



Town of Paxton
Board of Selectmen
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Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 25, 2017

Meeting Location: John Bauer Senior Center 17 West Street, Paxton, MA 01612

Members Present: Julia N. Pingitore, Chairman
 John F. Malone, Vice Chairman
 Peter Bogren, Jr., Clerk

 Carol L. Riches, Town Administrator

Attendees: see Attendee List

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Kiosk for the Paxton Scenic Byway

- Paul Robinson of the Scenic Byway Committee spoke in regards to the installation of the Route 122 Lost Villages Scenic Byway kiosk, which would be located on land owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust on Route 122 near Pleasant View Nursery. Mass DOT would put in a curb cut to allow for parking and the kiosk.
- **(JP)** Why are they willing to put in a parking lot?
- Mr. Robinson replied to allow parking for the entrance of Muir Meadow.
- **(JP)** We have been provided comments from Chief Desrosiers, Lieutenant Savasta and DPW Superintendent Michael Putnam which have all expressed their concerns about the line of sight for oncoming traffic in this area and its potential hazards.
- Mr. Robinson expressed that perhaps another meeting is needed then to discuss the possibility of using a private piece of property for the kiosks since we seem to have exhausted all the town owned land. The American Legion was suggested as a possible area as well as the area that Howe's Farm Stand uses to store their mulch. Could the Board please forward a letter to Mass DOT stating that you do support this effort however not this particular site.
- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to send a letter to Mass DOT stating that the Board of Selectmen does support this effort however not this particular location. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Meeting with Paxton Light Department

- Individuals that were present for the Light Department included:
 - General Manager – Jason Lavallee
 - Board members – John Ahearn, Emerson Wheeler and Jack Crowley
 - Attorney for the Light Department – Mr. Stephen Doucette
- **(JP)** Set the guidelines for how the meeting was to be conducted.
- Mr. Doucette started with an overview of some of the concerns that were mentioned at a recent Board of Selectmen's meeting which included the following:
 1. Questions about the paid time off for the Light Department employees on July 3, 2017.
 2. Issues with how the budget is put together.
 3. Since new management the relationship has deteriorated.
- Mr. Doucette then went on to express the concerns that the Light Department had when the Town Treasurer used funds from the Light Department without the Commissioners permission which caused a fiduciary problem for the Light Department. The Paxton Light Department came into being in 1913 and in 1914 the town voted to make the Light Department a separate entity. This meant that the General Manager runs the Department and the power goes to the Light Board. With this in mind as far as the employee's time off for July 3rd this was well within the General Managers domain to compensate his employees for work well done. There will be separate personnel policies from the Town due to the technical nature of the Light Departments duties. There is one Treasurer for both entities, but funds are kept separate. You do share health insurance because they are "employees" of the town. Other than that the General Manager sets the policies. In regards to budget issues the General Manager will provide the Board of Selectmen with the department's budget once it is set and invites anyone that is interested to attend their budget meetings prior to. The Light Board would like to clear the air and start fresh.
- **(JP)** We had a more casual relationship with the Light Department Managers in the past. I would like to clarify that the process of borrowing funds has stopped which has cost the Town in seeking other sources of funding. In reference to the July 3rd paid day off there was a discussion between Jack Malone and a Light Board member and they agreed that this would not be an additional paid day of for the Town or Light Department employees but then the Light Department employees did end up getting an additional paid day off. We abide by the policies set forth in our Red policy book.
- Jason Lavallee, Light Department General Manager, replied that we do not follow a lot of the policies that the Town does. We are in the process for putting together our own policies and will share that when it's complete.
- John Ahearn, Light Board Member, questioned where the money went that was borrowed.
- **(CR)** The money was borrowed with the Light Department Managers approval and returned with in thirty days. As a result of this process we have gone to quarterly billing to help bring in revenue on a steadier basis so hopefully we will not have to borrow funds in the future.
- John Ahearn, that money that was borrowed was a float that we need to keep there.
- **(PB)** Wachusett Regional School District reached out to the district towns about going to quarterly billing and we needed a little help to get through. We were not aware that this could cause the Light Department a problem.
- Jason Lavallee replied that he did not realize that the Board members were not informed of the borrowings in the past, so this was just a communication error.

- **(JP)** Do you have a timeline for the Light Departments personnel policy to be completed?
- Jason Lavallee replied that we are working on it but it will take some time.
- Mr. Doucette requested that the Town provide Jason with their policies so that they can try to mirror it as much as possible.
- **(JP)** We will continue with the process of signing off on the warrant from the Light Department.
- Mr. Doucette replied that it is a very fine line on reasons why you can decline a warrant from the Light Department.
- **(JM)** In reference to the time off for July 3rd it was noted on the payroll that it was okayed by the Town. Until the Light Departments policies are set could you try to work together with the Town on areas that we can agree to be the same.
- Jason Lavallee replied that the okayed by the Town on the payroll was not written by the Light Department.
- Emerson Wheeler stated that he does not agree with the Town's vacation policy. We need to hire top people and so we need to set up contracts with them.
- **(JM)** In turn it would be helpful if the Town was informed when the Light Department did something different so that the Town Administrator could answer any questions.
- Mr. Doucette replied that qualified employees need to be compensated in order to keep them. That's the nature of the industry and part of the package.
- Jason Lavallee replied that we do keep salaries within the industry standard.
- **(JM)** Referred back to the money that the Town borrowed from the Light Department and referenced that a member of the Light Board stated that the Town Treasurer stole from the Town.
- Jason Lavallee replied to this by stating that no money was ever stolen and everything that was borrowed was paid back.
- **(PB)** For a small town we should be able to just work together.
- Jason Lavallee replied by stating that their concern about the borrowing was that there was no paper trail and it was an illegal act.
- Mr. Doucette replied that in the future if the Town needed to borrow money the Paxton Light Board could take a vote to allow the Town to do so.
- **(PB)** Questions the Light Board as to how much they pay the Town in a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) program?
- Jason Lavallee replied that they don't pay anything.
- **(CR)** In the future if the Town is in need of funds we will take a revenue anticipation note rather than borrow from the Light Department.

Appoint Nicholas Andexler as a part time Dispatcher

- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to appoint Nicholas Andexler as a part time Dispatcher for the Paxton Police Department. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Appoint Stefano Marziale as a full time Dispatcher

- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to appoint Stefano Marziale as a full time Dispatcher for the Paxton Police Department. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Accept the resignation of Carolyn Grinstead

- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to accept with regret the resignation letter from Carolyn Grinstead from the Richards Memorial Library Board of Trustees. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Review plans for Sweetpea

- (PB) Will there be any residence?
- (CR) No, there will be no one living at the property. There is a meeting this Thursday to further discuss their plans for the property.

Review plans for Shabo's Garage

- (JP) Is there going to be a gas station?
- (CR) Not at this time. There is also a meeting on this Thursday night as well.

Meeting Minutes

- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes from September 11, 2017. Unanimous, all in favor.**
- **Motion (JM) seconded (PB) to approve the Executive Meeting Minutes from September 11, 2017. Unanimous, all in favor.**

Town Administrators update

- **Zoning Board of Appeals**
Just a reminder that Sweetpea Friends of Rutland Animals Inc. will go before the Zoning Board of Appeals on Thursday, September 28th for a variance and special permit in respect of their proposal to rebuild the animal shelter and operate the kennel boarding business. As the Board of Selectmen revoked the Sweetpea's kennel license it may be in the board's interest to attend this hearing.
- **Health Fair**
The COA will be holding a Health Fair on Thursday, September 27th here at the John Bauer Senior Center between the hours of 10am and 1pm. This is the second year of this event and has even more area professionals and agencies participating than last year. It is open to all ages.
- **Richards Memorial Library**
The library's annual book sale will take place October 13th and 14th between 10am and 4pm.
- **Fire Dept.**
The annual Fire Dept. open house is October 15th 10am to 1pm. It is open to everyone and is a chance to see the Fire Dept. equipment.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, 2017 at 7:00pm.

Adjourned Meeting at 8:16pm, Unanimous all in favor.

Documents from the Meeting filed in BOS office:

Meeting minutes

Agenda

Attendance list

Document provided by Attorney Doucette for Paxton Light Department

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Graf-Parsons

Executive Assistant