

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
APRIL 6, 2016**

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

Also in attendance: School Business Manager Bill Hoff, Tax Collector Jill Schechtman and Assessor Helen Totz

First Selectman Mack opened the meeting at 7:02 pm. with a greeting to the group. Selectmen Chafetz inquired as to what would be the proper process for adding an item to the existing agenda. A brief explanation was provided and Selectmen Chafetz made a motion to add Cami Beiter to the agenda for appointment to the Historic District Commission. First Selectman Mack clarified the wording that would be necessary in order to do this, however, cautioned that it would not be appropriate to appoint at this meeting as there were additional applicants whose resumes have not been circulated as of yet. Selectmen Reynold voiced concern about furthering the discussion as he had not had an opportunity to review the resumes. Selectman Sullivan agreed. First Selectmen Mack further explained that the appointment of this position had been removed from the agenda a day earlier as she misunderstood that Selectman Chafetz would not be in attendance at the April 6th meeting and she wanted all five Selectmen to review both candidates' resumes and vote. First Selectman Mack apologized for the misunderstanding and noted that several appointments would be on the next meeting agenda. Selectmen Chafetz made a motion to discuss versus a motion to appoint.

Selectmen Chafetz discussed his concerns that Cami Beiter had followed proper procedure in submitting her application for consideration and that he felt the Board of Selectmen were taking too long in making a decision. He questioned the rationale behind removing this particular appointment due to his absence but continuing with other appointments on the agenda. First Selectmen Mack clarified this decision by explaining that the appointments on the agenda were actually re-appointments and due to a decision made at an earlier date there would be no proposed competition for those individuals who were interested in being re-appointed. This was the case with the re-appointments of both Kathleen Harrington and Maureen Schorr to the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures on which they currently serve. She further noted that both Town Chairs approved of the continuation of these individuals. She also noted that the two Town Chairs also approved Tom Frenaye and Vic Mathieu whose appointments as electors to the Emergency Management Office were on the agenda for discussion and appointment. First Selectman Mack also pointed out that there were no additional applicants for consideration on the Emergency Management Office. She also emphasized that the reasoning behind the postponement was her desire to be fair to all. First Selectman Mack announced that the additional candidate for the Historic District Commission alternate position was Carlo Reale and if Selectman Chafetz and the other Selectmen wanted to discuss this candidate and move forward she would be willing to do it. Selectman Chafetz said this is what he wanted to do in order to be fair to Cami Beiter.

Selectman Reynolds noted that the vote should not occur as he has not reviewed resumes and felt that they should wait to vote as this was not on the agenda. He wanted to review before making a decision. Selectman Sullivan also expressed a desire to review the additional resume, while noting that she had nothing against the candidate being discussed, she felt it was better to review both resumes before making a final decision. Selectman Holmes noted that she understood Selectmen Chafetz's position; however, she also wanted to see both resumes before making a decision. First Selectman Mack asked for a vote regarding the addition of an agenda item putting the Discussion and Appointment of the Historic District alternate position on the Agenda. **Vote 4-1 against.**

Approval of the Minutes from the March 2, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Holmes made a motion to approve the Minutes from the March 2, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Approval of the Minutes from the March 16, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Selectman Sullivan made a motion to approve the Minutes from the March 16, 2016 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Public Comment

None

Approval of 2016-17 Selectmen's Budget presented to Board of Finance on February 29, 2016

First Selectman Mack explained the stages of the Budget since the first version was presented to the Board of Selectmen on February 25, 2016. Her task, after the initial presentation, was to review the budget and find a way to carve an additional \$250,000 out of the proposed budget in an effort to get to a 2.5% increase overall. First Selectman Mack worked with Finance Director Deborah Cerrato to achieve this goal. After working with Finance Director Cerrato, Version #2 was presented with a 3.06% increase. It was noted at that time that there was still additional work to be done. After presenting Version #2 it was discovered that the financials included a firefighter position which had been included in error. First Selectman Mack went on to note that Version #3 reflected the removal of the firefighter position as well as additional items. Those items included an employment vacancy factor resulting in a reduction of \$55,000; the removal of a police position and corresponding employee benefits; a small correction in Public Works to the Facility Manager's salary and corresponding employee benefits; an impact to the Highway Department with the reallocation of Road Maintenance from the

operating budget to the capital budget based on a recommendation by ACCE in concert with the Board of Finance. In addition, Version #3 reflected Babbs Beach staff training under the operating budget. Version #3 resulted in a 2.04% increase. Finally, version #4 reflected a 2.36% increase. Changes include additions made by Information Technology resulting from its recent presentation to the Board of Finance and increasing its budget by approximately \$24,000. There were also a few subtractions to various line items, including the subtraction of a third party insurance broker whose functions will be assumed by the new assistant Finance Director. Further additions included insurance and employee benefits for new positions being proposed. First Selectman Mack noted that after all those adjustments; the result was a \$350,000 increase over last fiscal year or a 2.36% increase. First Selectman Mack stated that her goal is to get to a 2% increase. She mentioned that she is currently working on a few other items that should get her to 2.14% and at that point she will still need an additional \$21,000 to reach her goal of 2%. Selectman Holmes inquired as to the additional changes being referenced that will get the Town to a 2.14% increase. First Selectman Mack explained that the changes will be the subject of an executive session to come in the near future. She further explained that she is looking into consolidation of services and additional reorganization. Selectman Chafetz asked about the final outcome of the police based on personnel. First Selectman Mack confirmed that there have been no cuts as of yet. The police are thinking of a Narcotics Officer, a Sergeant position which will not be a backfill but rather a promotion from within which will allow for minimal impact to the financial scenario and a Records Coordinator. Selectman Chafetz inquired as to whether the items that the police were requesting to be certified were still included. First Selectman Mack confirmed that they were.

A final discussion involved the vote and exactly how it should be worded as there had been some confusion as to which budget version should be voted on. Selectman Reynolds assumed it would be based on what was presented originally and what has been done to date. Selectman Holmes noted that there was never a vote on what was presented originally due to the number of changes that were going on at the time and too many unknowns. Selectman Reynolds noted that it was important to follow the guidance of the Town Charter.

First Selectman Mack explained that the Town Charter states that the Board of Selectman is required to present a budget by "x date" which did not occur this year. She acknowledged that the Charter was not followed exactly and noted that Mr. Gauthier brought this to the attention of the Board of Selectman. She expressed her desire to rectify the situation to the best of her ability and comply as closely as possible. The vote will be based on Version #2 which reflected a 3.06% increase which inadvertently included a firefighter. Selectman Holmes expressed concerns over approving the original budget and stated that she is not sure she wants to retroact the approval of the original due to the fact that there were reasons they did not approve it to begin with. First Selectman Mack agreed but wanted to ensure that it was clear that the direction of the Board of Selectmen made on February 25th to find an additional \$250,000 to remove

had been followed. All Selectman agreed it would be best to vote on the most recent version.

Selectman Reynolds made the motion to approve the original budget as presented by the First Selectman to the Board of Finance on February 29, 2016 as amended through today, April 6, 2016. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Discussion and waiver of bid purchasing policy for architect contracted for the Emergency Management Performance Grant to improve security in the schools

First Selectman Mack introduced the School Business Manager Bill Hoff and asked him to lead the discussion on this agenda item. Manager Hoff began by explaining that the original grant approved had included vestibules. Former Superintendent Karen Baldwin allowed a quote system for architects. Multiple architects came through the schools and Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc. was selected and provided initial plans for \$5,500. This amount was paid and ultimately the project was put on the back burner. Recently the vestibule project was revisited and due to the tight timeline it was decided that Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc. should complete the project as they already had familiarity. By choosing not to go out to bid for this project, the purchasing guidelines were not followed and as a result of this action a waiver was required from the Board of Selectman in order to pay Kaestle Boos Associates, Inc.'s fees. Currently, the \$48,000 invoice cannot be paid since the Bid and Purchase Policy was not adhered to. Selectman Reynolds asked if there is a reimbursement under the grant. The answer is yes there is a reimbursement of approximately 50%.

Selectman Holmes asked for an update on the project. Manager Hoff stated that a contractor had been chosen and preconstruction meetings were underway. Most construction would be done during the upcoming school vacation which allows for limited disruption to the students and staff. The majority of the construction issues will be noise as opposed to demolition. The doors have been ordered and expected delivery is May. The impression is that the doors should be an easy install. All work is slated to be done by the end of June which would be on track. Selectman Chafetz asked if the project was on budget. Manager Hoff noted that the budget will be fine, and the project is expected to come in under budget

First Selectman Mack asked if Business Manager Hoff felt confident that all parties were now fully aware of the Bid and Purchase Policy. She stressed the importance of having procedures in place moving forward so that the type of situation can be avoided. Business Manager Hoff assured the First Selectman that he had every confidence that this situation would not occur again. He also mentioned that had it been done properly the waiver should have been asked for at the original revisit of the project as opposed to five months later. First Selectman Mack said she felt comfortable with moving forward and strongly hopes that the town will not be put in this situation again. Selectman Reynold made a motion to approve the waiver of the Bid and Purchase Policy for the

architect contracted for the Emergency Management Performance Grant to improve security in the schools. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Appointments

Discussion and reappointment of Kathleen Harrington to the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 2020

Selectman Reynolds motioned to reappoint Kathleen Harrington to the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 2020. Selectman Chafetz asked if ACCE is responsible to the Board of Finance and if so if there is any conflict of interest. Discussion ensued and the conclusion was reached that there would not be a conflict of interest. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Discussion and reappointment of Maureen Schorr to the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 2020

Selectman Sullivan motioned to reappoint Maureen Schorr to the Advisory Commission on Capital Expenditures for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 202. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Discussion and appointment of Tom Frenaye and Vic Mathieu to Emergency Management Office for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 2020

First Selectman Mack opened the discussion with an explanation of the Emergency Management Office and its make-up. Under the Town Charter this group is mostly comprised of an ex-officio board which includes First Selectman, Emergency Management Director and representative of the Police, Fire, Ambulance and two electors. The chairs of the two town committees were contacted in order to obtain their recommendations for the elector positions. First Selectman Mack stated that Tom Frenaye was incredibly qualified for the position as he is a former First Selectman and he has additional expertise in ham radio technology which could be vital to the town in the event of an emergency. In addition Vic Mathieu is equally qualified due to his position at the Suffield Mini-Bus giving him firsthand knowledge of where the “at risk” residents are located throughout town. His position as the town liaison for the North Central Health District would also assist the town in planning for required provisions of varying types. He is also on the Board of Directors for the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association. While his qualifications are excellent, there are concerns as to whether or not he would have a conflict of interest due to his position on the Board of Directors of the SVAA since the town would be renegotiating the contract between the Town of Suffield and the Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association and the Emergency Operations Center is now located at the SVAA. First Selectman Mack reached out to Bob Brooks, Chairman of the Republican Town Committee, to discuss and together they determined that this appointment would need to be tabled as the potential conflict was

too great. Selectman Chafetz wondered if Mr. Mathieu would be able to abstain during certain situations. Mr. Brooks said that while he supposed that he could abstain from voting on certain things, this truly was a conflict of interest that was too big and too prevalent to proceed with appointing. Mr. Brooks will review additional options and present another candidate in the near future. First Selectman Mack recommended moving forward with the appointment of Tom Frenaye and to table the Vic Mathieu appointment.

Selectman Sullivan made a motion to appoint Tom Frenaye as an elector to the Emergency Management Office for a term of four years expiring on April 30, 2020. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Selectman Sullivan made a motion to table the consideration of Vic Mathieu as an elector to Emergency Management Office. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Discussion and approval of Tax Ordinance to abate up to 50% of the property 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

First Selectman Mack noted that this is a continuing discussion of what was presented in prior meetings. Assessor Helen Totz and Tax Collector Jill Schectman were introduced and spoke to the group. Assessor Totz noted that there was an error on the spreadsheet she presented at the last meeting although it is a good error. Revised numbers show that the town will see an increase to the tax base much quicker than originally anticipated. Selectman Reynolds questioned the spreadsheet and First Selectman Mack stated that she recommends a phase-in approach where the taxes are abated at 30% in Year 1, abated at 40% in years 2 through 4 and abated at 50% in Year 5. With this approach the town would be on the plus side in year 1 by approximately \$3,000 in new taxes; in year 2 it would be \$18,000; in year 3 it would be \$39,000; year 4 would be \$78,000 and \$86,000 in year 5. The numbers assume all currently existing Suffield farms apply and qualify.

First Selectman Mack stated that the phase in seems fair to all parties and invited input from the Four Seasons members in the audience who had no issues. Ms. Totz noted that the numbers will be based on the Grand List for each fiscal year. Selectman Holmes expressed that the numbers looked good. She wondered if instead of making it contingent on the fiscal year, because we are only approved for phase one, could we make it more contingent on actual completion of the phases. If Four Seasons has not completed construction by 2020 then there is a risk that the town may lose minimal tax revenue. Whether we can link the phase in of the abatement to the completion of Four Seasons' construction phases was discussed to minimize risk. First Selectman Mack expressed that this risk is justified for the purpose of supporting economic development in the agricultural industry. Suffield's predictable tax structure in this area, along with

its existing greenhouse zoning regulations, access to natural gas and flat landscape will make Suffield attractive to additional greenhouse operations. Selectman Chafetz asked about the height of the greenhouse buildings, which are 20 feet, as he does not want to change the look of the town. Ms. Totz explained that other greenhouses will not necessarily be the same as the hydroponic greenhouse. Selectman Holmes noted that Suffield has zoning policies with caps relating to the height of buildings. Selectman Reynolds asked if the motion should include mention of the phasing. First Selectman Mack replied yes with next steps including presentation to Board of Finance and if approved, drafting an ordinance. The ordinance would then be approved by the Board of Selectmen and brought to a Town Meeting. Tax Collector Jill Schectman offered her approval, felt it was good for the town and represented the town well. Selectman Mack noted that Suffield's dairy farmers are grandfathered at 50% per the existing ordinance. They will not have to back up to a 30% abatement as a result of the new ordinance. Selectman Chafetz asked if fruit orchards are included in the existing ordinance. Assessor Totz responded no, and added that three dairy farms currently receive the 50% tax abatement.

Selectman Reynolds made a motion to approve the tax ordinance to abate up to 50% of the property taxes of fruit orchard, vegetable farm, nursery farm, any farm which employs nontraditional farming methods, including, but not limited to, hydroponic farming, tobacco farms, and recommend to the Board of Finance phased in as presented in the spreadsheet presented at this meeting and that the abatement currently provided to dairy farms under the existing ordinance be grandfathered at 50% and recommended to the Board of Finance. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Selectman Chafetz asked when this would be presented to the Board of Finance. It will be presented on Monday, April 11th per First Selectman Mack.

Close the Public Hearing on the 2014-15 Annual Report

First Selectman Mack explained that the Annual Report had been posted on the Town website for review. The Town received corrections from two residents which have since been incorporated in the document. Selectmen Chafetz had also inquired about the reporting of narcotics. As a result of this inquiry, First Selectman Mack reports that Captain Brown has made an adjustment to the narcotics numbers and the Annual Report is deemed complete. First Selectman Mack extended her thanks to all who offered suggestions and corrections.

Selectmen Reynolds made a motion to close the Public Hearing on the 2014-15 Annual Report. **Vote 5-0 in favor.**

Selectmen Updates

a. Commission Updates

Selectmen Chafetz gave a brief update on an event that was originally to be held at the Kent Memorial Library but has been relocated to the Suffield Middle School due to ongoing construction issues. Steve Katz, the founder of the musical group Blood, Sweat and Tears, will be performing on Thursday, April 21, 2016. Selectmen Chafetz expressed his hope that he would see many residents in attendance. Tickets are available by contacting the library or Selectmen Chafetz.

Public Comment

Tom Frenaye had a concern with the reappointment process. Mr. Frenaye mentioned that he had raised a question 6 months prior to the current board coming into place with regard to an appointment that took place in October 2015 for Michael Stevens whose term was not technically up until April 2016 and the previous board approved ~~him~~ through April 2020. He felt this was not right to reappoint so far in advance. He posed the question as to how early an individual can be reappointed. Discussion amongst the Board of Selectmen ensued and Michael Stevens, who was present in the audience, was asked why exactly this had occurred. Due to the impending transition, the former First Selectman felt it would be beneficial for continuity between fiscal years. It was determined that the decision was commission specific in this unusual circumstance and that this would not be a normal practice.

Selectmen Reynolds asked what happens to the individuals who cannot be reappointed for various reasons, including an individual who no longer is living in town. Michael Stevens explained that the Chairman has the power to request the resignation of a member. If the request for resignation does not garner a response, the Chairman can contact the First Selectman for additional help.

Selectman Chafetz moved to adjourn and by unanimous vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

The next regular Board of Selectmen Meeting will be Wednesday, April 20, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristen O. Lambert
Recording Secretary