

Board of Selectmen
Minutes

Date: November 13, 2019

Members Present: Janet Flinkstrom, Mike McCallum and Scott Sweeney

Time: 7:06 p.m.

2) Selectmen approve minutes of October 30, 2019 as recorded.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

3) Selectmen approve and sign on Payroll Warrant #20-10P in the amount of \$73,694.82, subject to further review.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

4) Selectmen approve and sign on Vendor Warrant #20-10 in the amount of \$1,017,091.31, subject to further review.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

5) Request for Selectmen's appointment of David Nadeau as Zoning Board of Appeals, Associate Member (requested by Alan Pease ZBA Chair).

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

Any Other Business Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chairman: There is a Conservation Restriction that the Town is not part of but, the Selectmen do have to sign off on it as part of the process for getting it through the State bureaucracy. This is 34 acres of land that abuts Willard Brook State Park land. Landowner (Ewalds) is donating the CR to the Land Trust, CR protects it from development & the taxes will not change that much since it is already in Chapter. MM explained the reason for this not being on the agenda being due to the surprise of the State getting it done in a week, instead of taking two months and the State must have this back by 12/1/19. SS suggested that another meeting be scheduled to discuss so there is time to put it on an agenda. Harald Scheid, Regional Assessor confirmed if the land is already in Chapter 61A Forest Management then there will be no change in the taxes. Town will not own the land and there is no money involved. After discussion it was decided it would be in the best interest of getting this completed in time to sign it tonight. Resident inquired as to the benefit to the Town and also would access be allowed to the public? Access is given if written request is made to private landowner; that is how it is now and that will be the case still. It will contribute to Open Space in Ashby. Landowner will still own the land just the development rights are being deeded to the Land Trust.

6) Selectmen approve and sign the Conservation Restriction brought to the Board by Alan Ewald.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

Selectmen Open the Tax Classification Hearing:

Harald Scheid and Josh Gendron from RRG present. Handouts presented to the BOS and explanation of figures was discussed. Harald said in 26 years of his doing Classification Hearings for Ashby it does not make since to have different rates for Residential Property Taxes vs. Commercial/Industrial Property Taxes (that includes

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Personal Property Taxes) which only make up 6 to 7% of Ashby's tax base. Harald said we would have to raise CIP (Commercial, Industrial, Property Tax Rate) by 15% to cause a 1% reduction in the Residential Tax Rate. Residents could see a decrease on average of \$400 to \$500 in next year's annual tax bills but, HS cautioned about averages as it depends on the Market Value of your house. They are seeing a trend in smaller ranch houses being valued more because many people are retiring and downsizing so they are selling their larger homes. Smaller homes are in high demand. SS found an error in RRG's report. HS acknowledged that it was an error. Resident asked how the tax rate could go down. Harold Scheid and MM explained this. Resident wants to see 10% increases in commercial rate. HS explained we are capped at shifting the tax burden by no more than a factor of 1.5. Cannot increase a Commercial Property owner's taxes by more than 50%. Gave examples. SS asked about the 128 tax exempt properties in Town of Ashby. HS said they are mostly State-owned properties. Tax rate for 2020 will be \$18.33 per thousand.

7) Selectmen vote in accordance with M.G.L. Ch. 40 Sec. 56 as amended, the percentage of local tax levy which shall be borne by each class of real and personal property relative to setting the fiscal year 2020 tax rate and sets the Residential factor at 1.0 with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0 pending the approval of the Town's Annual Tax Recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

8) Selectmen authorize either Josh Gendron or Harald Scheid to sign the DOR Gateway LA5 on their behalf.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

9) Selectmen close Tax Classification Hearing at 8:11 p.m.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

Assistant Town Administrator's Report: Read by SS and available on the Town Website.

Public Comments (if any): Question asked for update on dumping situation on Log Cabin Rd. Residents are very upset and concerned as trucks are still going up the road, not as many, and dumping. A Cease and Desist has been issued. The Town regulates Zoning. A zoning infraction is a civil penalty not a criminal penalty. The Town had DEP, Nashoba Board of Health, ConCom and Fire Dept. all go up there & nothing could be cited. MM suggested residents contact Sen. Gobi or Rep. Harrington to put pressure on DEP to get something done. Resident asked if the Selectmen approve the hiring of Public Safety Building Architect. SS suggested the Public Safety Building Committee come to a BOS meeting to discuss. Much discussion was done on possible ways to get the Police Station built for a lot less money. Tom Dorward, Keeper of the Town Clock let the Board know he would be leaving Town soon. He says Bill Arnold would like to continue tending and winding the clock & Tom puts forward Bill's name to be appointed as Keeper of the Town Clock when he leaves end of December.

Town Sign Update: Sign will be centered in the middle, 11 feet from the sidewalk and flag pole in the Spring.

10) Motion to adjourn at 9:18 p.m.

Motion: Mike McCallum Seconded: Scott Sweeney Vote: Unan

Signed by: _____

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Dates Minutes Approved by Board of Selectmen: _____