Select Board Meeting

June 24, 2020

6:00 pm meeting called to order by Neil.

Select Board members present: Mike Bedini, Ericka Oleson and Neil Oleson.

Select board members absent: None

Others present: Brett Billings, John Heck, Jim Scalise, Jim White, Doug Miller, Kendall Bell, Christine Dobbert and Vicki Winchell

Ericka Oleson made a motion to approve the minutes from the 6/10/20 meeting. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.

Ericka Oleson made a motion to approve the Executive session minutes from the 6/10/20 meeting with a correction of correcting the date to read 6/10/20 and correcting Cindy’s last name to Bosley from Brule. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.

New Business:

* Brett Billings, Director of the Manice Center
  + Mr. Billings attended the meeting to introduce himself to the Selectboard as he is new to the position. He also updated the Selectboard on the Manice Center stating they are currently working on upkeep of the facilities. He informed them there will be no in person programs currently because so many attend from over the state line. He is unsure as to how the remainder of the year will unfold.
* John Heck, Fulcrom Enterprise, Marijuana Cultivator and Manufacturer
  + Mr. Heck is interested in purchasing the land owned by the town on Bliss Road to be used as a marijuana farm. There would be no dispensary or retail operations taking place on this property at any point. If the town is interested, Mr. Heck will provide specific plans regarding the project.
  + There are 4 partners in the company; John Heck, Bill Heck and 2 others who have been involved with the Cannabis industry for over 7 years.
  + They have assembled a dozen professionals to deliver top grade service to meet the town and Cannabis Commissions requirements.
  + Christine was unsure if a previous vote by town residents approving sale of this land was worded specifically for selling it to the solar company only that was interested or if it was written more general and could be sold to anyone since the previous sale was never completed. She will research this further next week to see if it is able to be sold or if it would require a new town vote.
  + Jim Scalise, 2nd generation civil engineer attending with Mr. Heck to vouch for his client, is a Berkshire county native and maintains that Mr. Heck and his partners have developed a well thought out, well prepared plan for developing this business.

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* + Neil inquired as to how big the buildings would be. Mr. Heck responded they would be growing in 100,000 square feet of space that would be comprised of 22-23 Greenhouses each measuring approximately 30’ x 150’. The plants would be growing in raised beds with no impact on the land itself and would be a self-contained system. They feel this is an ideal location as it is a rural area, no wetland, and since much of the property has been cleared there would be very little need to clear any more land.
  + Neil questioned the security needs of this business. Mr. Heck and Mr. Scalise responded they have 2 consultants on their team who helped draft legislation in Massachusetts as well as their security expert having 30 years’ experience. The state requires 24/7 video surveillance of all grow facilities. Because the Town of Florida does not have local police the security system would connect directly to the state police via a life feed. The property would have motion sensors and be fully fenced in with a 6’ high fence.
  + The facility would be fully staffed during regular daytime business hours. At closing the security systems would be activated.
  + Christine commented even though the bylaws require only the abutters to be notified, she would prefer to notify all town residents of the possibility of this business. Mr. Heck was in complete agreement with this request. He also mentioned he would like to do what they refer to as a Host Community Agreement (HCA). This would be an informational meeting inviting all town residents to attend to view their presentation and ask any questions. It would require a public notice to be published everywhere 30 days prior to the meeting date, as well as written notification to all abutters (again, Christine would like to notify all town residents). Selectmen have agreed to this and have “penciled” in the date for August 4, 2020, to be held at the Senior Center. If the town residents offer favorable feedback, the next step would be a Special Permit Meeting. This company would reimburse the town for any expenses incurred.

Selectmen:

* Telephone conference was held briefly with Highway Department Union representative Kendall Bell and steward Doug Miller.
  + Due to COVID-19, Ms. Bell is unable to attend meetings in person and requested to either hold a virtual meeting soon or have a 1-year contract extension but would like some adjustments for the union employee’s if the extension is chosen.
  + Kendall requested a 3% raise until negotiations could resume next year. Neil responded this would be an extension to their current contract which states a 2% increase. Kendall and Doug accepted the 1-year extension with a 2% increase on behalf of the Highway Department union employees. Kendall will write up the contract and send it to Christine within one or two days for the Selectmen to sign.

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* Neil shared with the other board members that Christine had sent the letter to the Railroad, as requested, regarding the noise and pollution levels at the Central Shaft Road location. There has not been any response so far however Christine is working with Mark Simpson from DEP.
* Selectmen signed the Radio Repeater Project.
* Mike mentioned to Jim since they received approval for the Truck to discuss state bid.
* Selectmen discussed Jim’s Salary with him. Jim is currently paid $25 per hour. The Selectboard are happy with the performance Jim has been giving and suggested a 3% increase. Jim was accepting to this offer.
  + Ericka made a motion to do a 3% raise for Jim White, Highway Superintendent and a 2% raise for the other highway members for Fiscal Year 2021 effective July 1, 2020. Mike seconded. Unanimous.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator:

* Library personnel have met with the Board of Health and have their process in writing, clearing them to now proceed with curbside pickup/drop off.
* Christine checked with National Grid regarding placing American flags on their poles along the road within town as many other towns do. The flags must be clamped to the poles. There is a weight and size (30x36) limit and National Grid requires the town to carry a $2 million insurance policy. The Selectmen have chosen not to move further on this project due to the cost of the insurance.

Jim White, Highway Supervisor:

* Highway department on shutdown this week
* Worked on mowing the cemeteries
* Milling from Tim Keating to Ray Croft’s has been completed
* Working on foundation for Judith Poirot and Denise Swistak’s headstones.
* Burial today
* 44’ culvert replaced from Fellowship Hall to the fire station on Church Road
* Neil mentioned one grave is leaning. Jim will look into it.
* Ed Poirot of Poirot Road contact Jim to report a catch basin is falling in by his house. Jim will investigate this further.
* A culvert is going to be put in at 160 Tilda Hill Road. Jim told the resident he needs to pay the town first for the culvert and then the work will be completed.
* Compactor roof has been completed
* Jim will meet with Christine after vacation to discuss Chapter 90 projects to plan for.

7:14 pm Ericka made a motion to the meeting. Neil seconded. Unanimous.