

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FEBRUARY 3, 2016**

Present: First Selectman Melissa M. Mack, Timothy Reynolds, Joanne Sullivan and Krystal Holmes

Absent: Melvin Chafetz.

Also in attendance: Director of Economic Development Patrick McMahon and Assessor Helen Totz

Approval of the Minutes from the January 13, 2016 Tri-Board Special Meeting

Selectman Holmes requested that the Tri-Board Special Meeting minutes be amended to reflect that Selectman Sullivan was not in attendance and to add Board of Education Chair Jeanne Gee and Superintendent Karen Berasi as in attendance. Selectman Holmes also requested that a note be included in the minutes to reference the conversation surrounding bond issuance timing that occurred at the Tri-Board Special Meeting.

Selectman Reynolds made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2016 Tri-Board Special Meeting of the Board of Selectmen as amended by Selectman Holmes. Vote 3 in favor. Selectman Sullivan abstained.

Approval of the Minutes from the January 20, 2016 Regular Meeting

Selectman Holmes made the motion to approve the minutes from the January 20, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Vote 3 in favor. Selectman Reynolds abstained.

Public Comment

None

Presentation by Technology Committee

Selectman Mack began by thanking Michael Stevens for spearheading the review and reinstatement of the Technology Committee. The mission is to present a unified and strategic approach to improving technology for the Town of Suffield and the Suffield Public Schools. Selectman Mack thanked those who have volunteered their time to work on this committee. She is pleased by the qualifications of the proposed members and feels that the Town will be well-served by this group. A brief overview of the selected committee members was presented by Mr. Stevens, as well as the vision for the Committee. He feels that there is a good mix of IT experience represented and that there are numerous opportunities available for the committee to act upon in the upcoming

year. The Technology Committee Calendar was also presented and reflects 10 meetings per year.

Selectman Reynolds asked that those who serve on this committee be mindful and use common sense and professionalism when using any type of social media outlet as they are bound by the Town's code of ethics.

Approval of bylaws and members and ratify calendar of Technology Committee

Selectman Reynolds made the motion to approve the Technology Committee bylaws subject to revision and approval of the Town Attorney and the members presented by Mr. Stevens. Selectman Mack noted that the Freedom of Information Act requires that minutes must be posted within 1 week of the meetings.

Approval of the submission of Recycling Rewards Application

Economic Development Director Patrick McMahon made the presentation. The Recycling Reward Application deadline for this year was February 1st. The Town submitted an application to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's Recycling Incentive Grant program to pursue community efforts at increasing recycling. Mr. McMahon is seeking Board of Selectmen approval of the submission of the application for the grant and to expend such funds should the grant be awarded.

Mr. McMahon explained how the grant is awarded. We answered questions and will be assigned points. If we obtain a threshold amount of points, the minimum award is \$4,000 up to a maximum of \$14,000. If the Town is awarded a grant then it must be applied toward an approved activity from a list provided by DEEP.

Selectman Mack discussed that she is encouraging residents to increase their recycling efforts as the Town's contract with USA Hauling, the company that hauls Suffield's garbage, no longer credits Suffield for recyclables. USA Hauling is giving the Town 20 additional recycling receptacles to place around town to promote recycling and to support the Suffield High School Safe Grad Party, a Suffield public school event. Selectman Mack mentioned that some of the grant funding could be used toward educating the Town on composting, another effort to reduce the Town's annual garbage tonnage.

Selectmen Reynolds made a motion to approve of the submission of the Recycling Reward application and the expenditure of the grant should one be offered. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Approval of lease for swing space at 230C Mountain Road

Selectman Mack presented a brief overview of the lease for swing space at 230C Mountain Road. The town was able to obtain the additional 892 square feet of space at

a discounted per sq. foot price of \$9.64. 400 square feet of basement space has been modified (at no additional charge) to house the IT Department and space on the second floor of the building has been reconfigured (at no additional cost) to house the Human Resources Department. It was noted by Selectman Mack that rent for the swing space is coming from the Town Hall renovation project funds.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to approve lease terms as discussed. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Discussion and approval of Tax Ordinance to abate up to 50% of the property taxes of (1) dairy farm, (2) fruit orchard, (3) vegetable farm, (4) nursery farm, (5) any farm which employs nontraditional farming methods, including, but not limited to, hydroponic farming, (6) tobacco farms, and recommend to Board of Finance

Selectman Mack introduced the topic by stating that the Connecticut General Statutes provide for three optional tax ordinances that municipalities may adopt to provide additional tax benefits to qualifying farms. Suffield adopted Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 12-81m, one of the optional ordinances, in 1992 but it only applies to dairy farms. As a result of a new economic development opportunity involving a hydroponic tomato farm, the Town is exploring expanding Conn. Gen. Stat. Sec. 12-81m to cover all of the types of farms mentioned in the statute. Assessor Helen Totz presented on the topic, including the ultimate increase in real and personal property taxes to the Town once the new commercial project is fully phased in and the impact on Suffield's current tax base as the project is phased in over the next several years.

Selectman Mack stressed that it is a great opportunity for Suffield to increase its commercial tax base and support Suffield's agricultural industry. Based on Four Season Farm's current plans, once it is fully built, the farm will be the largest greenhouse operation in New England. By adopting a certain tax structure via ordinance, in addition to our well-established zoning regulations applicable to greenhouses, we can provide structure and certainty to the process of doing business with Suffield in this growing industry. The expansion of the ordinance would provide a benefit to existing farmers and incentive for farmers to sell their development rights to the Town under the farmland preservation initiative because it enhances the marketability of preserved farmland going forward.

After in-depth discussion, the Selectmen agreed to continue the discussion at the next meeting and analyze the impact on the current tax base if the abatement is phased in up to 50% over time.

Selectman Sullivan made a motion to table the vote on this issue. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Approve appointment of Steven Sorrow to Connecticut River Assembly for a three-year term commencing on April 1, 2016 until March 31, 2019

Selectman Mack described the Connecticut River Assembly and that the appointment requires a referral to Town Meeting under the Connecticut General Statutes.

Selectman Sullivan made a motion to approve the appointment of Steven Sorrow to the Connecticut River Assembly for a three-year term commencing on April 1, 2016 until March 31, 2019 and to refer it to a Town Meeting. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Selectman Updates

Commission Updates - None

Authorize the granting of a standard utility (gas) easement to Eversource Energy for Ff Tyler Place and send to Town Meeting

Attorney Flynn presented information regarding the easement. Currently Lauren Enterprises and the Town of Suffield have a cross easement in which 20 feet is owned by the Town of Suffield and 20 feet is owned by Lauren. In an effort to extend the utility service, Eversource requires the use of all 40 feet of the area. Attorney Flynn explained why this decision requires a motion to send to Town Meeting.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to authorize the extension of a standard utility (gas) easement to Eversource Energy for Ff Tyler Place and send to Town Meeting. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Motion to refer to Town Meeting the approval of the expenditure of \$500,000 for vestibule improvements in all four of the Suffield public schools with a 52% (sic) reimbursement from the Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection School Security Grant

Selectmen Reynolds made a motion to refer to Town Meeting the approval of the expenditure with an amendment to correct a typographical error on the meeting agenda from 52% to 50.2% reimbursement. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Motion to refer to Town Meeting the approval of the submission of a Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Grant in the amount of \$2 million for the relocation of the highway garage.

Selectman Holmes made a motion to send to Town Meeting the approval of the submission of a Responsible Growth and Transit-Oriented Development Grant in the amount of \$2 million for the relocation of the highway garage. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Call a Town Meeting for Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at Suffield Middle School at 7:00 p.m.

Selectman Holmes made a motion to call the Town Meeting “as Presented” with the new scheduled date of Tuesday, February 16, 2016. Vote 4-0 in favor.

Executive Session regarding Huntley Retirement Agreement

Selectman Holmes made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Huntley Retirement Agreement at 8:05 p.m.

At 8:15 p.m. Executive Session ended.

Public Comment

Priscilla Sutula of 1727 Hill Street commented on the tax ordinance for the hydroponic tomato venture by stating that in her opinion it appeared to be more of a “business” than a farm and she has concerns.

Selectman Reynolds moved to adjourn and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

The next regular Board of Selectmen Meeting will be Wednesday, February 17, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary