

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, December 18, 2019 – 6:00 PM, Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Road

PRESENT: Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair; Mr. Neal Pilson, Selectman; Mr. Alan Hanson, Selectmen; Ms. Danielle Fillio, Town Administrator

ABSENT:

GUEST: Mr. Bog Gniadek, Chair, Finance Cte.

Mr. Manzolini called the meeting to order at 6:08 PM.

Mr. Gniadek noted that he was attending this meeting with the expectation of discussing the Town Hall building project. Ms. Fillio said that at the last meeting of the Board it was decided that this meeting would take place too soon after the discussion at the last meeting and would not provide enough time to learn the outcome of the meeting of the Municipal Building Committee in order to decide how to move forward.

Mr. Pilson invited Mr. Gniadek to raise his issues with the project. He had a question regarding the tax rate that was set at the last meeting. Mr. Gniadek has always had the goal of getting second homeowners to pay more taxes and he was disturbed to learn the process they used to assess personal property for second homeowners resulted in 3% of the replacement value of the home. Mr. Gniadek believes that the use of the Form of List is totally unreliable as people either underreport or do not report at all. He looked at his homeowner's insurance policy to determine what the contents of his personal property was listed as. It turned out to be 70% of the replacement value of the house.

Mr. Gniadek noted that he is raising this issue because of his concern with the impact the cost of the new Town Hall/Library project will have on the tax rate. How can we increase the tax rate, and hope to get young families buying homes and moving into town, particularly as we do not have a commercial tax base to help defray those costs.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that the Board ask the assessors for the industry standard in Berkshire County, whether the Town should reassess how they determine the personal property tax assessment and what latitude the Town would have to change the method for determining the personal property tax. Ms. Fillio offered to have that conversation with Ms. Mary Stodden, the Assessor and Mr. Gniadek offered to be part of that discussion. Mr. Manzolini asked that Ms. Fillio and Mr. Gniadek arrange for that conversation to take place and then bring the results back to the Board at a meeting during Budget season.

Review and Approval of Annual Alcohol Licenses for Wineries: One of the licenses is for Hilltop Orchards and the other for Balderdash Cellars. Hilltop is asking the Board to approve the Farm Winery Retail License and requires a motion. Mr. Manzolini moved to approve the Retail

License Renewal for Hilltop Orchards. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous vote.

Baldardash Cellars is requesting that the Board confirm that the lot in question remains the same although the lot number has had to be changed and that the appropriate documentation has been executed and submitted. Mr. Pilson moved that the Retail License for Balderdash Cellars be approved. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

Approval of Road Opening Permit for Dublin Road: The application is for Tighe and Bond to do the boring required to test for replacing the culvert. Borings will be done on January 2nd and January 3rd, which will necessitate partial road closures, which will leave one lane open. There will not be a need for detail officers, the Town will post signs alerting the residents. At the completion of this process, the hope is that the Town can put it out to bid to start work this summer. Mr. Pilson moved that the Board approve the application for street work on Scace Brook Road. Mr. Manzolini seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous vote.

Review Draft MOA re: Shared Services of Council on Aging Director with West Stockbridge: Mr. Manzolini asked whether West Stockbridge had already approved the Agreement. Ms. Fillio explained that both Boards of both towns are meeting this evening; Ms. Fillio had agreed to bring the agreement to the Richmond Board to see what comments they may have about it and Ms. Marie Ryan will present it to her Board in West Stockbridge. There was a discussion of exactly how the arrangement would work, which Ms. Fillio was able to clarify.

Mr. Pilson had some suggestions for rewording the agreement to provide greater clarity. Ms. Fillio noted that Town Counsel is also currently reviewing the document. Approval of the agreement was deferred until the Board has had the results of the West Stockbridge discussion, the changes noted above have been made, and the Town Counsel provides her advice.

Review and Approval of Berkshire County Sheriff's Control Emergency Services

Communication Agreement: Mr. Pilson has reviewed the agreement, which the Town has had for many years. Mr. Pilson asked how the \$12,728.63 fee was determined. Ms. Fillio explained that there has not previously been an official agreement like this – they usually just send the Town a letter indicating the fee owed based on the number of calls completed. There is always a percentage increase based on the number of calls and the operating budgets they have in County Dispatch. This document is a new required, formal agreement. Ms. Fillio is trying to confirm that the \$12,728.63 is the correct amount.

The Board can approve the agreement, pending confirmation that the amount is correct. The Board is being asked to sign an agreement for what has already been budgeted through June of 2020. Mr. Manzolini moved that the Agreement be approved, pending verification that the amount stated is the amount previously budgeted. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was passed by unanimous consent. Mr. Pilson asked how the fee was set. Ms. Fillio did not know the

exact process as she has not previously been involved in that aspect but will research what the process is and report back.

Letter of Resignation from Lisa Donfried, Library Trustee: Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board accept Ms. Donfried's resignation. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which passed with unanimous consent. Ms. Fillio then noted that the Town will let everyone know that there is an opening on the Library's Board of Trustees. Anyone who is interested in serving in that capacity should write a letter of intent to the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen who can appoint a temporary Trustee until the elections in May. Mr. Manzolini would like to have a recommendation from the Library so that there can be agreement on the appointee between the Board and the Trustees. If the Library Trustees agree on a recommendation for the interim term at their January 7th meeting, they could present that to the Selectmen at their January 8th meeting.

Mr. Hanson asked that a letter of thanks be written to Ms. Donfried for her service as a Library Trustee.

Mail/Sign Warrants: Warrants were duly signed as appropriate.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT – See Attached:

Building Committee Meeting: The meeting is scheduled for December 19th. The designers will be in attendance so that there can be a discussion on where the project is at this point.

Town Staff Holiday Luncheon: Will take place on Friday, December 12th at 12:00 Noon. The offices will be closed. There will also be a free Procurement refresher and an Open Meeting Law refresher course.

Holiday Hours at Town Hall: Town Hall will be closed at 12:00 Noon on Tuesday, December 24th and closed December 25th. It will also be closed on January 1st. Ms. Fillio reminded the Board that she will be on vacation on December 26th and 27th.

Christmas Tree: There is a Town Christmas Tree in front of the Town Hall, which has been decorated. If there is someone among the residents who asked about a Tree-Lighting Ceremony who would be willing to volunteer next year, Ms. Fillio would very much like to hear from them some weeks before the Holiday. Mr. Manzolini suggested that in October on the Annual Calendar, the Town should be solicited to see if anyone wants to contribute a 12 – 16-foot tree so that we can have a commitment by Thanksgiving. The Monday after Thanksgiving is when the tree should be installed with the help of volunteers. That should become an annual tradition.

Phone System: Ms. Fillio reported on the situation with the new phone system, which has not worked properly since the Town converted to it. Mr. Pilson asked if there have been complaints from Richmond residents about difficulty in reaching people at Town Hall. Ms. Fillio noted that there have been such complaints as well as notices from people unable to reach the

Department they need. Mr. Hanson asked if the old 698 numbers still work. He was advised that if you dial the old main number, 698-3882, it transfers you into the system to the COA direct line.

An apology for the phone issues and an explanation of the correct numbers will appear in next week's e-newsletter.

Snowstorm Issues with Casella Pick-Ups: Mr. Beckwith, Highway Superintendent, and Ms. Fillio met with Casella and arranged for them to send a small pick-up truck to those problem areas where the big trucks cannot fit. Casella will work with the Town around any future issues and has consulted with Mr. John Griffen, the Republic Services employee who remained with Casella and who is familiar with the area, to obtain a better idea of the problematic roads.

Ms. Fillio noted that we are currently operating with Casella under the Republic Services contract. However, there was an agreement between the Town and Casella that we would accept an increase in fees and extend the contract for another two years. Richmond also agreed to hold a Special Town Meeting in the Fall to raise the additional money (which did not happen). Ms. Fillio is working with Ms. Angela Garrity, Town Accountant, to see how much money is left in that account because the remainder of the extra monies can be dealt with at the Annual Town Meeting in May.

Mr. Manzolini asked Ms. Fillio how Mr. Paul Lisi, Jr. was doing. Ms. Fillio responded that she had no additional information on his situation other than that he is still on leave and, hopefully, will get better soon. Mr. Manzolini asked whether a "Plan B" was in place to get the taxes out on time in Mr. Lisi's continued absence. Ms. Lisi responded that part of the tax mailing has been printed, but the front side cannot be printed until all the information can be loaded into Softrite. The Assessors' Office has been working with Ms. Fillio to accomplish that, but Softrite is telling the Assessors that their information is not formatted correctly. The Assessors are saying that it is formatted exactly the same way as in the other towns they work in that also use Softrite. It is hoped that on Monday that disconnect will be corrected and they will be able to upload all the necessary information. Once that happens, Ms. Angela Garrity and Mr. Paul Lisi can talk to each other so that the forms can be printed.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that the Town send Mr. Lisi a get-well card. Mr. Hanson will get a card and have everybody sign it at the Town Holiday Party on Friday.

MEMA Grant to Upgrade the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan: The application has been approved and sent to MEMA. Ms. Fillio has completed the mandatory one-hour webinar, which explained how to move the process forward. She expanded on what the requirements are for the development of a Hazard Mitigation Committee. Once it is formed, that Committee meets to develop a Plan, which must be approved by the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen and then FEMA and then MEMA. It all has to be completed by June of 2021, which means that about 3-1/2 months prior to June of 2021 it must be completed and submitted to FEMA for

approval. Ms. Fillio explained how the grant and the 30% match would work and how expenses would be reimbursed by the grant.

Sewer Matters: As Mr. Tom Grizey was not present at the meeting, it was assumed that there were no matters to bring before the Board.

Selectmen's Matters: Mr. Alan Hanson reminded the Board of a disaster certification requirement he recalled that never seemed to go anywhere. Ms. Fillio clarified that some employees are required to be certified at certain levels in emergency situations. She anticipates the issue being revisited. Mr. Manzolini also had thought about compliance with other similar processes. He asked if there were webinars, etc. that should be completed. Ms. Fillio noted that the Ethics test is viable for two years – Ms. Angela Garrity, Town Clerk, is sending out notices to employees who are due to repeat the exam this year.

Mr. Neal Pilson requested that the Town be prepared to address the roads issue. He reminded the Board that there is a Roads Advisory Committee that should be preparing for the March and April thaw that will create problems with the condition of some of the Town's roads. He expressed his concern that there will likely be an earlier spring than usual and, given global warming, it may be that this year the roads will be even worse than last year. The Roads Advisory Committee should meet to discuss the various options Mr. Beckwith, the Highway Superintendent, will have to deal with the situation. There is a Roads Committee that used to meet annually, which was comprised of the heads of each department, the Chair of the Selectboard, and the Town Administrator. Mr. Manzolini advised that a meeting of the Roads Advisory Committee be placed on the Town's Annual Calendar sometime in February, right after Budget season.

Mr. Pilson mentioned information received from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission about technical assistance that they will provide at no charge to various towns. He wondered if there was anything in that information that identified something that Richmond should be taking advantage of. Ms. Fillio will speak to Ms. Laura Brennan, Richmond's Marketing Director, and a Senior Planner at BRPC, who will be able to advise which of the projects included in the program Richmond could get approval for.

Mr. Manzolini thanked Ms. Fillio for providing him with the article about the School Superintendent and the issue there. On Friday, it would be nice to invite Mr. Mike Lamke, a previous employee of the Highway Department for most of this year. That would provide an excellent opportunity to formally recognize him and thank him for his many years of service. Mr. Manzolini also suggested that the same invitation be sent to Mr. Rick Latimer.

Mr. Manzolini asked whether there has been an opportunity to find information on "green cemeteries." He said the Town owes an answer to Ms. Eileen Martin, who raised the issue and asked whether Richmond would be willing to have green burials. Mr. Pilson recalled having a file on the subject, which he will find. Research needs to be done to fully understand what is

involved and what the State regulations concerning green burials are and then give Ms. Martin an answer. He asked that this be done by Spring.

Review and Approval of Personnel Policy: Ms. Fillio had incorporated all the Selectmen's comments into the version distributed at this meeting and provided comments from Ms. Beth Goodman, Town Attorney. The Board reviewed the changes and comments with Ms. Fillio.

Mr. Pilson voiced a concern with some language on Page 9 dealing with the Termination Process. Ms. Fillio will check with Ms. Beth Goodman for clarification of the intent of the paragraph as written and ask for clarifying text.

Under Bereavement on Page 12 the wording has changed from the current policy and is consistent with a more humane policy.

Mr. Manzolini asked that a final version that would include all approved changes be provided for further review and approval at the next meeting.

Changes to Work Schedules on Page 7 were discussed. There were no comments.

Next Meeting Dates: January 8th and January 22nd. Mr. Pilson will not be at the January 8th meeting, but will call in. He will be in attendance on January 22nd. There was no further conflict for those dates.

There being no further business to bring before the Board, Mr. Pilson moved that the meeting be adjourned. He was seconded by Mr. Manzolini and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM

Signed:

Mr. Roger Manzolini, Chair