

TOWN OF MONSON

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

August 26, 2021 – Select Board Meeting

Present –Tyler Adkins, Eric Vainio, Sue Chase, Daniel Swain, John Moore, Brian Turner, Jim Paine, Mike Witham, Sandra Hardy, Richard Allard, Rick Clawson, Dan and Diane Dube, Jackie Stevens, David Slagger, Georgia Underwood

- 1) Meeting opened at 6:00 PM
- 2) Selectboard approves prior meeting minutes and signs warrants
- 3) Tyler Adkins officially opens meeting to public comment

PUBLIC COMMENT

Brian Turner noted that some of the in-town road right of ways are being blocked by rocks, junk cars, camper trailers, etc., especially on Water St. There should not be anything blocking the right of ways and Brian suggested that the selectboard address the issue.

John Moore asked Tyler where he got his information on electricity rates that were discussed at the last meeting. Tyler stated that he got the information from the electric bills. John thought the rates were lower than what Tyler had stated. Tyler explained the electric rates and offered to meet with John some other time to discuss the matter further.

Jim Payne expressed concern about the way the matter of ATVs on the Steward Road was handled. He noted that Tyler abstained from voting on the matter due to his friendships with certain people involved and that he did not attend the public meeting that was held before the selectboard meeting on August 12. Jim also feels that although the selectboard voted to not allow ATVs on the Steward Road, the town is opening itself up to liability issues by allowing ATV use on any roads. Tyler apologized to Jim and stated that the purpose of the public meeting was to get input from residents and that he makes very effort to keep town business as transparent as possible. Sue Chase further explained that the town and state are working on developing guidelines to help with the decision-making process regarding ATVs on public roads.

Richard Allard presented a photo of a culvert on the Steward Road that is washing out to the selectboard. He questioned why the culvert was not seeded and compacted and asked when it will be fixed. Tyler suggested that Richard reach out to Daniel to discuss the matter and Richard said that he will not do that because he feels that nothing will be done.

Rick Clawson stated that he rode down the Elliotsville Road and the culvert near the North Pond Stream was not replaced and is rusted and bent. Eric noted that the solution would be to

cut off the end of the culvert so it's clean. Rick then stated that when he replaced culverts, he always put rocks at the inlet and outlet, as well as putting hay down. He also noted that there is lots of erosion at the beach and there is grass growing in the middle of the beach, there are no ladders on the docks, there are no flags in town, he does not think that Daniel tried very hard to find a contractor to grade the roads, and he feels that there should be a road committee to make sure that the road work gets done properly and in a timely manner. Tyler agreed that there is a lot of work to be done and asked Rick to please continue to have patience. Diane Dube also feels that Monson residents are paying a lot of tax dollars and not getting quality road work.

Richard asked whatever happened to the money that was set aside for the Hillside Cemetery. Daniel stated that it's still in the bank.

Mike Witham mentioned that at the last meeting Daniel said that the town line signs were not up on the Willimantic Road and therefore the pavers did not know where the town line was and thus did not pave all the way to the town line. He stated that the signs have been there for 20 years, and that Daniel did not see them because he did not go look.

Jackie Stevens mentioned some road markings at the end of her driveway and wondered if work is going to be done. Daniel explained that a culvert was going to be replaced but a resident had requested that it not be replaced. Sue asked if the culvert is in good shape and Jackie said it seems ok, she was just wondering if any damage done to her driveway would be repaired if the culvert was replaced.

David Slagger noted that the St. John tribe is a big part of Monson history. The tribe would like to be part of the Bicentennial celebration, including having a tribal gathering and participating in the parade. They would also like to be embraced and supported by the town leaders in a display of peace and friendship. Sandra Hardy invited Georgia Underwood to attend the next Bicentennial meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED

TOWN MANGER REPORT

Daniel provided updates on the following:

Roberta Jarvis is no longer working as the office assistant and Daniel is looking for a replacement.

Daniel contacted approximately 40 contractors for the ADA ramp and gym doors and has heard back from 4 of them.

Steve was asked to have the roadside mowing done by September 1.

The chip sealing is done, and Allstate donated the leftover crushed rocks as well as those that were swept up after the process was done.

Daniel has been working with Tyler on the road plan and the plan will be presented at the next couple of meetings. He has also been looking at the ditching work with Chad.

All health care workers must receive the COVID-19 vaccine by 9/30/21. So far only 2 Monson firefighters have been vaccinated. Daniel is waiting to see what happens as the vaccine mandate will likely be challenged in court.

A quote was received for leasing the solar panels, Daniel is working on the mill rate, has started a contractor database, and met with Bob Keyes to discuss the downtown WiFi. The town received the yearly bill from Axiom, but it has not yet been paid as Daniel is not happy with the service Axiom has provided. He is trying to reach them to discuss the matter as well as the fact that the reported usage numbers don't seem realistic.

The zoning map is complete and is now online. Bill Varney at Premium Choice is still waiting for pole licenses.

The \$600,000 bond for roadwork was approved yesterday morning. Tyler read the vote aloud and motioned to approve the proposed vote, seconded by Eric Vainio.

SELECTBOARD REPORT

Eric Vainio brought forth the following:

The yield sign on the North Guilford Road is still not very visible and needs more trimming. Tyler requested that Daniel resolve the issue.

Has the repeater on the communication tower been fixed? Daniel will find out.

Will brush cutting be done on the North Guilford Road? Steve and Jimmy have need working on brush cutting.

Will there be a public meeting to review the comprehensive plan? Daniel confirmed that there will be a meeting.

Update on the transfer station fence? Daniel received a quote from Allentown Fence for \$10,000 which was submitted to Allstate. Tyler feels that there should also be a guardrail in that spot. Brian Turner suggested moving the light pole over to the left in order to widen the road a little bit.

ATVs have been going from Robinsons to the Blanchard Road. Eric feels that the distance may be more than 1500 feet but there is no signage stating that the ATV trail ends.

Sue Chase noted that the intersections at Hebron and Pleasant Streets are still very bad, and she wants to stay on top of the matter. Daniel stated that he has ordered mirrors for the poles and Tyler suggested putting out cones as a short-term solution. Sue then asked for an update on the flashing speed sign, Daniel stated that there is no update.

Some residents on the North Guilford Road put out some "slow down" signs and Sue wonders what other signage might be available. She suggested installing "slow" signs with solar flashing lights.

Eric reiterated that when things need to be done it's important to set priorities and timelines.

Tyler asked Daniel if he found out why the county tax increased by 20%. Daniel stated that he did not.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FESTIVAL COMMITTEE: No report.

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE: Sandra noted that the logo is done, and merchandise and fliers will soon be available.

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE: The committee is working on sculpture ideas with the technology teacher at PCHS.

OLD BUSINESS

Code Violation Discussion-Spring Creek BBQ: Daniel explained that when there is a code violation, the code enforcement officer goes through a process and if the issue is not resolved, it goes to the selectboard. The issue in this instance is a deck built without a permit. Brian Turner further explained that a permit is needed to build a deck. An 'after the fact' permit costs 4 times the original permit fee. The town can enter into an agreement that if the Withams fill out an application and pay \$120.00, the matter will be dropped. He further noted that he has issued 24 permits for decks in the last 10 years and the Withams should also be required to

obtain a permit. Mike Witham then stated that a year and a half ago he filed a complaint about violations of the land use ordinance regarding the community sign and he feels that he is being retaliated against for making the complaint. He asked Eric to read aloud the letter that was sent to him regarding a meeting that was supposed to take place on July 28 to discuss his code violation. Mike showed up to the meeting but the selectboard and town manager did not, therefore, he feels that the matter is resolved and would like to continue discussing the sign violation. Tyler stated that if Mike doesn't want to say anything else on his behalf regarding the deck issue, the matter will be brought to executive session. Mike stated that under advice of council he will not discuss the matter further.

Early Buyout of Solar Panels: Daniel got a quote from Androscoggin Bank for lease payments on the solar panels. The cost to buy out the panels now would be \$57,014.27. The lease quotes are as follows:

3 year lease – 2.08% interest - Annual payment of \$19,801.12
7 year lease – 2.62% interest- Annual payment of \$9,021.06
10 year lease – 2.95% interest – Annual payment of \$6,667.36

The bank will defer the first year's payment if the decision needs to be made at Town Meeting. Tyler would like to give the matter some more thought.

NEW BUSINESS

Selectboard Bylaws: Sue Chase asked to put the discussion off until the next meeting. All agreed.

Setting Mill Rate: Daniel stated that the assessors will have the commitment done on August 30. The town's valuation has been going up and the mill rate options range from 16.2 to 17.069. The town can't go with the lowest rate because of the 2% prompt payment discount. The biggest consideration would be overlay. Daniel put forth the following options:

Mill rate of 16.7 – overlay would be \$35,500
Mill rate of 16.5 – overlay would be \$19,400
Mill rate of 16.45 – overlay would be \$15,400

Daniel explained that the town used to have about 1 month of operating money in the bank but now has \$280,000 in surplus which is about 4 months of operating money. Some of this money could be used to lower the mill rate. Tyler recommended 16.7 because the town has a new assessor, and no one is sure how much will be needed for overlay. Overlay for last year was \$32,000. Eric feels there is too much surplus and 1 – 2 months should be plenty. Sue feels that whereas everyone is unsure of how many abatement requests will come in, the overlay should

remain close to last year's amount. Tyler Adkins motioned to set the mill rate at 16.65, seconded by Eric Vainio.

Meeting moved to executive session for 1 MRSA Subsection 405(6) (H)-Code Enforcement and 1 MRSA Subsection 405 (6) (A) – Personnel Matter at 8:15 pm.