



# BOARD OF SELECTMEN

CHARLES E. SHEPARD MUNICIPAL BUILDING

48 High St. • P.O. Box 609 • Warren, MA 01083-0609 • Tel. 413-436-5701 • Fax 413-436-9754

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18, 2021

**PRESENT:** Mr. John Nason: Chairman, and Mr. David Dufresne, Clerk.

**Absent:** Mr. Marc Richard: Vice-Chairman,

**ATTENDEES:** see attached list.

### Opened the Meeting at 5:00 PM

Mr. Nason called the meeting to order and led with the Pledge of Allegiance. He advised all that this meeting is being video/audio taped and will be rebroadcast following the meeting.

### MINUTES:

Motion to approve and sign the Minutes of February 11, 2021 as written, made by Mr. Dufresne; second: Mr. Nason- AIF.

### CORRESPONDENCE, read by Mr. Dufresne:

1. Ryan McNutt/Palmer Town Manager would like to meet with the Town of Warren regarding animal control. Ryan stated that the previous animal control set-up was not working; the structure will need to be different, more of a service contract than regional agreement. Mr. Dufresne stated that he is not happy how they bailed out on us with no advance notice. Mr. Nason stated that he is o.k. with getting together with Ryan to discuss. Also, Mr. Nason is going to reach out to Sturbridge Animal Control to pursue both options. The Board approved to reach out to Mr. McNutt; Mr. Nason will reach out to invite him into a meeting.

### BUSINESS:

2. Due to the fact that the Town no longer has a Financial Committee or a Capital Planning Committee, Mr. Nason stated that the Board will hold meetings with all Department heads to collect and discuss budget proposals and articles. Follow up meetings will then be held, to go into more detail. Fire Department Budget review is this week, Police Department will be next week and Highway Department the week after. Other Departments will be scheduled back to back at upcoming meetings.
3. Mr. Jim Kordek questioned if the Town is in compliance with not having a Financial Committee. Madeline Witaszek stated that she believes per M.G.L. that it is recommended yet not mandatory for the Town to have a Finance Committee.
4. Chief Lavoie and Fire Dept. members have been helping out at the Palmer Covid-19 vaccination site. Their hours of pay will be paid by the Town and reimbursed through the Cares Act. Payroll needs to be kept track of and marked accordingly.

### FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET & ARTICLES DISCUSSION:

Chief Adam Lavoie presented the FY22 Budget with a \$36,010 total increase from FY21. Chief Lavoie stated that the cost of daily business has gone up. Vehicle expense due to the aging fleet, has gone up. Costs have increased for utilities, heat, fuel, medical supplies. There has been an 18% increase in calls this year. With the closure of Mary Lane, mutual aid will go up as ambulances are out of service on longer calls to Wing or Harrington Hospitals.

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Chief is requesting the following Articles to be placed on the Warrant for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting in May:

**Article #1-** \$6,000 to purchase two(2) sets of turnout gear, helmets and boots for new members, **Article #2** - \$4,000 for matching grant cost to replace wildland firefighting clothing, **Article #3** To re-appropriate \$122,000 from FY21 Regional Dispatch Assessment and re-direct to the radio infrastructure build project for Fire & Police Dept., **Article #4-** Appropriate \$55,000 for the replacement of Fire Command Vehicle, **Article #5** – Appropriate \$70,000 for the missed capital planning installment for Engine #5 replacement, **Article #6** – Appropriate \$150,000 for capital planning installment for ambulance replacement in 2022, **Article #7** – Article to “unfreeze monies” for Engine #5 replacement.

Mr. Nason questioned if the Chief has looked into COVID Grants for a new ambulance. Chief stated that he will certainly look for any available Grants; he is always seeking. Mr. Nason stated that we need to discuss further to better understand the process of ambulance rates, how the process works, who's responsible for what, cost sharing, insurance payments, to make sure it is distributed fairly. – to discuss at another meeting and the Treasurer/Dawn Swistak needs to be a big part of this discussion. Mr. Nason questioned the Chief if there has been any discussion with regionalizing with West Brookfield services. Ware is similar to us, strictly municipal versus private. Chief stated that we are saving by having a municipal service; it is local with 24 hour service, good reputation, reduced cost; it would cost double or triple for a private service. Also, we have quarterly write-offs, because we are designated as a poor community. 75% of the calls are EMS calls, fire calls have increasingly gone down nowadays.

#### **TOWN WEBSITE ACCESS:**

Discussion on allowing access to the Town's website with restrictions in place. The Board agreed that each department should have access to perform their own maintenance and post meetings, etc. Mr. Nason requested this be investigated further, to see if sign-in's can be created with restrictions in place to perform town website maintenance. Ms. Clowes will reach out to CivicCMS to see if this can be done.

#### **COMMENTS AND CONCERNS:**

Mr. Soltys asked for an update on the Town Manager discussion.

Mr. Dufresne stated that he recently reached out to Bernard Lynch of Community Paradigm for consulting services regarding a Town Manager. The consulting services would help outline options of position responsibilities, the right title, the proper salary, and the means to create the position. The report would likely cost the Town in the range of \$3,000-\$4,000. The Board will verify that the selectmen's purchased services budget line to confirm this amount is available to pay for the consulting services. Mr. Dufresne will then have Mr. Bernard Lynch meet with the Board to narrow down our expectations and weigh our options, to then move forward with an Article on either a Town Manager or a Town Administrator.

**Next Meeting Date for a Working Meeting: Thursday, February 25, 2021 - 5:00 PM, Shepard Municipal Building.**

**Meeting dissolved at 7:10 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,



Priscilla J. Clowes  
Administrative Secretary



David P. Dufresne, Sr., Clerk