

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
March 20, 2018**

Call to Order

Chairman Kevin Morse called the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Resource Room of the Municipal Center.

ATTENDANCE:

Board: Kevin Morse (Chairman), Tim Bonin, David Cortese (Vice Chairman), Hal Davis, Mike Hughes, Matt Wojcik (Town Administrator), Suzanne Kane (Administrative Assistant)

Library: Justin Snook (Director), Joe Biagioni (Chair)

Other Staff and Citizens: Atty. Rich Bowen, Jeanne Lovett (Finance Director), Police Chief Nick Miglionico, Fire Chief Kent Vinson, Eric Chamberland (22 Charles Street), Luke MacNeil (25 Marilyn Drive) and many other citizens.

- **Pledge of Allegiance (00:12)**
- **Chairman's Announcements (00:36)**
There were no announcements.
- **Citizen's Forum (00:39)**
No one came forward.

1. Class II License: Brevigleiri-All Around Auto Sales. Possible Vote(s) (00:47)

In the packet is an application for a class II license.

Ms. Kane stated that the license is new because this is a new location. Mr. Brevigleiri will not be doing business out of his home. He is restricted to two cars and he is not to post sales. Mr. Brevigleiri joined the meeting.

Mr. Cortese made a motion to approve the class II license for All Around Auto Sales. Mr. Bonin seconded the motion. All-Aye.

2. Appointment: Economic Development, Luke MacNeil. Possible Vote(s) (02:45)

In the packet is an application for Luke MacNeil.

This application is to fill Eric Chamberland's spot. Mr. MacNeil joined the meeting and spoke about his interest in the committee.

Mr. Bonin made a motion to appoint Luke MacNeil to the Economic Development Commission for a term ending June 30, 2021. Mr. Cortese seconded the motion.

3. Beagle Club Liquor License: Change of Officers. Possible Vote(s) (04:56)

Ms. Kane stated that the Beagle Club elects its officers every year and

they must notify the ABCC.

Mr. Davis made a motion to approve the change of officers for the Beagle Club. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion. All-Aye.

4. New Common Victuallers License: Sokol Club, Possible Vote(s) (05:41)

In the packet is an application and related materials.

Ms. Kane presented the application.

Mr. Hughes made a motion to approve the Common Victuallers license for the Sokol Club. Mr. Cortese seconded the motion. All-Aye.

5. Review Warrant: COLA, Compensation Schedule, General Bylaw Regarding Private Roads, Prop 2 ½ Override Question (6:09)

Mr. Wojcik presented budget scenarios. With a Proposition 2 ½ (Prop 2.5) override of \$1.5 million, the Town would be able to balance the budget for the next five years and invest in capital while raising the school budget 1% every year and keeping the library open. Dispatch would not be regionalized and no new staff could be hired, other than a Facilities Manager. Health insurance savings would need to be managed.

Mr. Morse stated that, every way he has looked at the budget, by 2021 the Town cannot make payroll. He is not a proponent of an a-la-carte approach to an override, as it does not solve the overall budget balancing problems. Mr. Wojcik presented some live budgeting scenarios. He spoke about the dangers of using Free Cash to balance a budget.

Brett Argall of 3 Royal Crest Drive stated that a \$200,000 proposed reduction to the Town's assessment to the School Dept. actually represents a deficit of \$650,000 from the School Dept.'s requested level-service budget.

Dennis Salatiello of 22 Caswell Court asked how much the average homeowner would expect taxes to increase with a \$1.5 million override. Ms. Lovett stated that the current tax rate is 16.07; the new tax rate would be 17.60. Based on the average home value of \$296,100, this would mean an increase of \$453.00 annually.

Mr. Salatiello asked, after a successful \$1.5 million override, what happens after five years. In short, Mr. Morse stated that it is not possible to tell. The Town is hoping to keep a five-year budget projection going forward. Mr. Wojcik stated that in 2023 and 2026 debt exclusions will roll off and the tax rate should diminish.

Luke MacNeil asked what would happen if the Town ran out of money. Atty. Bowen responded that it would depend on the degree of the deficit. If a town is unable to balance their budget, the Dept. of Revenue (DOR) would step in, force the town to submit estimated tax returns and borrow to make up revenue. The DOR will not approve a certification of a tax rate until the budget is balanced, which would most likely mean services are cut and supplemental taxes imposed. In a case of municipal bankruptcy or a State mandated receivership, all local control over the operation of government ceases.

Dawn Fontaine of 25 Charles Street asked how a new tax rate of 17.6 compares to other local communities. Ms. Lovett replied that you need to look at

the average tax bill. She believes that Douglas is below the average.

Lisa Mosczynski of 60 Oak Street asked the mechanics of an override vote. Atty. Bowen explained the process. The ability to place this item on the May 8, 2018 ballot was discussed.

Ms. Lovett has spoken with the Town's financial advisor, and bond companies do not favorably view having overrides fail, however this is a unique situation because if the override is not on the warrant and/or does not pass, the library will close. Further cuts would hurt the bond rating. Closing of the library is a symptom of the problem and is only the first of many services that would be affected.

Fred Fontaine of 25 Charles Street asked if the BOS would recommend and support a Prop. 2.5 override, and the consensus of the BOS was in the affirmative, as it was in 2016.

Rebecca Lavalley of Northwest Main Street asked, if a Prop. 2.5 override had passed in 2016, where would the Town's financials be currently. Mr. Morse replied that it is hard to forecast, but they would not be having the discussion they are having today. Mr. Morse stated that the BOS still has a lot of work to do, because unless the Town sees more revenues, there will continue to be financial deficits. Mr. Wojcik stated that all the savings initiatives that occurred from 2016 to present may not have happened if there were not so much budget pressure to accomplish them. He spoke about the dramatic increases in expenses that the Town has no control over, namely Blackstone Valley Tech (BVT), pensions, health insurance, School Choice-Out, and Special Education and school transportation.

Lori Colbert of 11 Crescent Lane asked if the current five year budget projection assumes the expenses Mr. Wojcik just spoke about. Mr. Wojcik stated that control needs to be gained over school transportation and BVT.

Mark Mungeam of 20 Depot Street inquired as to what PILOT is. Mr. Morse explained that it is State-owned land payments in lieu of taxes. Atty. Bowen provided further information. Mr. Mungeam suggested grouping together with other communities to approach the State. Atty. Bowen stated that the law does not allow a class action suit. A discussion was held.

Dick Vandenberg of 52 Linden asked about Douglas' efforts to expand the Town's industrial base. Mr. Davis explained that most of the property suitable for development is not owned by people that want to bring business to the site.

A gentleman in the audience asked if there was a way to re-appropriate State Owned land back to the Town and the short answer is no.

Frank Sabatino of 249 Southeast Main Street asked how many retirees in the Town are going to be forced to pay this tax increase. Mr. Morse stated that the townspeople are being provided with the opportunity to choose a budget. Ms. Lovett stated that according to the US Dept. of Congress 2016, 906 Douglas residents are age 65 years or older. A majority of the community is pre-retirement age.

Mr. Hughes made a motion to place a Proposition 2.5 override

question for \$1.5 million on the May 8, 2018 election ballot. Mr. Cortese seconded the motion. All-Aye.

Atty. Bowen emailed a sample ballot question and sample motion to the Town Administrator, which will need to be voted upon at the next meeting. Mr. Wojick suggested the BOS meet next Wednesday and discuss assumptions should the Prop. 2.5 override fail. It was decided to move the March 28, 2018 meeting to Thursday, March 29, 2018 at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Wojcik stated that there is an article on the warrant asking for a general bylaw amendment regarding the Town's ability to be involved in the maintenance of private roads. Town Counsel has consistently advised the Town to not be involved in the maintenance of private roads. However, roadways must be accessible for emergency services. It is most cost effective to maintain the road with small repairs over time rather than to wait for it to be impassible. This amendment would allow the Town to engage in minor repairs such as grading and filling small potholes, without incurring the liability of being on that private road. Authority for major repairs could go before the BOS by petition instead of Town Meeting.

A gentleman in the audience asked how many miles of road in Douglas are private and asked if this bylaw includes snow removal. Mr. Wojick stated that Town Meeting many years ago authorized Douglas to provide snow plowing on private roads. Mr. Wojcik believes there is approximately 80 miles of accepted public roads and 45 miles of private roads.

Roy Swenson of 565 Northwest Main Street asked if Massachusetts mandates that towns maintain private roads and the answer is the opposite. Private roads are private property.

Mr. Hughes made a motion to place the Use of Private Way bylaw on the May 7, 2018 Town Meeting warrant. Mr. Cortese seconded the motion. All-Aye.

6. First Look at Annual Appointments (1:36:18)

In the packet is a list of annual appointments.

Ms. Kane presented the list. She will be sending letters out to those whose terms are expiring asking them if they would like to be considered for reappointed, and she will ask the boards if they support the reappointments.

7. Approve Minutes: March 6, 2018 Regular Session (1:36:52)

Mr. Hughes made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2018 regular session BOS meeting as presented. Seconded by Mr. Cortese. All-Aye.

8. Town Administrator's Report (1:37:43)

Mr. Wojcik stated that as of 2/22/18, due to the purchase of supplies, the cap in the Snow & Ice Account has been exceeded. The new authorization has been set at \$350,000, which is \$165,000 more than originally budgeted. Two more Nor'easters are expected.

Mr. Wojcik stated that the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is having a Resource Management Plan meeting on Wednesday, 3/28/18 at the

Bellingham Public Library to discuss the planning associated with the Blackstone Complex of State-owned land.

Atty. Bowen stated that he has been in touch with the other party involved in a real estate matter and has not heard back from them. Pursuant to the BOS's directive, he will be working on transactional documents for their review.

9. Old/New Business (1:40:23)

Old Business: Mr. Bonin asked about the status of calling on an audience from the Governor. Mr. Morse has sent the Governor some emails asking for his and the Lt. Governor's presence at this evening's meeting. Mr. Morse received a declination due to scheduling issues. He was referred to DCR Commissioner Beaton's office. Mr. Morse has invited the Governor, Lt. Governor and Commissioner Beaton to the Finance Committee meetings and he has not heard back from them as of yet. Mr. Morse also invited Rep. McKenna and Sen. Fattman.

New Business: There was no new business.

10. Adjournment (1:41:35)

Mr. Hughes made a motion at 8:46 PM to adjourn. Mr. Cortese seconded the motion. All-Aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Wright
Recording Secretary