



## **Town of Bernardston** **Board of Selectmen**

MEETING MINUTES: October 5, 2011

Select Board Members Present:  
Robert R. Raymond, Chairman  
Stanley D. Garland  
Virginia M. Budness

Others Present:  
Jane Dutcher, Finance Committee  
Paul Luther, School Committee

The Chairman opened the meeting at 6.03pm.

### **Warrants**

The payroll warrant is approved for \$28,320.15. Motion by Virginia, second by Stan. Motion carried.

The vendor warrant is approved for \$19,146.08. Motion by Virginia, second by Stan. Motion carried.

### **Minutes**

- Regular Meeting September 21, 2011. Motion by Stan. Second by Virginia. Motion carried.

### **Calendar & Announcements**

Bob read aloud the following:

- Board of Health, Wednesday, Oct 19, 6.30pm at Town Hall
- Planning Board, Thursday Oct 6, 5pm at Town Hall
- Bernardston Fire & Water District, Thursday, Oct 13, 6pm, Water House
- Recreation Commission, Thursday, Oct 20, 6.30pm, Town Hall
- Conservation Commission, Thursday, Oct 20, 6.30pm, Town Hall
- Council on Aging, Friday, Oct 21, 10.30am at the Senior Center

The following event announcements were also made:

- PVRSD Green Energy Committee, Thursday Oct 20<sup>th</sup> at PVRSD.
- PVRSD Budget Committee, Monday Oct 24, 1pm at PVRSD.
- United Church of Bernardston Supper, Sunday Oct 8 at 5pm-6.15pm.
- Cable Committee, Thursday Oct 13, 7pm at Northfield Town Hall
- Finance Committee, Monday, Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 7pm at Town Hall

### **Appointments**

6.05pm Paul Luther – School Committee

Paul Luther met with the Board. He is a member of the School Committee, Building & Grounds Committee, Budget Committee, and also served on the BES Principal Screening Committee. Paul stated PVRSD had submitted a balanced budget based on all four town

assessments on Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>. Paul reported the following to  
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the Board: four (4) full-time positions were eliminated; the special needs budget was reduced by \$185,000, and health insurance costs incurred a rate reduction of 2% even though the family plan enrollment went up significantly. Stan asked for the names of the persons holding the eliminated positions. Paul stated there were no new positions added. Virginia asked if the four persons impacted by elimination were still in the PVRSD system. The names were not available to Paul at this time and the persons affected were moved elsewhere in the system. Stan asked the hiring salary of the new BES principal. Paul stated it is \$80,000. Paul went on to say the district does its best for the schoolchildren with its available resources. Bob asked if the school budget would be presented in a more realistic light this year. Paul said the district has a clearer idea of where the Town is coming from with respect to assessments. Bob said the Town contributes 64% of its budget to the school and this simply cannot get any larger and a 5-6% increase overall reflects 10-12% to the Town. Bob also wants entitlements and 3% automatic raises reviewed. Paul said he wants the school budget to be tied to the Town's ability to afford or tax for an increase, the district be fair about increases and to reexamine the step system. Stan said the unions need to give more up in the current economic climate. Bob also said he is concerned about retired teachers from PVRSD remaining enrolled for health insurance in BC/BS. He wants them moved to Medicare when they turn 65.

#### 6.15pm Tax Classification – Board of Assessors

Russ Deane representing the Board of Assessors stated the tax rate for FY12 will be set at \$16.08. This represents a .25cent increase from FY11. The rate does include the \$45,000 appropriation at the Special Town Meeting, August 18, 2011 for School Rd engineering. There was some residential value lost but it was made up by commercial and commercial personal property taxation. Commercial property is 11% of the total valuation of \$218 million. Bob asked about a split-tax rate. Russ stated you need at least 25% of your valuation to be commercial to consider 2 rates. Paul Luther asked if commercial and property residential values were calculated the same. Russ said the same formula is used for both. The Board of Assessors contracts out for valuation inspections. The Kringle Candle valuations won't be considered until the FY13 year. Motion by Virginia to set the tax rate at \$16.08 per thousand dollars of valuation, second by Bob. Motion carried.

Russ stated the school budget does place a significant amount of pressure on the Town's property tax. Paul said when he was on the Town Finance Committee he found the municipal budget process to be more complicated than he expected. He has served on the School Committee for 9-months now and truly believes the PVRSD is a system that cares about teaching and its students.

#### **New Business**

- A. Bernardston Elementary School (BES) – BES use application were forwarded to the Board for approval as follows: a) Adult Volleyball and b) Youth Basketball. Motion to approve by Virginia, second by Stan. Motion carried
- B. Memorandum of Understanding – The Solid Waste District asked the Board sign an

MOU regarding Transfer Station inspections being conducted by the FCSWMD. Motion by Virginia, second by Stan. Motion carried.

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- C. Town Hall Sign – Virginia stated the notice board in front of Town Hall was supposed to be replaced by the Tech School and was first requested 12-months ago. To date the sign has not materialized and she suggested that the Board not seek the Tech School to continue or start the project. Motion by Virginia, second by Bob. Motion carried.
- D. Town Clerk Computer – The Board agreed with the Town Clerk’s request to purchase a new computer system. Public notices will now be placed on the Town website.
- E. Conservation Commission – The ConCom has ruled the Town owned land between School Rd and Deane Rd is a majority of wetlands according to a recent state inspection. The prospective lessor of the land will be notified of the decision.
- F. Free Store – Bob read a letter from the FCSWMD regarding the Free Store located at the Transfer Station. Jan Ameen, Executive Director of the SWMD said that rules of enforcement need to be re-applied to prevent Free Store volunteers and Town employees from taking items (e.g. metals) that would otherwise be to the financial benefit of the Town. The Free Store closed September 29<sup>th</sup>. Bob said the Highway Dept could be removing items left at the Free Store and putting them into the waste stream. The Board will revisit the concept of a Free Store in spring 2012.
- G. Board of Health – The BOH requested access to Town Counsel for the purpose of:
  - a. Setting new fees.
  - b. Obtaining a ruling as a Special Municipal Employee for Sandy Giard as a BOH member and septic inspector for which she is compensated with 50% of the fee.

**Old Business**

Stantec – The Board executed a contract for services from Stantec as the engineer on the School Road project. The cost of service is \$45,000. Motion by Virginia, second by Bob. Motion carried.

BES Green Grant – The MSBA did not OK the BES project for its Green Grant program. The project was not deemed appropriate or met the criteria for 56% reimbursement. Bob suggested the Town is now on its own to proceed as it sees fit to replace the heating system at BES.

Comcast Cable Contract – Bob read two letters from Comcast regarding a senior discount and a fee of \$2,500 per year payable to the Town for each of a ten-year term. These 2 items accompanied four (4) copies of a final contract between Comcast and the Town of Bernardston. Motion to sign the contract by Virginia, second by Stan. Motion carried.

**Other Business**

Belle Notte – Stan noted the Board there have been several incidents in the recent past at the Belle Notte restaurant that have required police intervention. Stan said the Board, as the licensing authority, should meet

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with Belle Notte representatives to discuss the problems. It was agreed to ask the owner(s) of Belle Notte to appear before the Board on October 19th.

Administrative Assistant

Virginia spoke to the possibility of increasing the Administrative Assistant’s hours by 4 per week in the future. It appears the demands of the position may require more hours if the future projects in the Town come to fruition.

**Administrative Assistant Report**

Hugh Campbell reported several matters to the Board as follows:

- a. Land Lease bid released. Bid deadline Wed, Oct 19 at 3pm.
- b. FEMA meeting to assess recoverable costs from TP Irene.
- c. Town Hall Siding contract extension due to weather.
- d. RFP for phone/internet/cell phones.
- e. Mass Broadband installation of fiber optic lines at Town locations.
- f. Treasurer position advertised with a deadline of Wed, Oct 19 at 4.30pm.
- g. Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan update.
- h. Deadline for December newsletter is Nov 15<sup>th</sup>.
- i. Suggestion to switch hours from morning to afternoon after BOS meetings.

Adjourn With no further business to be discussed, Bob made a motion to declare the meeting adjourned at 8.04pm. Virginia seconded. Motion carried.

Attest: Hugh Campbell, Administrative Assistant

_____	, Chairman	_____	, Member
_____	, Member		
Robert R. Raymond		Stanley D. Garland	Virginia M. Budness