

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: October 3, 2023
Time: 10:00 AM
Place: Via Zoom Meeting & Town Hall
Egremont

Present at the meeting in person were Selectboard Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie, Finance Committee Chair Laura Allen, Moderator Steve Cohen, Stacey Shultz, Town Clerk Juliette Haas, for a short time Richard Allen.

Present via zoom were Mary McGurn, Marj Wexler, Doug Mishkin, Eileen Vining, Peg McDonough, Susan Bachelder, Dan Blitzer, Charles Ogden, and for a short time Jake Eberwwin and Berkshire Eagle.

The meeting was audio and video recorded.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the September 19 meeting were accepted with minor edits.

NEW BUSINESS:

The issue regarding the Board of Health Chairmanship was resolved prior the meeting.

The Board voted unanimously to issue a letter of support for 1Berkshire's application for a Regional Economic Development Organization grant to continue its work in identifying and strategically coordinating collaborative efforts and projects that have meaningful impact and provide ongoing incentivization for deepened investment, industry growth, resiliency, and equitable entrepreneurial access across the regional economy.

The Board voted unanimously to release the following executive session minutes as they relate to the parking/access agreement with 50 Prospect Lake LLC.

December 13, 2022
January 10, 2023
January 17, 2023
February 13, 2023 redacted

OLD BUSINESS:

Office Administrator Brazie reported that she had long conversations with Attorney David McCay and Attorney Russel Dupere regarding the town's need for a labor and employment lawyer. Both are very knowledge with years of experience in the field and both serve several other towns. Attorney Dupere was most familiar with the POST requirements under the Police Reforms laws, is closer being based in Westfield MA, has a lower hourly rate and is familiar with Town Counsel Jeremia Pollard having worked with him on issues for other towns. The Board voted unanimously to accept the retainer agreement with Attorney Russel Dupere.

Board of Health Director Juliette Haas has withdrawn her request to issue a letter of concern to the Department of Public Utilities regarding the new guidelines for municipal aggregations.

There is no information for the Board to review in regard to the borrowing term for the Mount Washington Road engineering funds.

Finance Committee member Thomas Berkel has proposed a fire services assessment to the Town of Mount Washington in the amount of \$42,390. The fee, based on the town's expenses, also takes into consideration the extra time and miles that is required in responding to the Town of Mount Washington, as well as depreciation for equipment, and is based on equalized value of town property vs total number of parcels. The Board voted unanimously to adopt this approach and to edit Article 12 of the Fire Service agreement to reflect this. An invoice for the assessment will be sent to the Town of Mount Washington.

The Board spent extensive time discussing the date, time, place and the articles for an October, 2023 Special Town Meeting. The Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB) official recommendation and a draft of the regional school district agreement was received the afternoon of October 2 starting the clock ticking for the required vote within 30 days of notice to consider a new 8-town regional school district. The RSDPB has asked that all towns hold the town meeting on October 23, 2023 at 6:00PM. Ultimately Egremont was unable to conform to this request because the staff at Southern Berkshire Regional School District, where both Sheffield and Egremont meet, have stated in writing that the parking capacity is not large enough for both towns to meet at the same time. A majority of the Board won't utilize Egremont's secondary meeting location at Catamount because of past complaints regarding accessibility issues, lack of lighting in the parking lot and audio problems. Thus the Select Board voted unanimously to hold its meeting at the Mount Everett High School cafeteria on Saturday, October 21, 2023 at 10:00am. The Board voted unanimously to include on the warrant the following articles in this order:

ARTICLE 1: \$29,000.00 to pay mandated back wages to a police officer

ARTICLE 2: \$10,000.00 for legal fees

ARTICLE 3: Vote to rename its Board of Selectmen the Select Board, by amending the General By-Laws to add a new Bylaw 22.

ARTICLE 4: Vote to accept the provisions of sections sixteen to sixteen I, inclusive, of chapter seventy-one of the General Laws providing for the establishment of an eight town regional school district, together with the towns of Great Barrington, Sheffield, New Marlborough, Stockbridge, Monterey, West Stockbridge, and Alford, to be known as the Southern Berkshire Hills Regional School District.

Town Clerk Juliette Haas noted that some of the members of the 8 towns proposed to be in the new district are printing ballots to be used in the voting tabulator. The Board agreed that this was not necessary. The paper ballot including the wording of the article will be printed in house and counted by hand.

The Egremont three person delegation to the RSDPB , which includes Select Board Chairman George McGurn, Egremont School Committee member James DiPisa and Finance Committee Vice-Chairman Thomas Berkel as well as former School Committee member Danielle Jordan, will hold an outreach meeting on a date to be determined.

The Town will utilize the reverse 911 phone program to send out a robo call, as well as its email group and web page, to announce both the outreach meeting and the Special Town Meeting.

Susan Bachelder offered to coordinate child care for parents attending.

GRANTS:

Grant Administrator Peg McDonough presented ideas for grant applications under the FY 24Community Compact program.

Best Practices: the town could possibly obtain help updating its Americans with Disabilities self evaluations and transition plan, though employees did a great job with these in the past.

IT Grant: Digitizing Town Hall paper files and maps per state though Peg felt town department's may not be read as it is recommended that records be purged first so unnecessary files are not being digitized.

Efficiency and Regionalization: Shared personnel with other Towns, either planning across departments or start with hiring a shared Conservation Officer between 2-4 other towns. Prior difficulties in this area have shown this may not be worth the effort to Egremont.

Municipal Fiber Grant Program: Possible additional funds to continue with Mesh WiFi buildout due to changes in the scope of work.

Peg asked that the agenda for the next Select Board meeting include discussion of a Green Communities grant to upgrade the heating system in Town Hall.

SELECT BOARD ITEMS:

The next meeting of the Board will be October 17, 2023 at 10:00am.

Meeting adjourned at 11:46am.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.24/oct3

The recording of the minutes is posted on the Town's web page at www.egremont-ma.gov for 90 days. Any attachments noted are on file at Town Hall.