



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: January 22, 2018 – Business Meeting
Time: 5:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall, Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chairman Pepe, Vice Chair Woodbury, Clerk Monette,
Members Stevens and Hicks, and Interim Administrator Ross

At 5:03 p.m. Chairman Pepe called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcement

Any members that are participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law

None

Minutes:

Vote to Approve Meeting Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2017 Business Meeting (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

Communications:

None

Citizen Input

None

Town Administrator Finalist Interviews

Chris Heard (5 pm via Skype)

The Board interviewed Town Administrator finalist candidate Chris Heard via Skype using a list of interview questions.

Mr. Heard introduced himself to the Board and reported that he was a city manager in Lebanon, MO for the past twelve years and has always had a passion for government. With his broad experience in city management, he believes he is positioned to provide the leadership Spencer needs to move the community forward.

Questions and answers with Mr. Heard included:

Mr. Woodbury noted that there are areas in Spencer which are considered to be blighted and asked how to work with property owners to make an investments in their property

Mr. Heard: investing in property happens when people we make people productive in the community and let people know you want to help engage them. By developing strong zoning regulations, people will know you are serious.

Mr. Stevens asked about experience in the City of Lebanon with blighted areas.

Mr. Heard: by creating a mutual understanding it's a win-win for both parties.

Mr. Monette pointed out that there are absentee landlords with no vested interest in their property.

Mr. Heard: get property owners out of the way; put programs in place to leverage capital for folks that have an interest in downtown.

Chairman Pepe: describe your leadership style.

Mr. Heard: has a "type A" personality and is strategic in his thinking and always looking to get return on investment. Keeps staff calm and is proud of his style. Is a delegator and assigns projects appropriately. Enjoys mentoring and teaching.

Dr. Hicks: which is your most significant project so far?

Mr. Heard: professionalized the City of Lebanon. After he resigned, a professional firm was hired to replace him. He saw the work he started to conclusion.

Mr. Monette: what do you see as the most pressing need for Spencer?

Mr. Heard: a cohesive economic development strategy in a virtual setting that explains why someone would want to invest in the Town.

Mr. Stevens: characterize your communication style.

Mr. Heard: direct communicator, in person, email, all areas.

Mr. Pepe: the voters approved a \$19 million dollar roads project; describe any experience in this area and financing efforts to get the project moving.

Mr. Heard: developed a plan on how to attack roads by looking a pavement management index, without a plan, community interest dictates what happens. He prefers incremental financing and to build once and do it right, but not to overbuild.

Dr. Hicks: what is the best and worst career advice you've ever received?

Mr. Heard: he came to Lebanon in the middle of multiple lawsuits and sunshine violations. He was advised to develop a war committee, which was helpful in navigating constant change. He strives to think through all advice

Mr. Woodbury: the Town is recovering from a downturn, how you would reach out to support changes in downtown with the current age group?

Mr. Heard: the bottom line is you need to give people a reason to want to be in your community.

Mr. Pepe: is there anything else you'd like to add or any questions?

Mr. Heard: had a good dialogue and likes idea of coming to Spencer.

Chairman Pepe explained that the Board will interview other finalists and discuss next steps and be in touch soon.

Thomas Gregory

The Board interviewed Town Administrator finalist candidate Thomas Gregory using a list of interview questions.

Mr. Gregory thanked the Board for interviewing him and said he left a teaching career to get into local government and progressively moved along in the same field. During his time in Worcester, he worked on an effort in to help with homelessness and was involved with the development of a more accountable shelter. He was the Assistant to the Town Manager in Shrewsbury where he worked on multiple projects for four years and is now the Assistant Town Manager in Walpole where he has taken on statutory authority with regard to managing personnel; major building projects, and has extensive procurement experience.

Questions and answers with Mr. Gregory included:

Chairman Pepe: describe your leadership/management style.

Mr. Gregory: believes you model what you ask others to do and set clear expectations; encourage and mentor others and make difficult decisions. He is a clear communicator with an open dialogue/door.

Mr. Woodbury noted that there are areas in Spencer which are considered to be blighted and asked how to work with property owners to make an investments in their property

Mr. Gregory: he interfaced routinely with the Walpole Economic Development Committee and built strong partnerships and brought business owners to table in mutual manner.

Mr. Pepe: the voters approved a \$19 million dollar roads project; describe any experience in this area and financing efforts to get the project moving.

Mr. Gregory: was instrumental in making the case to revitalize downtown improvements in Walpole which were mainly cosmetic and included infrastructure; was not involved in the financing portion. He negotiated an agreement with Siemens Corporation and took the lead on the layout of street scape improvements.

Mr. Stevens: characterize your communication style.

Mr. Gregory: worked in challenging environments by providing as much information as possible and to allow for an informed decision. If hired, he will work with the Board to share information while remaining neutral.

Dr. Hicks: what is your most significant accomplishment to date?

Mr. Gregory: created a veterans district in Shrewsbury and worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs to on sharing and regionalization with three other communities and saved on administrative costs.

Mr. Monette: Spencer received a three-year grant to hire four firefighters, how would you obtain funding after the grant is complete?

Mr. Gregory: would use new growth. He noted that Spencer's estimated new growth was \$100,000, however was actually \$500,000.

Mr. Pepe: what is the best and worst career advice you've ever received?

Mr. Gregory: he was encouraged to go to law school and looking back he's glad he did not. His passion is local government.

Mr. Pepe: where do you see Spencer heading in the future and how would you guide that direction?

Mr. Gregory: the biggest challenge is living within limited resources and complying with state and federal mandates; would work to keep residents and businesses satisfied and believes the Town/School relationship is critical for success of the Town. Would prioritize capital needs and work with Department Heads.

Mr. Woodbury: the Town is recovering from a downturn, how you would reach out to support changes in downtown with the current age group?

Mr. Gregory: would talk about good work being done in Town and take direction from Board on ways to make spencer more attractive to younger people and to everyone.

Mr. Pepe- have you dealt directly with blight?

Mr. Gregory: managed the Worcester CDBG funding for vacant buildings and would look to see if similar opportunities are available in Spencer.

Dr. Hicks: describe how you would do more with less.

Mr. Gregory: would prioritize a list with and work with Department Heads to make the case of which projects to be funded.

Mr. Monette: how would you restore lost Town services?

Mr. Gregory: utilize the recurring funding source from the tax levy and expand the commercial tax base for Economic Development.

Mr. Pepe: is there anything else you'd like to add or any questions?

Mr. Gregory: thanked the Board for their time .

Chairman Pepe explained that the Board will interview other finalists and discuss next steps and be in touch soon.

Old Business

Vote to Approve/Sign the FY2018 Community Development Strategy (CDS) – Ted Harvey, PVPC

Ted Harvey presented the final draft of the FY2018 CDS. A new one will be drafted each year.

Pepe- question on partnership with affordable housing

A motion to approve the Fy2018 CDS as (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

Discussion: Kaitbenski Gravel Permit License Renewal Discussion

Chase and David Kaitbenski were present.

Mr. Ross reported that the Board required a gate to secure the Gravel Pit and that all debris be cleaned as part of the condition for renewal. The Pit was cleaned but has not been properly secured with a gate, therefore a letter was sent to the Kaitbenski's indicating the Board voted to deny the renewal.

Chase Kaitbenski explained that they cleaned the debris after the meeting, however have been unable to get the gate up in time. When the ground thaws in March, they will place boulders and make a gate. Currently there is a chain with ribbons to prevent access.

A motion to rescind the prior motion (on date) to not renew the license for not being secured with a gate (Woodbury/Hicks) passed 5/0.

A motion to approve the Gravel Pit renewal license for Kaitbenski with the condition that a gate be installed in March (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

New Business:

Introduction of new Fulltime firefighters – Chief Parsons

Chief Parsons reported that for the first time in Spencer's history, fulltime firefighters were hired. Due to a grant award, he was able to hire four fulltime firefighters and introduced:

- Joshua Blodgett
- Patrick Gorham
- Thomas Parsons
- David Hoyt

All four took the Oath of Office and were sworn-in by Town Clerk Laura Torti.

The Board congratulated them and thanked Chief Parsons for his efforts to obtain the a three-year grant.

Initial FY19 Budget Discussion with Representatives of SEBRSD

Chairman Pepe thanked SEBRSD Comptroller Suter and Interim Superintendent Jodi Bourassa for coming in.

Ms. Bourassa noted that the DPHS building must be improved for learning to happen. The goal is to upgrade energy savings, electrical, heating, and other renovations. They will work with the MSBA.

Mr. Monette asked about solar for the roof and about the previous building study.

Dr. Hicks noted that they need to be sure nothing has changed and may be able to work within the footprint of the existing drawings and said they will save 10% with renovation as opposed to a new building.

Chairman Pepe asked the District to review smaller capital projects with the Town's Capital Improvement Planning Committee (CIPC).

Mr. Ross suggested a member of the school committee may be interested in serving on the CIPC.

Mr. Woodbury pointed out rebates are available with the gas company with the purchase of energy efficient boilers.

Mr. Stevens noted that with regard to the operations budget, he'd like to see small scale improvements and be informed on what is being done to improve the schools.

Mr. Suter said work is being done to improve the school fields and the surface of the track utilizing the excess & deficiency funds.

Ms. Bourassa said she is working on improving grades K through 8 literacy program and having one to one Chromebooks technology for grades 7 through 12.

Chairman Pepe asked about exit interviews. Ms. Bourassa said they are not, however family needs are driving much of the students leaving and also many are entering trade schools.

Mr. Suter noted the State MLC is expected to increase between 4-6%. Transportation costs will also increase. There is a reduction in circuit breaker funding, however he is not expecting any major changes with the budget this coming year.

The Board thanked them for their time and all look forward to working together.

Review FY19 Budget Calendar

The Board reviewed the calendar.

Vote to Adopt the Community Comparison Chart

A motion to adopt the 2018 Community Comparison Chart (Woodbury/Hicks) passed 5/0.

Vote to Direct the Town Clerk to place the remainder of the term of Water Commissioner (presently vacant) on the Ballot for the May 8th Annual Town Election

A motion to direct the Town Clerk to place the remainder of the term of Water Commissioner (presently vacant) on the Ballot for the May 8th Annual Town Election (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0.

Town Administrator's Report:

Mr. Ross reported:

- A memo with salary recommendations will be forthcoming.
- He is working with financial advisors on the bond borrowing.
- FinCom met last week and are working on financial policies.
- Free cash should be 3-5% of the budget; Spencer are at 5.1 % and should strive to reach 10%.
- Water and Sewer retained earnings at the State recommended level.
- A draft lease between citizens and the Town have been forwarded to KP Law. Still need to work some things out.
- He offered the Health Agent position to Lisa and she has accepted. Paul Dell'Aquila, Lee Jarvis and Rodney Foisy interviewed three finalists and they were unanimous in choosing Lisa.

Board Liaison Reports

- Chairman Pepe met with the EDC to discuss downtown revitalization and Facebook/Twitter social media presence the Town.
- The Fire Department is holding a home safety course at the Senior Center on January 26th.

Citizen Input

None

Board Member and Staff Comments

Mr. Ross reported that a one week transition period is all that's recommended when a new Town Administrator is hired.

Dr. Hicks noted that he attended the MMA Conference and learned employers can no longer ask people about their present salary.

Mr. Pepe said the FinCom survey is complete and results were as expected.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Administrative Assistant

Referenced Materials- FY2018 Community Development Strategy (CDS) & 2018 Community Comparison Chart