

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
ALL-BOARDS
MINUTES

Date: October 29, 2019
Time: 6:00pm
Place: Town Hall
Egremont

Present at the table were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie.

Others in attendance: Marj Wexler, Mary McGurn, Bruce Bernstein, Tom Reynolds, Dave Campbell, Evan Triantafylidis(Berkshire Record), Greg Cherin, Jim Noe, Sue Funk, Will Brinker, Marcella Bush, Laura Allen, Francine Groener, Keila Sheldon, Sue Turner, Robin Goldberg, Steve Rawlings, Bill Tynan, Susan Bachelder, Ned Baldwin, Jason LaForest, Danile Jordan, Juliette Haas, Joe Schneider, Helen Krancer, Matt O’Sullivan, Elliott Snyder, Jen Brown.

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded by both the Town and the Berkshire Record.

Chairman McGurn announced that each department would have 3 minutes to tell the meeting What are you working on; What progress has been made over the past year; What are your plans for the next year; Any budget surprises or increases anticipated for FY 2021.

Tom Reynolds: Buildings and Grounds

Tom reported that his department has replaced windows at Town Hall, upgraded the Town Hall utility room, replaced the siding on the Salt Shed, paved a portion of the Town Hall parking lot, upgraded the power on the village Green and at French Park, replaced the horse equipment shed at French Park and made some repairs to fences, and painted the Annex. Still to take place this year is the renovation of the Town Hall downstairs bathrooms. In the coming yea he plans to finish the blacktopping of the Town Hall parking lot, paint the bathrooms at the Park, make repairs to the Basketball courts, and clean and remove moss from the Town Hall roof. He has begun the process of possibly consolidating his operations to the Highway Department complex and building a new garage.

Robin Goldberg: Assessors

Robin reported that the Assessor’s office has converted its assessment software, is close to having the interim values accepted. The Assessors need a new computer s theirs is very slow. The Tax Rate is near to being set. The board will continue with its consultant in the new year.

Ned Baldwin: Building Commissioner

Ned reported that there was about \$3,000,000 in new construction this past year. He reported he needs a new computer.

Mary McGurn: Bylaw Review Committee

Mary reported that the Selectboard has asked the Committee to move to Phase 2 and make a comprehensive review of the General Bylaws for possible changes to be made at a spring 2020 Town Meeting.

David Campbell: Cemetery Commission

David reported that the Jewish section of the Riverside Cemetery has been delineated with markers. Graves in a section of Town House Hill Cemetery have settled and are being leveled. Will Brinker has been helpful with organizing records. The Commission is meeting the first Friday of every month at 8am. Sue Turner complimented Greg Peck's care of the Town House Hill Cemetery.

Sue Funk: Collector/Treasurer

There is a new online payment module which allows tax payers to pay multiple town fees, but does not allow for scheduling of payments. It also allows tax payers to search taxes paid back to 2018. Sue feels that faster internet is needed.

Bill Tynan: Conservation Commission

The Commission held 20 hearings the past year and 10 continuances, with 50 site visits. Bill welcomed new member David Campbell and noted the recent resignation of a member. All forms have been updated by DEP. The Commission is redoing its filing system so it is by street address instead of name. The Commission anticipates no address changes.

Bruce Bernstein: Council on Aging

Bruce reported on the Council's participation with SAGE Triad, Berkshire Regional Transportation and the Regional Emergency Planning Commission. Through these groups the Council has been connected with Age Friendly Berkshires and Walk Boston. Three Council members are training to be Ombudsmen and will volunteer at Fairview Commons. The Council continues its monthly luncheons, coffee hours, good morning seniors program, exercise and wellness programs, sand for seniors program and the Be Seen Be Safe walking vest distribution program. The Council is planning a new focus to try to involve those 55 to 70 years old.

Robin Goldberg: Cultural Council

The Cultural Council is combined with Alford. The council awarded more than \$9,000 in grants to about 23 different local organizations.

Will Brinker: Emergency Management

The team, which includes the Fire Chief, Police Chief, Health Director, Road Superintendent, Buildings Superintendent, meets monthly. They team is getting more involved with seniors. The team recently updated the protocols for lost persons. The telephone alert system only uploads land line numbers. If you wish your digital phone line number and cell phone numbers to be a part of the system they need to be reported to Town hall. Planning grants have been obtained to pay for new radios, lights and for a portion of the alert system. The Fire Stations and the Town Hall are established as warming/cooling centers, or reception centers. The town's shelter is the Mount Everett High School.

Elliott Snyder: Board of Appeals

The Board anticipates a request for a variance from the Fire Department for an addition to the South Egremont Fire Station. Elliott reported on the recent resignation of one of the members. The Board has issued a permit for a retail marijuana shop that will have no off street traffic.

Laura Allen: Finance Committee:

Laura noted that the Committee would need no extra funds.

Joe Schneider: Fire Chief

The Department responded to over 200 calls last year. The new rescue truck is on its way. The South Egremont Fire Station addition is not being town funded. An OSHA audit was conducted of the

stations and the department will soon be making the required upgrades. The Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad will be asking the Town for funds in FY 2021 for the very first time. The Department is planning to ask to replace the 1996 Fire truck at an approximate cost of \$375,000. About 30% of the calls that the Department responds to are in Mount Washington. The taxpayers in Mount Washington should be asked to pay a portion of this cost. The membership is aging. The Department is in need of volunteers both male and female.

Jennifer Brown: French Park Committee

The new tennis courts are getting a lot of use. The French Park fund is seeking quotes on the installation of a single pickle ball court. The donated funds for the trail improvements have been received by the French Park fund and improvements should be made this fall. The rocks were removed from the horse back riding ring and a base layer of sand put down. Funds will be budgeted in the coming year for sand footing.

Marj Wexler: Green Committee

The Committee hosted its 11th annual road side clean up this past spring. Committee members continue to write articles promoting recycling for the Berkshire Edge. The management of the Compost at the Transfer Station has become a big job as residents are throwing things there, such as plastic bags, that do not belong. The Committee continues to manage the Swap Shop as well. These areas help to keep the weight of the trash down. The sale of compostables is popular. The Committee writes Eco-Tips for the bi-monthly newsletter. The October Plastic reduction challenge had about 100 participants. On the wish list is establishing a tool exchange library and a fix it café for small appliances. Also the Committee is looking at a municipal partnership in which there is a collaboration between the electric company and the community to reduce home energy usage.

Juliette Haas: Board of Health

The Board of Health is the protector of the public's health and public water. The Board did 25 Title V's and 30 Perc tests last year, as well as dealt with numerous nuisance complaints such as noise and odor complaints. The Town's restaurants do a fantastic job and inspected by the Berkshire Health Alliance. The Department took in about \$15,000 in fees over the last year and expect the same for the coming year. This years flu clinic had a record number of participants.

Jim Noe: Highway Department

Paving in the amount of \$300,000 took place on Taconic Lane and Boice Road with patch paving taking place on Mount Washington and Town House Hill Roads. Guard rails along Route 71 were repaired at a cost of \$29,000. The Town awaits the announcement of the MassWorks Grant awarded to see if the Creamery Road project was awarded a grant. Patch paving will continue next year on Mount Washington Road and McGee Road, and Town House Hill Road will be finished. Jim reported that there might possibly be grant funds available to buy a new truck to replace an older model truck. It was noted that the work of the Highway Department is very visible and very much appreciated.

Susan Bachelder: Historical Commission

Susan reported that she has submitted her resignation form the Commission and said it has been a pleasure to serve on the Commission. Individual members of the Commission will be spearheading the different aspects of the Commissions duties and projects. The Commissions role is to identify, evaluate and protect the town's historic assets. The Town has about 200 historic properties. The MACRS are being updated on all these properties. The Commission is trying to embrace the 20th century. The Commission tried to protect the Egremont Heights sign, as is one of the very early subdivisions, without success. There is a 1960's kit house on Jug End Road the Commission is working to protect and catalog. The Commission is beginning an oral history with the town's older citizens.

George McGurn: Human Resources

George reported the Human Resources Committee has been given an extension to its original 4 month appointment for another 6 months. The committee meets monthly and as needed, but one of the three members is covering the weekly hours of the former Personnel Director. The Committee is about to revive the search for a new Director. There is the possibility of sharing a Director with other towns.

Francine Groener: Library

The Library has 417 patrons, 30 of whom were new in 2018 and another 23 new in 2019. 3826 items were circulated. 535 items were received through the inter-Library program and 630 provided. There is a new book return at the Library. The little book exchange at Kenver's is very active. Two new ones are planned with one being placed in front of the South Egremont School House for sharing of children's books. The South Egremont School students visit the Library weekly. The Library is accepting a new router for enhanced wifi. The Librarian is hosting field trips to different locations. The building conditions report will be updated to get current cost estimates on repairs needed at the Library.

Greg Cherin: Planning Board

The Board has received more Form A's than in past years. The Board has met with the Housing Committee and is close to presenting an Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw for town meeting approval. The Board's next bid initiative is a Retail Marijuana bylaw. When that is complete the Board wants to revisit the Village District bylaws. Then the Board will bring to the table ground mounted residential solar arrays. The Board plans to ask for a level funded budget.

Jason LaForest: Police Department

The Chief noted he has been on the job for just 4 months. There were 4000 calls and 290 motor vehicle offenses in the past year, with 400 traffic offenses so far this year. Past scheduling issues have been rectified and the town now has 24/7 coverage by its department. Policies and procedures are being updated. The department has started the certification process. Traffic enforcement has been stepped up throughout town. With the current scheduling it may be possible to eliminate some part-time shifts saving anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year. The Department may also be able to save about \$5,000 per year by working with the Sheriff's Department on the IMC (the program used to run records) program instead of doing it alone. It may also save on some computer software maintenance costs. It will also enhance officer safety. The old cruiser has 110,000 miles on and the new one has 40,000. It may be time to replace the old and rotate the new. Both are used regularly. Cruiser laptops need to be updated. The RMV may have a grant for in-cruiser printers. It was noted by the Chairman McGurn that Egremont treasurers its Police Department. The Department received a grant for a new pill disposal box. And the Department now has its own firearms instructor which will save training funds. The work done by Chief LaForest over the past 4 months has been appreciated.

Marcella Bush and Danile Jordan-Kelly: School Committee

The Committee has been working on goals and training for the School Superintendent and the 2 principals. The new middle school curriculum is in use. A investigator has been hired to look at the concerns in the district. The new accounting firm will be putting together spreadsheets that will make the budget easier to read. The budget process will be starting soon. The program at the South Egremont School is going fabulously. The Greenagers are involved with planning some landscaping and a new playground in the works.

Juliette Haas: Town Clerk

Juliette reported that she in her 3rd year as Town Clerk following a Clerk who was in office for 33 years. She is asking for a salary increase comparable to other towns as she feels the salary was frozen. This was a calm year as far as elections but she is already gearing up for the 2020 Presidential election,

which will have early voting for both the primary and the election. Her role as Records Access Officer is time consuming. The records archives go back to 1847.

Bruce Bernstein: Trails & Greenways Committee

The Committee has been working with the Great Barrington Committee to resurrect the former Trolley Line as a walking trail. The trolley line is currently owned by private citizens. The Committee would like to look at all trail systems in Egremont. The Greenagers are enthusiastically helping.

Will Brinker: Water Department

The new operator has been learning this past year. Billing is more accurate which has reduced costs and brought in more income. Over the past 8 years water flowing through the plant went from 28,000,000 gallons to 11,500,000 gallons. Leak detection continues with the help of Mass Rural Water services. Meter batteries are being replaced. On the list for next year is funding for infrastructure repairs. The budget should be level funded.

Jenn Brown: Agricultural Commission

The Pollinator Plan is in the works with a review of the town being made. Part of the plan may be the possibility of planting pollinator friendly plants near the Dog Park and at the Library. The plan will include information on how residents can plant pollinator friendly plants as well. These will be native plants. The Commission may need funds to purchase the plants and seeds.

Lucinda Vermeulen: Broadband

The negotiating team is very close to a final agreement with Fiber Connect and feel it should be ready for presentation to the Board at its November 5 meeting. Fiber Connect is working with MBI on the funding mechanism. A positive outcome as early as November 6 is anticipated.

Chairman McGurn updated the Board on the School District Consolidation talks which will have financial implications for the Town. Negotiations are expected to last for years. Issues surrounding the district debt, cost sharing, infrastructure and assets are complex. Egremont has been encouraged to have a strong voice. Chairman McGurn proposed a letter, that he will draft, be sent to DESE signed by the Board and the Finance Committee. It was noted that a vocational school is very much needed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

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The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.