel that the town should repair any property damage that occurs outside of the town right of way. Eric stated that the driveway damage that occurred on Water St is in the town right of way but is causing no problem for traffic.

Tyler asked how many times per year there is property damage caused by the plow. Daniel stated that it happens 2 – 3 times per year. Eric explained that normal repairs consist of fixing sod and ruts, and cold patching holes. Tyler then asked for other examples of damage caused by something other than the plow. Eric and Buddy explained that sometimes damage is caused during ditching, brush cutting and paving. Tyler feels that this should not be a plow specific conversation and while he does not have a strong position for or against the addendum, he would like to see a clear policy in place.

Buddy then noted an incident at his house that took place about 3 years ago, There was a 911 call for his neighbor's house and the ambulance mistakenly pulled into his driveway instead, driving on the lawn and causing damage. The first responders did not call to apologize or offer to fix the damage. Buddy fixed it himself but feels that an apology should have been offered. He then stated that fixing property damage has always been at the discretion of the Town Manager, but the town really needs to have a policy, preferably that the town will fix anything in the town right of way and anything outside the right of way will be the responsibility of the plow contractor. Daniel will write a general policy for all town departments

TOWN COMMITTEE REPORTS

No reports – Everything is currently on hold.

OLD BUSINESS

Budget Meeting Schedule: Daniel stated that the free phone conferencing method being used for this selectboard meeting would not be a good way to hold budget meetings and that the town may need to pay for something better. He also stated that the state has told towns that new budgets will not need approval at this time. They said that old budgets may be used or that towns can proceed with no budget. Daniel will fax the proposed new budget to the selectboard for review, along with a copy of last year's budget for comparison. Further discussion will be had at the next meeting.

Tax Acquired Property Sale: Daniel asked the selectboard for authorization to sign the quit claim deed. Buddy Martin motioned to authorize Daniel to sign the quit claim deed to the The Brown Family Trust, seconded by Eric Vainio. Daniel then noted that the buyers had paid for the property and that the town made an additional \$300 - \$400.00 above what was owed in back taxes.

NEW BUSINESS

Staffing During State of Emergency: Daniel explained that he will be speaking to Chris about the Public Works plan and that the town office is temporarily located at the Town Clerk's house. Jim Bohrer is not currently working at the transfer station but will continue to be paid as he would not qualify for unemployment. Roberta Jarvis is not working and Daniel is working from home and also at the office on occasion. If the Emergency Plan is implemented, he will be in town more often. Daniel then explained that Cass Hefferan has offered to be the interim transfer station attendant and that residents will temporarily not be charged for trash disposal. Buddy asked if there will be a background check done on Cass prior to hiring her. Daniel will check with the state to see if background checks can still be performed as county court houses are currently closed.

Buddy Martin stated that he feels that this is a good plan and Tyler trusts that everything is in order.

Eric asked when expired registrations will need to be done and Marti explained that all registrations that expired after March 1, 2020 are extended until 30 days after the state of emergency is lifted.

Daniel then explained that during an emergency, cash flow to towns is generally not good. While there is still money coming in, it is not as much as usual. Many towns are going for Tax Anticipation Notes to cover expenses, but Monson has about \$500,000 in the bank and is in pretty good financial shape.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM