

## **BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING**

**Wednesday December 4, 2019 – 6:00 PM – Richmond Town Hall, 1529 State Rd.**

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

**ABSENT:**

**GUESTS:** Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent, Mr. Tom Grizey, Wiring Inspector;

Mr. Manzolini called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

**EDM – Presentation of Cost Estimates on Existing Town Hall Renovation:** Mr. Manzolini introduced the representatives of EDM to outline the costs involved in bringing Town Hall up to code. EDM reported on their inspection of Town Hall with an eye toward making it workable for the Town for the next 20 years. They brought in several engineers to do a site evaluation, starting with a survey by Foresight Engineering of the site. The next step was to meet with Ms. Fillio and others to discuss what the needs of the Town were. That information was reflected in some floor plans and a site plan and then submitted to professional cost estimators to arrive at a number for the entire project. The goal for this meeting is to walk the Board through what is happening on the site and what the layout inside the building would look like.

Mr. Manzolini explained that the reason EDM was engaged to do this survey was to determine if it would be in the Town's best interest to build a new Library/Community Center and renovate the existing Town Hall or to incorporate a Town Hall into the new building. Once the cost of renovating the existing Town Hall becomes available, that decision will have some concrete basis.

One of the things that was looked at was trying to put a septic system on the site to replace the tanks currently buried under the driveway, which creates an issue with cars driving over the site. Mr. Alan Hanson asked whether the proposed septic system would involve a taking – he was assured that it can be installed within the current limits of the property.

Another challenge for the site is accessibility. The current handicapped ramp is not at the proper slope. A proposal was made for a van-accessible spot in front of the building and a re-grading of the front entrance, which will provide a flush entry into the vestibule and the addition of an elevator. The existing exterior ramp will be rebuilt to provide better accessibility.

Paving the entire site and providing parking spaces will also be done. There were questions from the floor about driving over the new septic system as Church Road comes down alongside of it. There was a discussion of parking spaces, etc. Mr. Pilson suggested that EDM be allowed to complete their presentation and leave questions to the end.

The interior of the building: Starting on the lower floor – all the interior walls and the finishes on the exterior walls would be removed, which will allow for waterproofing of the exterior walls and reworking of the floor plan of the lower level.

The existing mechanical systems: The electrical system would need to be entirely removed and the mechanical system should be replaced to provide long-term viability. One downstairs bathroom will be removed, and a single-user male or female bathroom will be retained. On the upper floor, the raised portion will be removed to create an elevator entry vestibule.

A question was raised from the floor about the existing access to the attic. EDM said that it will be retained, and an access hatch will be added above the stairway.

On the lower level at the bottom of the stairs there will be a small vestibule. On the right side will be the Police Chief's office, straight ahead will be an open office area with four work-stations. There is a meeting space planned with storage around the exterior walls. The existing mechanical room will be retained and the area where the restroom was removed will be turned into the electrical closet.

The elevator issue is off to the side and access into the building will be created through the existing vault and the exterior wall. The existing upper landing will be removed to provide access to the elevator from that entry level. From the lower level, there is a small stop up in the elevator to the main office area. There will be two public rest rooms and the Administrator's office will be right up front so that she can greet people coming in looking for someone to talk to.

In the back area a meeting room is planned with seating for just over 50 people. The existing flooring will be saved and the floor underneath the stage area will be rebuilt.

Discussion of the cost of the above proposed renovations: The total amount will come to about \$3,000,000. Including all fees, rental of temporary facilities during construction, etc. There is a more specific breakdown of where the total number came from in a spreadsheet.

A reporter from the Berkshire Eagle asked that EDM expand on the location of the temporary facility during construction. EDM responded that there was no specific location in mind at this time and the amount allocated to that rental is just an educated guess as to what it will amount to.

Mr. Pilson asked if there were issues of mold and asbestos within the building. There are issues of asbestos on the lower level which is minimal and will cost about \$5,000 to remove, replace and repair. The mold air test had not been performed.

There was a discussion of the roads around the property generated by Mr. Alan Hanson, Mr. Manzolini and Mr. Dick Stover, which resulted in Mr. Stover's offering to compare the land survey for the Town with the survey of the Church's property, which was done a few years ago.

Mr. Pilson was concerned that the septic system would be within ten or twenty feet of the property line just below which is a private home. He wondered if there would be sufficient setback from the building to conform to regulations.

Nancy McConnell of Lenox Road asked how many parking spaces will be included in the plan. The response was that there would be one parking space lost from the existing spaces. EDM did not have the total number available. There is a minimum number of parking spaces required for any public building. That information was not available at the time of the meeting, but EDM will obtain that number.

Mr. Manzolini noted that the purpose of this inspection was to obtain a preliminary concept in a credible order of magnitude estimate, which was obtained from the professional estimating organization that EDM used to provide a number based on the concept presented at this meeting. He noted that, given the estimate of the overall cost about \$2.8 million or more, it would seem reasonable to determine what the cost would be to include the town hall into the library/community center. The increase in the cost of the proposed new building to add the Town Hall space might be the same or less than the cost of renovating the existing Town Hall, which would make that a logical way to proceed.

Nancy McGonigal asked that she be reminded what the vote was concerning an established road around the Town Hall and Church. Mr. Manzolini noted that he was unaware of any such vote, but on any map the only road that is shown is the one that comes up the side of the Town Hall. However, in practice, the only road that is in use happens to be the one which is the church's driveway and the Town is holding discussions with the church about making improvements to that road and taking some responsibility for it, making it officially a Town road. There was continued discussion which Mr. Pilson responded to by pointing out that that issue does not need to be resolved at this meeting and that The Town continues to have discussions about that issue with the church. He reminded the group that the report submitted at this meeting produced the base cost analysis that will be helpful to enable the Board and the Municipal Building Committee and, ultimately, the Town to decide on a future course of action. That was the one step in the process being addressed at this meeting.

It was pointed out that, given that there will not be additional bathrooms created in the building, the existing tight tank septic system could remain as it is.

Mr. Tom Grizey asked about the initial estimate for the renovation, which Mr. Pilson noted was in the area of \$2.1 million, but did not include the additional cost that would be incurred to relocate the work of the Town Hall to another space during the construction. Their final report is now at \$2.8 million. Mr. Grizey was referring to the cost of the Library/ Town Hall proposed 17 years ago that was voted down, and which was less than the cost estimate given tonight to just renovate Town Hall. Mr. Stover reminded Mr. Grizey that 17 years has gone by since that estimate was given and there is no question in anyone's mind that costs have risen substantially since then and the Town has not yet obtained an estimate of the cost of the new building, with or without the addition of the Town Hall offices. Mr. Pilson pointed out that there is no comparison between the old estimate 17 years ago to produce a new building and the estimate of the cost today to renovate the existing Town Hall building.

Mr. Manzolini thanked EDM for their presentation and noted that the information will be taken under advisement by the Board.

**Board of Assessors – Tax Classification Hearing:** Mr. Jeff Reynolds of the Board of Assessors presented a Tax Classification Assessment to the Board. The complete report is attached here.

Mr. Reynolds' recommendation to the Board was that it adopt a single tax rate to be assigned to all classes of property in Richmond. In FY19 the tax rate was \$12.06, the new tax rate for FY20 is likely to be \$12.40, pending final approval.

Mr. Manzolini had some questions for Mr. Reynolds concerning commercial properties. Mr. Reynolds was able to advise Mr. Manzolini that the change in taxation of commercial properties from last year to this year was minimal and that the Department of Revenue determined that Balderdash Cellars was to be classified as an industrial property, which increased the number of industrial properties in Richmond from three to four.

Mr. Bob Gniadek of the Finance Committee asked what was included in the personal property classification. Mr. Reynolds noted that the personal property classification included a number of sub-categories: Second Home Personal Property, Business Machinery such as wireless and utility companies, etc.

Mr. Gniadek also asked about the median value of properties in Richmond, which Mr. Reynolds will forward to him.

Mr. Manzolini moved that the Town set the Residential Factor at 1.0, with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0, pending approval of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous roll-call vote: Mr. Alan Hanson, aye, Mr. Manzolini, aye, Mr. Pilson, aye.

Mr. Pilson expressed his gratitude to Mr. Reynolds and the other members of the Board of Assessors for the excellent work they do to keep the Town afloat.

**Driveway Permit for 71 Cheever Road:** There was a discussion of the location of the property and the reason for the request for the driveway, which was to provide access to his backyard. Mr. Peter Beckwith, Highway Superintendent for Richmond, noted that he had looked at the site and approved it for a driveway. Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board approve the request. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

**Highway Superintendent – Updates and Discussion:** Mr. Beckwith reported on the status of the Town Barn project: The old structure has been brought down and Richmond is next in line for the builders to install the new building.

The Highway Department repairs at the Highway Garage were completed earlier in the afternoon of the date of the meeting.

The project was within the \$18,000 budget. There was some initial concern with a couple of unknown rotten beams inside a walls. After speaking with the engineer and the Building Inspector, they were able to make repairs without major increase in costs or jeopardizing the safety of the structure. All the deteriorated block and broken block has been repaired or replaced. The next project at the Shop, will

consist of some form of waterproofing, which can be done in stages, exterior and interior, to keep the block from deteriorating further. That can all be done in stages.

Mr. Manzolini asked for the cost of the work cited. It was budgeted for \$18,000.00 and the contract that was signed was for \$17,075.00, which was within budget. The company suggested some additional things that could be done, such as repairing the doorways that have settled. If the decision is made to include those upgrades, the cost will still fit within the Town Building Maintenance Budget.

Dublin Road in Richmond – Mr. Beckwith asked the Board for clarification of their opinion concerning the plowing of that road. Currently the Highway Department plows up to Rte. 20 and has been doing that for many years. Mr. Manzolini noted that although Richmond has been plowing the Hancock road for many years, there has never been any compensation to the Town for that service. He asked if Mr. Beckwith has had any discussion with Hancock about reimbursing Richmond at least for the materials being used. Mr. Beckwith has not approached Hancock, wishing to learn the Select board's opinion.

There was a discussion of the anticipated cost, which resulted in the decision to pursue an agreement with Hancock to reimburse the cost of plowing that road, if the cost per year were to be close to \$4,000.00 or \$5,000.00 or so. If the correct amount is \$1,000.00 or less, Mr. Manzolini thought it unnecessary to bother with such a small amount.

Mr. Beckwith proposed that he take the cost for this year as a case study, keeping track of each time they plow that road. At the same time, he would start a conversation with Hancock and advise them that in the Spring a realistic cost would be available. Mr. Manzolini said that the Board is authorizing Mr. Beckwith to engage in that discussion with the Town of Hancock.

**The cemetery:** Mr. Manzolini said the Board wished to determine a reasonable way to proceed with winter burials and the attendant need for plowing. Mr. Beckwith noted that the Town has three active cemeteries, so if one is plowed regularly, all three should be. There is only a proper road in one; the other two have a grassy road after the gate. He would not know where to go with the plow. Those two cemeteries are old, there is a lot of things that can go wrong taking a plow into those areas. In speaking to the Cemetery Director, Mr. Beckwith was advised that any plow damage that occurs, he will not repair, so the Highway Department staff will have to do that, as well. There is the issue of where the snow would be placed that is plowed out of the lot. Space is extremely limited and requires the plow to take very sharp turns which could result in damage to headstones.

Mr. Manzolini asked if nothing was done all winter, when a grave would have to be opened in late March, what would have to be done at that time. Mr. Beckwith said he could remove the surface of the snow, which would likely leave the layers of ice that will have accumulated underneath. Mr. Beckwith promised that should the occasion arise; he would do his very best to create a path to the correct plot so a gravedigger could open the grave. Mr. Hanson noted that it seemed reasonable to him that the only time any plowing would be done in the cemetery would be when it was necessary. Mr. Manzolini thought the discussion should be left there. Mr. Pilson asked whether it would be doable to clear the existing parking lot and the one paved road. Mr. Manzolini suggested that Mr. Beckwith do nothing about plowing the cemeteries until the necessity arises, at which time the Board will discuss the issue with Mr. Beckwith again.

Mr. Beckwith reported on his discussion with Ms. Fillio about repaving of the roads and parking lots around the church and Town Hall. Their consensus was that no action should be taken until it became clear what the plan will be for the Town Hall. Mr. Pilson noted that it would be several years before anything will happen – either adding the Town Hall to the new building or renovating the existing Town Hall and the problem is not going to go away during that time. He suggested that the issue be deferred until it comes up again. Ms. Fillio suggested that before the Town accepts responsibility for any road, it would be wise to invest in a survey and ownership. The Board agreed with that suggestion.

Mr. Beckwith reported on his finding of a company that does mapping and budget assisting with a sophisticated computer program. They can map out every manhole, where every street sign is, etc. He has been offered a proposal by them to do some of the Town's roads to see if we find it useful. If it proves to be useful for budgeting maintenance purposes, in the future we may want to try mapping the use of gravel roads. Mr. Manzolini asked if there was a grant available to pay for that service. Mr. Beckwith responded that it would be paid out of State aid, which does not require the Town to match any funds.

Mr. Pilson asked if this was a one-time only expense. Mr. Beckwith said they had offered him several different options. In talking with Ms. Fillio, they decided that a lump-sum payment out of State aid was the best idea as it would not cost the Town anything and would provide the same benefit. Mr. Manzolini asked if that would impact the amount of Chapter 90 funds the Town would receive for road improvements. Mr. Beckwith said that only \$8,000.00 would be affected and the next allotment would be forthcoming shortly. This year, he pointed out, the Town had an extra \$33,000.00 allotment granted to it.

Mr. Hanson asked exactly what the mapping would include. It is hoped that the program will be included on our GIS, which the Town already has with the Assessors' Office. Ultimately, the mapping would include road boundaries and property boundaries all on one GIS mapping system. It could be posted on the Town's website so that residents could see what shape the roads are in, what the future projects are and their costs.

Mr. Manzolini and Mr. Pilson both saw no objection to going ahead with this project, which would initially only map the Town's paved roads.

**Open Highway Staff position.** Mr. Mike Lamke is retiring on Monday next week, creating an open position in the Highway Dept. Mr. Beckwith asked the Board to review the ad and job description he and Ms. Fillio worked together to produce. Mr. Pilson advised them to move forward to fill that open position. There was no objection from the remainder of the Board members.

Mr. Pilson reported that the Road Committee had discussed some anticipated problems in the spring as climate change is creating a thaw-freeze situation. Once the gravel roads unfreeze, there will be many complaints. He has already had a request to pave Osceola, so he thought the Road Committee should be reinvigorated. He urged Mr. Beckwith to be out ahead of the inevitable requests and complaints.

Mr. Hanson asked Mr. Beckwith how comfortable he was with the condition of the roads at this time and the repairs that were done on the mud holes. Mr. Beckwith replied that there were only two potholes that popped up on Osceola Road, both in the same area. East Road is in better condition than it was, but he is trying to improve it further. He switched to different types of gravel from a darker base to a lighter base, hoping that they would not thaw out as quickly in mud season.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that the Town do something to recognize Mike Lamke's many years of service. There was a discussion of possible ways to do that. Ms. Fillio was asked to work on deciding what to do.

Mr. Pilson asked if Mr. Beckwith had seen the note complaining about a truck dumping something on someone's driveway. Mr. Beckwith explained exactly how he handled the situation both times, but a second complaint was issued after the recent snowstorm, saying that he had not gone far enough with the plow when he was in the exact same spot as the last time and had put the same amount of material in exactly the same spot. It seems clear that no matter what Mr. Beckwith does, it will never be enough or the right thing. The Board suggested that Mr. Beckwith just continue to do the best he can.

Mr. Manzolini thanked Mr. Beckwith for his update.

**Approve Richmond Pond Special Use Permits for Canyon Ranch, etc.:** Mr. Manzolini moved that the Canyon Ranch Special Use Permit be approved. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Manzolini moved to approve the Bass Association one-day event on August 29, 2020 conditional on changing the arrival time from 5:30 to 6:00 AM. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

Mr. Manzolini moved that the Special Use Permit for the Kayak Club be approved. Mr. Hanson seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. Pilson suggested that, for future reference, applications for the Richmond Pond be handled by the Town Administrator. Ms. Fillio can grant those approvals if the Board will delegate that responsibility to her. Mr. Manzolini moved that the Board authorize Ms. Fillio to handle all future Special Permits for Richmond Pond. Mr. Pilson seconded the motion, which was adopted by unanimous consent.

**Report on Advisory Committee to Work with the School Committee:** Mr. Pilson serves on the Advisory Committee, along with Mr. Robert Gniadek, teachers, parents, etc. The Town has been advised by Berkshire Hills School District that the agreement to share the School Superintendent with Richmond has worked well as far as Richmond is concerned, but they feel that the Superintendent is spending too much time dealing with New Ashford and Hancock. If we are to go forward with Berkshire Hills with a shared Superintendent, they have advised us that they do not want to continue providing that Superintendent for those two towns. This will require discussions with Berkshire Hills and the Shaker Mountain School Union, which includes Richmond, New Ashford and Hancock. It could lead to a restructuring of our arrangement with Berkshire Hills and a possible increase in Richmond's costs. There are many facets to that potential restructuring that could be cause for serious concern to the Town of Richmond.

**Mail/Sign Warrants:** Warrants were duly signed.

**Sewer Matters:** Mr. Tom Grizey reported that the pumping of extra water continues, and he has not been able to identify the source. He noted that the biggest problem is likely the right-of-way up to the Boys' Club. The Highway crew has fixed the problem in the past and Mr. Manzolini suggested they be asked to do so again.

**Town Administrator Report – See Attached:**

**Municipal Building Committee** There was a discussion of how the project will move forward. Mr. Pilson felt the Board's only required action at this time would be to recommend that the Building Committee go ahead with securing estimates of the cost of including Town Hall. Mr. Manzolini said things should move forward as if the final plan will be to create a combined Town Hall/Library/Community Space.

**Fire Dept.** Engine 2 is still being repaired; the tank is on order and the insurance company will pay the \$13,000.00 cost.

**Personnel Policy:** Ms. Fillio hopes to have it in place by the first of the year.

**Holiday Luncheon for Town employees** on December 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 Noon. And at that time, she would also like to have an Open Meeting Law Refresher.

**Tree Lighting Ceremony:** There was a discussion of what help could be obtained to install and decorate the tree. Mr. Manzolini will take on the project to obtain an appropriate tree and Mr. Grizey will try to get a company with the appropriate equipment to transport the tree to the corner of the Town Hall Office building and install it. Decorating the tree is an issue that can wait until after the tree is installed. Mr. Manzolini noted that the Town could seek donations from residents to increase the amount that could be spent.

**Acknowledgement of Mr. Mike Lamke's 42 Years of Service on his retirement and Thanks to the Highway Dept. for their excellent work with removing the Snow from the last storm.** There was a discussion of what would be appropriate: Ms. Fillio will pursue the issue. Mr. Pilson said that at the very least a letter signed by the selectmen should be sent.

**Discussion of Trash Pick-up Issues:** Ms. Fillio and Mr. Peter Beckwith spoke with Casella who asked that the Town ensure that more salt and sand is used before they are scheduled to make pick-ups. Mr. Beckwith agreed to do that.

**Combined Richmond and West Stockbridge Councils on Aging:** Ms. Fillio reported on her meeting with Ms. Phyllis LeBeau, Director of the Richmond COA; Ms. Marie Ryan, Town Administrator for West Stockbridge and Mr. John Zick, Director of the COA in West Stockbridge to review a potential Memorandum of Understanding regarding the shared services for both Councils on Aging. She noted that the group arrived at a full agreement, which Ms. Fillio will incorporate in a draft MOU for review by the Richmond Board of Selectmen and Ms. Ryan at the next meeting. West Stockbridge's Board of Selectmen is meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Selectmen's Matters:** Mr. Neal Pilson raised the issue of abandoned homes in Town; one at 4 East Road and another at the entry to Colonial Acres. They are unsightly, with garbage and used cars on the property. He asked for clarification of the Town's procedures in such a case. Mr. Manzolini and Mr. Hanson both advised Mr. Pilson that it could be a Board of Health issue and Ms. Fillio suggested that if the house is truly abandoned, it could become a Building Enforcement issue. Mr. Pilson noted that the bank continues to pay taxes on the house on East Road.

Mr. Manzolini suggested that the Board of Health be apprised of the situation. Ms. Fillio noted that there is not much the Town can do if the taxes are being paid and there is no other problem than that it looks ugly. Mr. Pilson will put together more information and asked that some photographs be taken for Ms. Fillio so



that she can determine what action might be taken. A decision was made to have Ms. Fillio consult with Attorney Beth Goodman on the matter.

**Next Meeting Date: December 18, 2019, January 8, 2019 and January 22, 2019:** Mr. Pilson will be away on January 8<sup>th</sup> but will join the meeting by Phone. All other dates were workable for the three selectmen and Ms. Fillio.

**Approval of the Minutes of the November 6, 2019 meeting of the Board of Selectmen:** Mr. Pilson moved that the minutes of the November 6, 2019 meeting of the Board of Selectmen be approved as read. He was seconded by Mr. Manzolini and the motion was carried by unanimous consent.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM

Signed:

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Mr. Roger Manzolini

Chair

