



BOARD OF SELECTMEN

CHARLES E. SHEPARD MUNICIPAL BUILDING

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN WARREN & WEST BROOKFIELD MINUTES OF OCTOBER 1, 2020

PRESENT: Mr. John A. Nason; Chairman, Mr. Marc Richard; Vice-Chairman, Mr. David Dufresne, Clerk and West Brookfield Selectboard Chairman, Mr. Daniel M. Bigda and Selectboard Clerk, Mr. David J. Pierce

ATTENDEES: See attached list

Opened the Meeting at 7:00 PM

Mr. Nason opened the meeting and dispensed with the Pledge of Allegiance. He turned the meeting over Mr. Bigda, who will chair this evening's meeting.

MEETING MINUTES (JOINT)

Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 26, 2020 and September 10, 2020 as written made by Mr. Pierce; second: Mr. Bigda – unanimous.

Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 26, 2020 made by Mr. Dufresne; second: Mr. Nason – unanimous.

Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2020 made by Mr. Dufresne; second: Mr. Richard – 2 Yes, 1 Abstention (Mr. Nason due to absence)

School Committee members, Jason Morgan and Andrew Schwenker feel that the tone for this evening is not in keeping with what was discussed at the initial joint meeting held on August 26, 2020. Mr. Schwenker stated that he does not feel that it is a collaborative effort. Mr. Bigda reassured all that tonight was a continuation of the discussions from the last two meetings.

TRANSPORTATION

Again, as discussed at the last two meetings, concerns have been brought to the Select Board's attention from their respective constituents about paying for services not rendered. At the September 10th meeting, both Select Boards were in unison in a joint vote to direct their respective Treasurers not to pay for transportation costs. Referencing "An Act Relative to Municipal Governance during the COVID-19 Emergency, MGL, c92, §12", (attached) outlines provisions in which payments can be withheld, in addition to the allowance of a city/town to request certain documents from service contractors verifying any outside financial support as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19. Dr. Kustigian stated that he would provide a revised contract and would request verification from both Lizak Bus Service, Inc. and J.P. McCarthy & Sons, LLC. Mr. Nason agrees with requesting the information provided however that we are consistent in our actions.

Dr. Kustigian explained that the School Committee voted on numbers that addressed many of the moving parts that are fluid from day to day in addition to consultation with DESE on this very matter. He further explained that with transportation, the state is supposed to reimburse at 100%, however they never do. Lowering the transportation assessment will impact the towns in a negative manner which will not be realized until two years after the fact. The Administration has put out the transportation contract several times, however, there has been little to no response in terms of competition. He (Kustigian) also reminded all that any excess transportation does go back to their respective

towns. Mr. Nason stated that the bottom line is the taxpayers. Mr. Bigda reiterated that current events, the likes of which none of us have seen before provides the Boards of Selectmen with the authority to renegotiate. Mr. Nason stated that it is much easier to be one cohesive unit on the floor. Mr. Morgan, however, feels that currently, the Select Boards and School Committee are not on equal levels. Mr. Pierce reminded all that at each joint meeting that has been held, the School Committee has been invited, however thus far only one member has attended (Mr. Morse). Ms. Heather Gough did state that Mr. Morgan did advise all, however the School Committee voted to pay without either Board of Selectmen's involvement.

Mr. Dufresne suggested that all parties try to move forward from this point on. West Brookfield Advisory Board Member, Pamela Griffing, stated that in no way was the bus company making sure they, in Dr. Kustigian's words, were "shovel ready". She further feels that the vote to pay as the handout outlined was more for relationship management. She (Griffing) further asked if either bus company even made a good faith attempt in trying to obtain financial aid in order to offset the costs for the towns. Dr. Kustigian stated that J.P. McCarthy was transparent and provided his numbers, however Lizak would not. Speaking for himself as one member of the School Committee, Mr. Craig Burgess feels that in his words, we've been "hosed" for a long time and we should see what options are available in order to pursue moving forward. Mr. Dufresne suggested that perhaps the towns should investigate purchasing our own busses in order to be self-reliant. That option, however, comes at a significant cost, all of which would need to be carefully analyzed. Mr. Richard is not in favor of the towns purchasing a fleet of busses. Mr. Burgess suggested that an action plan be created for the next steps moving forward. West Brookfield recently retained a financial consultant who could possibly investigate the risk/rewards of such a move. Mr. Nason doesn't feel that it is our (Selectmen) business in getting too heavily involved in matters that the School Committee is charged with.

While still on the issue of transportation and considering the joint unison vote by both Boards, Mrs. Acerra, on behalf of Warren's Treasurer requested clarification on the directive to not pay transportation in the October assessment. As all are aware, the assessments are broken into two categories: operational and capital. Transportation expenses fall under operational. Although it contradicts their vote at the September 10, 2020 meeting, the Warren Board of Selectmen agreed to pay the full assessment as outlined in the July 29, 2020 calculations provided by the school. West Brookfield Select Board members will wait to confer with their counsel before reversing their vote.

Mr. Dufresne and Mr. Pierce, Warren and West Brookfield Select Board members will represent their respective Boards when meeting with the School Committee.

HEALTH INSURANCE

School Committee Chairman, Mr. Schwenker advised all that they are unable to discuss this matter in depth as they are currently in negotiations. Mr. Morse provided a spreadsheet after a discussion at the September 10th meeting. Mr. Schwenker said that they (School Committee) would like to verify the numbers. Mr. David Kirk stated that he provided these numbers to the Committee back in April and time is of the essence. December 1st is the enrollment date thus leaving very little time to confidently make a change. Mr. Pierce stated that the School Committee should be working in the best interest in the town. Ms. Lori Loughlin, former School Committee member and current Advisory Committee member stated that regardless if individuals are employed, elected or volunteers, we are all fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. We can no longer afford the insurance costs as they stand. Speaking from her firsthand experience, this issue cannot be pushed down the road any further. Dr. Kustigian stated that an RFP was issued, and they hired a consultant to address this matter who will be present at the October 5th meeting.

QUABOAG PRESCHOOL

Mr. Dufresne requested that this topic be added to the discussion this evening. He stated that several parents came to him with concerns over the move of the preschools from the elementary schools to Quaboag. He expressed his concerns over having young children in with young adults. He was assured by Dr. Kustigian that the area would be secured, however after a recent tour, found that the door cannot be locked as it is an emergency exit. He is not confident with the security of the kids at Quaboag.

He also expressed his concern over the height of the toilets, which he doesn't feel is an appropriate size for toddlers. Although stepstools are being provided, he feels that this could pose a trip hazard. Mr. Dufresne feels that this move was forced upon the town. Dr. Kustigian said that the preschool was never forced upon anyone as Mr. Dufresne insinuated. He further added that the new design is exceptional and would encourage anyone who is interested to schedule a walk thru. He would argue that the current location is by far better than what was in place at the two elementary schools. During this process, guidance was provided by the Department of Education and all official parties signed off on the project. Mr. Pierce has no issues with the preschool and Mr. Bigda suggested that Mr. Dufresne bring this issue up in the proper venue, which in this case would be the School Committee (Building Subcommittee).

The next joint meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, October 15th at 6:30 PM which Quaboag will host. A member of the School Committee will Chair the meeting. Tentative agenda items for the evening will include Transportation, Health Insurance and HVAC.

Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. Richard; second: Mr. Dufresne – unanimous at 9:22 PM

Motion to Adjourn made by Mr. Pierce; second: Mr. Bigda – unanimous at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



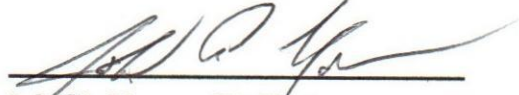
Rebecca Acerra

Administrative Secretary

BOARD OF SELECTMEN - WARREN & WEST BROOKFIELD

JOINT MEETING MINUTES - SIGNATORY SHEET

Meeting Minutes of October 1, 2020:



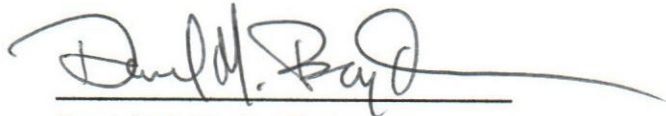
John A. Nason, III, Chairman
Warren

ABSENT

Marc W. Richard, Vice-Chairman



David P. Dufresne, Sr., Clerk



Daniel M. Bigda, Chairman
West Brookfield

ABSENT

Diane Vayda, Vice-Chairman



David J. Pierce, Clerk

AN ACT RELATIVE TO MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE DURING THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY. CHAPTER 92 MGL.

SECTION 12. (a)(1) Notwithstanding sections 52 and 56 of chapter 41 of the General Laws, a city or town may approve a payment for the period beginning on or after March 10, 2020 through the remainder of fiscal year 2020 on an existing service contract for school or education-related services entered into by the school committee or a service contract renegotiated or modified by the school committee in order to maintain the availability of and access to the services secured under the underlying contract between the parties; provided, that: (i) the underlying service contract was in effect before March 10, 2020 and the service contractor was unable to perform services under the contract as a result of the disruptions caused by the outbreak of the 2019 novel coronavirus, also known as COVID-19 and effects of the governor's March 10, 2020 declaration of a state of emergency; and (ii) there are sufficient unencumbered available funds remaining for such payment in the appropriation for the purpose.

(2) Before any payment, the service contractor shall present to the approving authorities set forth in subsections (b) and (c), a sworn statement reporting grants, discounted loans or other financial support that the service contractor has received from a state, federal or local government as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 or, if the service contractor has not received any such grants, discounted loans or other financial support, affirming that the service contractor has not received, and shall not receive thereafter, any such grants, discounted loans or other financial support. If the service contractor reports it has received grants, discounted loans or other financial support from a state, federal or local government, the payments to the service contractor made pursuant to this section and section 13 shall not exceed the total amount to which the service contractor is eligible under the service contract less the amount the service contractor received in such grants, discounted loans or other financial support and the sworn statement shall include an attestation that the payment is not in excess of that amount.

(b) In a city, the payment set forth in subsection (a) shall be approved by: (i) the school committee; (ii) a city auditor, accountant or other officer having similar duties; and (iii) the chief executive officer of the city as defined in clause Fifth B of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws.

(c) In a town, the payment set forth in subsection (a) shall be approved by: (i) the school committee; (ii) a town accountant or other officer having similar duties; and (iii) the chief executive officer of the town as defined in clause Fifth B of section 7 of chapter 4 of the General Laws.

(d) This section shall not apply to tuitions and rates set by the bureau of purchased services within the operational services division pursuant to section 22N of chapter 7 of the General Laws, which are set and are non-negotiable for fiscal year 2020.