

# TOWN OF MONSON

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

## **September 9, 2021 – Select Board Meeting**

**Present** –Tyler Adkins, Eric Vainio, Sue Chase, Daniel Swain, John Moore,  
Jim Payne, Mike Witham, Sandra Hardy, Richard Allard, Rick Clawson, Dan and Diane Dube,  
Jackie Stevens, Nancy Cassella  
ZOOM: Bobbie Crockett, Chad and Emily Davis

- 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**

Bobbie Crockett asked if the cell tower is up yet. Daniel explained that they have the permits, but the tower has not been built yet as there is no carrier willing to provide service. Bobbie also noted that the mowing and sign trimming on the North Guilford Road look good.

Jackie Stevens expressed concern about possibly not having enough people on the fire department once the deadline for the vaccine mandate runs out. She wondered if the vaccine mandate is necessary for the fire department whereas they do not receive a regular salary. Daniel explained that the only way around the mandate would be for the department to give up their EMS license. He also stated that it's very likely that the mandate may not go into effect or will be held up by litigation. Jackie also mentioned that there are now red markings on the road in front of her driveway and wondered what they are for. It was determined that the markings are likely there for dig-safe.

Rick Clawson again wondered how it happened that the town paid \$83,000 for the road work that was done. Tyler explained that the quotes for the work came back much higher than expected and the scope of work was scaled back to only include the pre-paving work. The costs for road work should be much lower going forward with better planning and scheduling. He offered to get together with Rick to discuss the matter further and suggested that Rick talk to Daniel about it.

Mike Witham stated that at the last meeting there was an item on the agenda that involved him. He stated that Tyler cut him off when he was speaking about the matter which is a violation of his civil rights and a federal crime that would trigger an FBI investigation. He also noted that the selectboard speaking about him in executive session is illegal. Mike then asked Eric to explain to the rest of the selectboard what they had done wrong. Eric explained that a

person has the right to express their views in a public meeting and Mike feels that he was cut off. Daniel suggested contacting the town attorney before doing anything else with the matter. Mike stated that if the selectboard continues to pursue the “frivolous matter” of his permit violation he will contact the FBI.

John Moore stated that after the last town revaluation the state showed a valuation for Monson of \$79,505,684.00 but that Daniel said that the valuation is \$77 million. Daniel explained that the town’s valuation is not usually the same as what the state determines it to be but that they are within a certain percentage of each other. John wondered how an accurate mil rate can be decided with such different valuations. Daniel said that the town’s valuation is used to determine the mil rate.

Nancy Cassella asked when the transfer station will start accepting recycling again. Daniel stated that they do take recycling, but it goes in the compactor with the other trash. Once the Fiber Right facility reopens, they will be separating the recycling there.

Sandra Hardy asked if anything more can be done about the cell tower. Tyler explained that they know this area is a dead zone but there is not enough volume for carriers to justify providing service. Sandra noted that it’s not just the people in town who would appreciate the service but also people passing through and AT hikers as well.

Richard Allard asked if anyone has looked at the Steward Road and when it will be fixed. He also stated that none of the selectboard voted on the \$83,000 that was spent on road work. Tyler stated that he and Buddy Martin voted on the issue. Daniel stated that he and Arvo Korsman looked at the road and that Arvo will be able to make the time to fix it. Dan Dube and Richard fell that Chad Davis should be responsible for fixing the road.

Rick Clawson noted that today’s rain caused big gouges in the Willimantic Road. Chad had said that he would remove the berms however, he only did one side of the road, and the other side is washing out. Tyler told him that the public works department will be checking the roads after storms.

Diane Dube expressed concern that the paving company did not blend the road pavement to the driveways, and she is concerned about plows hitting the bumps in the winter. Daniel stated that he will use cold patch to blend the pavement on driveways if needed.

Richard Allard asked again where the money is that was supposed to be used for the hillside cemetery. Daniel stated that it was not used and went back to the general fund. Richard is concerned that the project will not get done.

**PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED**

## **TOWN MANGER REPORT**

Daniel provided updates on the following:

The tax bills have been mailed and payments are starting to come in.

Daniel has a verbal agreement with a Greenville contractor for the ADA ramp. The contractor will be able to do the job in the spring and would like to charge time and materials for the project.

The roadside mowing is complete, and Daniel worked on the public works task list and reviewed it with Steve. Steve has been working on trimming the brush around the road signs and a new yield sign has been ordered.

Glenn Poole and Tootie Bennett have been working on the churchyard cemetery. They will spend approximately \$5,000 from the budget this year for the project. The headstones will be cleaned and stood back up.

A North Guilford Road resident suggested installing temporary speed bumps on the road to attempt to slow down traffic. The speed bumps would be put down in the summer and picked up in the winter. Daniel noted that trucks weighing more than 22,000 lbs would break them.

The vaccine mandate for the fire department has been extended to the end of October and the communication tower is repaired and functional. Eric noted that the fire department held a boot drive over the weekend and asked if the money has been accounted for at the town office. Daniel stated that the money was turned in to the office and the department raised about \$7,000.

Daniel has been spending more time assisting customers in the office due to being down a staff person. He will begin conducting interviews for the office assistant position soon.

Daniel would like to have a meeting with Axiom and Bob Keyes to discuss issues with the downtown WiFi. Tyler asked if he has spoken with other towns about Axiom. Daniel said that he has not because the issues seem to be Monson specific. Tyler stated that the problem is that the system does not work.

The county is asking the town to contribute \$426.91 to a broadband study. Daniel told them that Monson already has broadband but stated that he still needed to bring the matter to the selectboard. Tyler would like more information before making a decision.

Daniel applied for the recovery funds from the state. The amount is now \$69,000.

Daniel spoke to Bill Varney from Premium Choice about the broadband. They have permission to use the poles and it should take about 6 months to install the lines.

Peter Rioux submitted a quote for a new town clock, The price would be approximately \$10,000.

Daniel noted that he would like to participate in a webinar on de-escalation techniques and that he would like the office staff to attend. He also invited the selectboard.

The county assessment increase is due to the increased valuation of the town.

The Quarry Restaurant is requesting an extension to their liquor license for a special event at their facility. Tyler Adkins motioned to approve the license, seconded by Eric Vainio.

Daniel was contacted by a property owner who received an abatement last year from Hamlins. The town never received the abatement, so the 2021 tax bill was incorrect. Two years ago, the landowners received a supplemental tax because they supposedly were not being charged for enough water frontage. They subsequently proved they did not own that much water frontage and were then awarded an abatement. The selectboard approved the abatement and Daniel will apply it to the taxes.

Daniel contacted Allstates regarding the quote for the fence at the transfer station. The quote has been forwarded to the proper department.

## **SELECTBOARD REPORT**

Sue Chase noted that the flashing speed sign is now not working at all. Daniel will take it down and try to fix it. He stated that this will be done by the end of next week. Sue also suggested a flashing "slow" sign on the North Guilford Road.

Eric Vainio noted the following:

There is some erosion on the Willimantic Road. The grading work that Steve has been doing on the Barrows Falls and Degestrom Roads and Pleasant Street look good. He does not feel that the town needs to use a grading contractor.

Someone needs to be in charge of lowering the flag to half- staff when required.

Two meetings ago Eric noted that Steve did not mix the road sand with the salt before putting it in the shed. Eric explained that he had misunderstood that Steve was waiting for one more load.

Is the snowplow bid coming up for renewal? Daniel explained that there is one more year left on the contract and that the town has the option of extending it for an additional year.

What is the process for resolving the issue of the right of way blockage? Daniel stated that the process would involve him speaking to the offenders and asking them to move their things from the right of way. If this is not done, then the town can start removing the things themselves.

Eric noted that he was moving furniture with a local resident who had a land survey done and found right of way markers on his lawn. Eric wants to make sure violations and ordinances are fair. Daniel will look into the matter.

Dan Dube mentioned that more trimming needs to be done at the junction of Willimantic and North Guilford Roads. The brush is blocking the view.

Tyler asked if the mirrors for the poles have come in and if Daniel has spoken to Wendy at the General Store about putting cones out at the corners of Pleasant and Hebron Streets. Daniel stated that the mirrors have not come in and he will speak to Wendy. Tyler then asked if the GIS has been updated yet. Daniel responded that the assessors are scheduled to be in the office on 10/6 but he will try to have them come in sooner. The updates should be done sometime in November.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**FESTIVAL COMMITTEE:** No report.

**BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE:** The committee met today to work on fundraising plans and finalizing the booklet. Sandra is working with Georgia Underwood and David Slagger on the Native American programming and will speak to them about children's programs as well.

**BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE:** The committee will meet next Tuesday.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Early Buyout of Solar Panels:** Daniel explained that if the town would like to move forward with buying the panels early, the lease pricing may change if we wait for town meeting. \$50,000 of the recovery money will be spent on broadband but the rest can be spent on the solar panels. Tyler stated that he has not had time to further assess the purchase and is not ready to make a

decision. Sue asked what kind of maintenance the panels will need. Tyler explained that the energy production will need to be monitored to see if it's declining and sometimes the inverters need to be replaced. Also, debris on the panels and animals chewing the wires are things that may need to be addressed.

**Road Plan Update:** Daniel presented an updated road plan and explained the changes that he made. The crack sealing was changed to cold patching, ditching is to be done every 5 years and will include culvert work, paving to be done every 10 years. All numbers are now based on past pricing. Now that all the roads are paved, 2" won't be needed for maintenance so it was changed to 1". Eric mentioned that there is a culvert on the Barrows Falls Road that is in rough shape.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Selectboard By-Laws:** Daniel explained that this is a document that lays out the role of the selectboard and explains how meetings should be run. He noted that the document has been reviewed by the town attorney. Eric expressed concern that the by-laws will interfere with the selectboard's responsibilities to the citizens. He has issues mostly with the last two pages, Section 9 Code of Conduct and 2B, and would like his personal attorney to look at it. Daniel noted that he's not sure if it would be appropriate for a personal attorney to look at the document. Sue stated that she has no issues with the by-laws but is open to hearing the concerns of the other members. The selectboard would like more time to review the by-laws.

**Septic System Replacement Award:** Daniel submitted two bids to replace a septic system at a local residence. The system has failed and is leaking into the house and onto the neighbor's property. Steven Breault bid \$29,000 for the project and Arvo Korsman bid \$28,207. Tyler asked if the grant will cover the entire cost and Daniel said that it will. The original grant was for \$16,000 but the project will cost more than that so the state will adjust the amount. The project is scheduled to be done within the next two weeks. Tyler Adkins motioned to accept Arvo Korsman's bid for \$28,207, contingent upon the state updating the budget, seconded by Sue Chase.

**General Assistance Maximums:** Daniel explained that every year the GA maximums get updated and then proceeded to explain the housing/income/number of people in household. The selectboard would like to compare the new numbers with last year's numbers before approving.

Bobbie Crockett noted that she appreciates being able to call in to the selectboard meetings but that it's hard to hear some of the conversations. Tyler stated that part of the Entrepreneurship Grant will be used to get audio and video for the meeting room. This should be happening in a month or so.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM**

