

BOARD OF SELECTMEN VIRTUAL MEETING

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 – 6:00 PM Via Zoom

PRESENT: Alan Hanson, Chair; Neal Pilson, Selectman; Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator; Ron Veillette, Chair of the Con. Com.; John Drake, ; Amanda , ; Susan Waldren; Ed Fechner, Cable Advisory Cte.; Harley Keisch, Con. Con. Cte.; Lauren Broussell; Steve White

ABSENT: Roger Manzolini, Selectman

Approval of the September 4, 2020 Minutes: Neal moved that the minutes be approved as read. The motion was seconded by Alan Hanson and approved by unanimous vote.

Appointment of Animal Control Officer: John Drake is currently the Animal Control Officer in Stockbridge and West Stockbridge and has been asked to add Richmond to his responsibilities. After some general questions to John, Neal moved to appoint John Drake as the Richmond Animal Control Officer. The motion was seconded by AI and adopted by unanimous consent.

Application for Burial: Ms. Susan Waldren approached the Board with a request for approval to bury her husband, James Edward Waldren, in the family plot beside his parents. Neal moved to grant permission for the burial of James Edward Waldren and in the future for Ms. Susan Waldren in the family plot.

Location of a Telephone Pole: Alan explained that a resident was under the impression that the site was on the same side of the road as the historic schoolhouse, but it is on the opposite side of the road. That concern having been addressed, the request for the Board's approval for locating a pole on the West side of Swamp Road, between two existing poles, was granted. Neal moved that the application for placement of a telephone pole as outlined in documents before the Board be approved. The motion was seconded by AI and passed by unanimous vote.

Hazard Mitigation Project: Amanda described the proposed Hazard Mitigation Project and Municipal Vulnerability Study. The State is offering grants to cover the cost of these projects. Successfully completing these projects renders the Town eligible to apply for more grants to plan for priority projects such as updating culverts, designing infrastructure, etc.

There was a discussion of the various concerns that this project could address such as Flood Mitigation, Winter Storms, Extreme Heat, Drought impact on the water supply, High Wind events. Studies will be made of what has happened in the past and what supplies/equipment could have been helpful. It will also take into account the impact of Climate Change and address appropriate preparation.

With Danielle's recommendation to go ahead with the project, Neal moved that the Richmond Hazard Mitigation Planning Project, as outlined in the letter of September 18th, be approved. The motion was seconded by AI and adopted by unanimous vote.

Charter Cable TV: Ed Fechner reported that a discussion has begun with Charter (Spectrum) concerning the agreement with them that will expire in January of 2021 and be open for renewal and re-negotiation. Charter has assured us in writing that if no agreement is reached at the time of the expiration, the current agreement will remain in place.

Ed explained that certain initiatives that will be pursued with Charter for Richmond, they are currently providing to neighboring towns and should not, therefore, incur any challenge from Charter. Richmond intends to include a provision in the agreement that would offer discounts to Senior Residents under certain conditions. As that is also being offered in other towns, there should be no contention arising from it.

The Cable Advisory Cte. asked for direction from the Board of Selectmen as to how to move forward with the list of items the Town wants included; when does the Board wish to be included in the process? Should the Committee submit the list before bringing it to Charter or would the Board prefer to empower the Cable Advisory Cte. to submit the list to Charter and advise the Board of their response?

Neal noted that the Board could review the list and then authorize the Committee to go forward and initiate negotiations with Charter. He cautioned, however, that it is the Board of Selectmen who will be the contracting body for the town.

Some additional items to present: Production of TV shows at the school. Supply high-speed internet at the Firehouse and Garage. Neal said the Town has been in discussion with Pittsfield Community TV to carry Richmond generated programs such as Board meetings, as well as the programs to be generated at the school by students for dissemination to residents.

In response to the question of funding, Neal offered that Charter does offer grants, but that they then add a surcharge to the subscribers.

Authorization was given to hold a Public Hearing on Thursday, October 22nd. The Cable Advisory Committee will hold its next meeting on October 15th.

Intermunicipal Agreement with West Stockbridge for Fire Department Shared Services: Neal moved to postpone discussion until Danielle had time to incorporate the changes just received from West Stockbridge.

Conflict of Interest Exceptions: Harley Kaisch, Con. Com. member approached the board to request an exemption to a perceived financial conflict of interest in his position on the Con. Com. After some discussion of the details, Neal moved that the Board finds that the financial interest is not so substantive as to be likely to affect the integrity of the services which the municipality may expect from the member of the Con. Com. and hereby exempt him from the presumed financial conflict of interest so that he may continue to fulfill his duties on the Con. Com.

David Wyatt, a member of the Cable Advisory Cte. is also an employee of Pittsfield Community TV. The Board is currently in negotiation with PCTV, in conjunction with Charter Cable, about providing the Town of Richmond access to a channel that would carry Richmond-generated programming. Mr. Wyatt's position as an employee of PCTV does not put him in a position to impact those negotiations, which he does not participate in. Therefore, his interest is not sufficiently substantive to affect the integrity of his work on the CAC and he is exempt from the perceived conflict of interest and may continue as a member of the CAC.

Signing of Warrants for the November 3rd Election:

Appointment to the MVPHMP Committee: Neal moved to approve the appointment of Danielle Fillio, Peter Beckwith, Steve Traver, Shep Evans and John Hanson to the MVPHMP Committee. The motion was seconded by AI and approved by unanimous consent.

Town Administrator Report: Danielle advised the Board that Phyllis LeBeau had returned to work today and was doing well, although she continues to have issues with the left wrist that was fractured. Danielle noted that everyone was very glad to have her back.

Danielle requested approval to apply for an I.T. grant to digitize Town records which would eliminate the difficult and time-consuming effort required to retrieve historic minutes. The Board gave their approval.

The bylaw changes that were made at the Annual Town Meeting have been approved by the Attorney General and Danielle is working on getting them posted on the website. The Violation Tickets for non-criminal violation of those bylaw changes have been received and distributed to the departments responsible for enforcement of those bylaws.

Danielle has received the Sound Engineer's report on Balderdash. She will make copies for distribution to anyone interested and they will be available for discussion at the October 14, 2020 meeting of the Board.

Danielle raised the issue of boards holding meetings in person, with no electronic access for those who do not wish to come to Town Hall in person. She recommended that a universal guideline for conducting meetings be developed. After some discussion, it was decided that Danielle should undertake to make the decision on a one-to-one basis to ensure that every meeting be either hybrid (some in-person attendance and some virtual access) or full Zoom. Danielle also mentioned that she has been looking into ways to make the virtual meetings easier, which would include a better camera and the purchase of Chrome Books to leave at Town Hall to provide the option of close-ups of people in attendance. Funds are available for those purchases.

Website as Official Posting Site for Meetings: Lauren Broussell asked why it had been decided that the website not be counted as an official posting site. Danielle explained that the State had decided that, since the possibility of the website crashing would automatically require that any meetings posted there would have to be cancelled, it was in the interest of caution to not have

the website an official posting site. Danielle did note that everything possible is done to ensure that the agendas are posted in a timely manner as if the web were an official posting site.

Ron asked if it would be possible for meetings that occur on a regular basis be posted in advance of the week they are scheduled. It was agreed that those dates could be included in the calendar and it was noted that agendas are directly linked to calendar dates.

Highway Garage and Storage Space: Danielle asked that the board begin a discussion of the problem of the lack of indoor storage for the expensive Highway Department equipment. Everyone agreed that something must be done to find a way to protect that investment from exposure to bad weather. Danielle agreed to research possible solutions and their relative costs. Al suggested speaking to Fire Chief Traver about the use of his large, heated garage. He noted that it would be helpful to have Peter Beckwith, Highway Super., involved in these discussions.

Selectmen's Matters: Al reminded the group that the cut-off date for submitting Chapter 61 forms was October 1st.

Al reported that he has received a letter from Holly Stover, which he will defer reading until he has obtained the information required to respond. The State has been asked for the relevant files but has not yet responded.

Danielle advised the Board that she has received a request for a Special Use Permit for a Fishing Derby on October 4th at 6:00 AM. Neal moved that the Board grant the request with the proviso that every effort will be made to keep the level of noise as low as possible. Al seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous vote.

Al asked if any of the new constables had been sworn in. Danielle assured him that one new constable has taken the oath and worked the election, so we are covered for Nov. 3rd.

There being no further business before the Board, Neal moved to adjourn the meeting. Al seconded the motion and it passed by unanimous consent.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 PM

Signed:

Al Hanson, Chair