

**SELECTMEN'S MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM
1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
MONDAY, February 24, 2014**

Meeting was opened at 7:00 PM in the Upstairs Meeting Room. Present were Selectpersons, Mark Fairbrother, Chris Boutwell, Mike Nelson; Town Administrator, Frank Abbondanzio, Executive Assistant, Wendy Bogusz;

Meeting being Taped

Approve minutes February 3, 10, and 18, 2014

Minutes not available at this time

Colleen Campbell, Turners Falls Block Party

Campbell: I am working with RiverCulture this year and we want to move the block party down to where Unity Park is. This topic will be brought back before the Board at a later date once more event details are available.

Davis Hobbs: Swift River Hydro Operations – Expanded use of Strathmore Mill

Hobbs: Expressed interest in leasing/renting space to expand machine shop and storage of some of our electrical equipment and spare parts and that type of stuff. If we brought the machine shop in there we would have to update the electrical in area and do something regarding fire protection in that specific area.

Abbondanzio: I think it would be a good idea for you to use the space. Your presence is important in the building. Maybe there is a way to write it into the RFP that it could be a permanent use if that building gets segmented off.

Hobbs: I don't want to screw up things, but it is a question of money and timing. We have a lot of machines to move and it would take close to 6 months to set up or dismantle. We would not be able to be out of there in 3 months, I would need time. I don't want to hold up a process of expanding use of that property. I cannot do this type of expansion then be required to move it in 3 months. There is no basic electrical in that building.

In principal the Board is in favor of this project. The Town is also looking at ways to address the sewer issues. There are ongoing activities happening on that building to increase occupancy. If this works out then we would have to tell Walter to cut building 5 out of the RFP if they wanted to use it on a permanent use. Hobbs is still in the planning stages of making this happen.

Ms. Golrick asks about parking, whether the apartment is approved, who's business it is; and when easements for that building are open for discussions she is asking abutters to be notified. Hobbs does not expect any problems with parking. The apartment is legal; the business will be operated by Swift River Hydro

Walter Ramsey Reissuance of Strathmore Mill Reuse Request for Proposals (RFP)

Abbondanzio reads e-mail dated February 20, 2014 from Walter Ramsey into the record, This RFP will be going out mid March and due in June. The footbridge is in negotiations

Turners Falls Fire District Order to comply with building/fire code issues at the Strathmore Mill

Jensen: As you all know we have been limping through the care and preservation of the building. There have been long standing attention by the Fire Department to conditions there. There have been suggestions over time, some have been done, some have not and its reached a point where certain requirements, demands or attention to details are deemed to be needed to take place. I've drafted for discussion answers to specific order.

Fairbrother: The Fire Chief has raised a list of concerns and you have created a list of responses to those concerns.

Abbondanzio: I guess the feeling is after received the order, my initial reaction was if we are to implement that order as it is currently stated, not only would the cost be prohibitive, I think it would have long term detrimental effect on our ability to market or do anything with that building. Once you board up the building it makes it very difficult to show the building where aesthetics is the only redeeming factor the building has going at the moment. What has been pointed out in the order, some of the deficiencies as David also points out, there are legitimate concerns that need to be addressed. The feeling is there has to be some kind of middle ground where we can address the things that need to be addressed and we need to sit down and talk about those kinds of things, because the extreme solution is not going to be a good thing for the Town. The worst case scenario is the building does not

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get developed ever and we end up having to tear it down with an estimated \$4 million cost in the feasibility study and that would not be a good thing for the power plant which sits in the middle of that. I think there is a middle ground and I think David has worked hard to go through the list and see what is a legitimate concern and how do we address it so it doesn't hurt the Town over the long term. The practical side of this is to address the order as it is currently stated and its impossible to go to Town Meeting and request an appropriation that far exceeds what we have in available resources right now. We couldn't do it without going to Town Meeting and I wouldn't advise it because of the impacts we have on our ability to develop the building. That's just a personal opinion and I hope we can reach some middle ground on this.

Escott: I think this forum right now is an inappropriate place to be discussing what we can or can't do. Basically the Town is in violation of my order already, time has expired. I delivered the order on Wednesday, I told Frank I was available on Thursday if we wanted to sit down with David and try to discuss the timeframe, which would have been a compromise. I did not receive a phone call and I wasn't invited to this meeting. I came simply because I heard it was going to be discussed. Quite frankly, I'm not happy with the response I got with my order of notice. Not happy with response I received on this order, but no response at all is unreasonable. That is why this letter has happened. I think we can formulate a plan to deal with these issues but it saddens me that it had to come to this letter to be able to sit down and formulate a plan. Do I want to make the building so its not looking good to people to want to come into it? No, I don't want to do that. Do I want to make it safe for people to be in there? Yes, that is what I want to do. What you need to understand, if you remember the complexity of the fire of the one building we did have down there, all of the people on the TF Fire Dept. are somewhat familiar with the building, if you put that under fire conditions that all even changes and gets worse. If you take people from surrounding towns that have never been in that building under it's best condition and put them in that building under adverse conditions, the potential for injury or death is extreme and it is getting worse. I am willing to waive the time frame in this order if we can schedule a time to sit down and formulate a plan. A meeting will happen later this week to discuss these issues. The Board will get an update at the next Selectmen's meeting

Hobbs: Would like to see potable water brought into the building as he is paying for it. Hobbs is told to contact the Turners Falls Water Dept.

Jeff Singleton: Support for Chapter 70 position with MMA

Singleton: This is a letter that I should be primarily taking to the School Committee first, Finance Committee second and the Board of Selectmen last. The problem I have is I would like to go to the MMA breakfast on Friday and this is a complicated issue. It would help me if a local Board said we generally agree with what you are saying and we support what you are doing. Singleton reads statement into the record:

Proposed Statement on Chapter 70
To State Reps, MASC, MMA etc

The current budget proposal by Governor Patrick calls for a review of the Chapter 70 state education aid formula. This conforms to the language in the Chapter 70 statute itself, which calls for periodic reviews of the formula. However both the statute and the Governor's proposal appear to limit the statewide discussion to the adequacy of the foundation budget, only one component of the formula. We urge a broader discussion of the formula, including the role of enrollment in calculating both the foundation budget and the local contribution.

Since the minimum contribution portion of the formula was adjusted in 2007 the majority of school districts in any given year have not been entitled to state aid increases under the core formula. In most cases the state has simply ignored the formula, held these districts "harmless," given them a small increase per student. This year seventy-five percent of the districts in the state are not due to receive increases under the core formula under the Governor's budget. Indeed many of these districts would be facing massive and unsustainable cuts in Chapter 70 if the formula were actually implemented.

This reality applies not only to small declining enrollment districts in the western part of the state but to large urban districts in the east, including Boston and Somerville.

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There is strong evidence that one reason for this problem is the role of enrollment in the formula. The core formula subtracts a local ("minimum") contribution from a local foundation budget to obtain the level of chapter 70. Enrollment appears to be significantly exaggerated in the calculation of annual changes in the foundation budget. However enrollment is not considered at all in calculating changes in the local (minimum) contribution. This dynamic may be one reason for flat or declining Chapter 70 for most school districts in the state.

We would also ask why Chapter 70 should be heavily influenced by enrollment while the local contribution to education should be completely independent of this factor.

We therefore call for a broader review of the chapter 70 formula. Such a review should consider the adequacy of the foundation budget but also the other elements of the formula. It should also consider state fiscal capacity and the impact of future increases in Chapter 70 on other state-funded programs, including other forms of local aid.

Fairbrother: For myself, it has been impressive the dogged determination with which you have pursued financial stability in the school system, probably few people in town are as qualified or more qualified to speak on this than you are.

The consensus of the Boards approval was given to Jeff

Other:

There is a meeting being scheduled with Erving regarding sewer

*Nelson makes the motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. Seconded by Boutwell, approved unanimously.
Boutwell – Aye, Fairbrother – Aye, Nelson - Aye*