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SELECTMEN'S MEETING June 4, 2013

The Board of Selectmen held a Selectmen's Meeting on Tuesday, June 4, 2013, at 7:04 p.m. at the West Thompson Independent Fire Department.

PRESENT: Lawrence K. Groh, Jr., First Selectman; Kenneth Beausoleil, Selectman; Kerstin Forrester, Selectman; Rene Morin – Tax Collector, Tonya Park, Norma O'Leary, Jason Bleau – WINY Radio, Roger Tremblay, James Niedyalkoski, Christine Campbell, Steven Bodreau, John Sharpe, Lisa Sharpe, Alvan Hill, Kevin Walsh, Joseph Gaucher, Sally White and other concerned citizens.

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by Mr. Beausoleil, seconded by Mrs. Forrester, to accept the minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting of May 7, 2013, with 2 corrections:

1. Made by Mr. Beausoleil, Page 2, item 3) Selectmen's Comments - He stated that a brush fire can take hours to put out and is very difficult to control, and he reminded everyone that you need a permit to burn and to contact the "**town burning officer, Paul Grenier,**" to apply for a burning permit.
2. Made by Mrs. Forrester, Page 6, item 13) Citizen's Comments – Mrs. Forrester "**asked if there is a policy or procedure in place**" for paying invoices.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester - Yes

Motion made by Mrs. Forrester, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, to accept the minutes of the Selectmen's Meeting of May 21, 2013.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

2) CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Mr. Groh presented a copy of an email from Roger Durand regarding fire department issues.
2. He also read, for the record, a letter addressed to American Legion Post 67, copied to the Selectmen, from David Kress who is President of the Jessie Hay Memorial Association regarding the decorating and placing of flags on veteran's grave sites for Memorial Day. He explained that each year it is mandatory for all scouts, both boy scouts and cub scouts, under their charter to decorate the graves. He further stated that traditionally the graves are decorated the Saturday before Memorial Day. Notice was published in the Shopper's Guide that the graves would be decorated on Saturday, May 18, 2013. He stated that this is the second time in recent years that the American Legion Post received short notice, without the scouts available, that they would have to decorate on a weekday. He explained that after finding out that the graves were decorated on Thursday, May 16, 2013, he went to visit his parent's grave sites to make sure that they were both decorated and he noted that their section had not been mowed or trimmed and he also noticed that most of the flags would have to be removed to clean up the cemetery by Memorial Day. He indicated that he is sending this letter to the American Legion to let them know that decorating the graves means a lot to the scouts and is requesting that they be allowed to continue to participate in this practice and that the scouts were disappointed that they were not able to participate this year and to let

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the Board of Selectmen know that the flags are paid for by the taxpayers and should be placed on the graves with respect. Mr. Groh stated that the town does indeed pay for the flags; the money goes alternately to the American Legion one year and the VFW the next year, and they coordinate the celebration and they are funded approximately \$2,000.00 every year to accomplish this. He also agreed that it is important to teach the scouts to respect for our veterans.

3) SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS:

Mr. Groh thanked the West Thompson Fire Department for allowing them to use their facility to conduct their meetings and that it is greatly appreciated. Mr. Groh stated that John Bell has regretfully resigned as Chairperson from the Fire Advisory Committee, and he would like to appoint Selectmen Kerstin Forrester to Chair the Committee under 11) Other Business.

Motion made by Mr. Groh, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, to move the appointment of Selectmen Kerstin Forrester to Chairperson of the Fire Advisory Committee to 11) Other Business.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

Mr. Groh also stated that the Tax Collector's office has had a person out on sick leave for an extended period, without pay. He further stated that since they still have the money in the budget and since July is the busiest month of the year, he would like to hire someone temporarily to fill this position. He stated that if the other Selectmen have no objection that he would like to move forward to fill this position. The Board was in agreement.

Mrs. Forrester also thanked everyone who participated in the parade and she further stated that it was pretty well attended.

Mr. Beausoleil agreed with Mrs. Forrester and he stated that it was a fitting tribute. He also stated that the budget did pass and that the education budget was close by 24 votes.

4) CITIZEN'S COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:

Mr. Groh asked that any comments relating to item 6) and item 9) be held off until they come to those sections on the agenda.

5) REQUEST FOR PARKING LOT USAGE – PROJECT GRADUATION 2014:

Motion made by Mr. Beausoleil, seconded by Mrs. Forrester, to approve the use of the Town Hall parking lot on the requested list of dates for the bottle and can drive.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

6) REQUEST FOR RFQ – SOLAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Mr. Groh stated that he received a request from Chairperson, Alvan Hill, of the Solar Advisory Committee to add a request for qualification for the solar survey to the agenda. Mr. Hill stated that he would like to request to have the Town Planner issue a Request for Qualification for a survey and recommendation for a solar system for five town buildings. He would ask that the request is received from the supplier no later than June 17, 2013, by 5:00 p.m. so that he can present the information at the BOS June 18, 2013, meeting. Mr. Beausoleil asked if the Committee considered the transfer station for the project. Mr. Hill stated that the distance of the building would require virtual net metering which he explained would be quite expensive. He further explained that since the five buildings considered are close together and large, they would benefit by using solar panels. Sally White asked a question on whether or not the town is

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looking to purchase or lease the panels. Mr. Hill stated that when they make a presentation to the BOS they would like to present both options. He further explained that some towns use a PPA or lease type of option and some towns, like Woodstock, own their system outright. There are also 7 and 10 year buyout plans. Mrs. Forrester emphasized that this request for qualification is for the survey and recommendation only not for the system itself and the cost would be approximately \$1,000.00. Kevin Walsh asked the question on whether or not the companies that they are looking at have been properly vetted. Mr. Hill stated that they would not present to the BOS a company that is not vetted and that right now they have five companies that they are considering. Mr. Walsh asked about the life expectancy of the solar panels. Mr. Hill stated that the new panels can withstand 1 inch hail. Mr. Groh reiterated the same question regarding longevity. Mr. Hill stated that the micro inverters are warranted for twenty-five years and that a good micro-inverter can last fifty plus years. He also stated that string inverters have a ten year warranty and fail between ten and fifteen years. Mr. Hill further indicated that they would also look into purchasing panels from auction.

Mr. Groh asked Mr. Hill what has changed since their last request to the BOS? He also stated that he appreciated that they have come up with the five buildings, but still wanted to know what has changed? Mrs. Forrester stated that the big difference is that they are not looking for a request for quote to purchase a system but only a recommendation on a system. Mr. Hill also stated that, in addition, they are now looking for a system analysis on the five buildings, what it is going to cost and how many panels are needed. Mr. Groh suggested that while they get a request for qualification that they get a request for quote as well.

Ms. White suggested that they require a motion to define what the Committee is going to do. Mr. Groh stated that a motion is not in order.

The Board agreed to have the Town Planner write up a request for qualification for a consultant to do the survey on the five buildings, or a recommendation for a system, and a request for quote on the cost of the survey and have the Committee make their presentation to the BOS for approval.

7) APPROVAL OF TAX WARRANT/RATE BILL:

Mr. Beausoleil read the Tax Warrant sec 12-132 dated June 5, 2013, and the Rate Bill indicating the tax rate of 22.42 mils on the dollar on the grand list of October 1, 2012, dated June 4, 2012, for the record.

Motion made by Mrs. Forrester, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, for the BOS to approve the Tax Warrant/Rate Bill.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

8) APPROVAL OF RECREATION SUMMER TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES:

Motion made by Mr. Beausoleil, seconded by Mrs. Forrester, to approve recreation summer temporary employees for the year 2013 as listed.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

Mrs. Forrester inquired as to the pay rate. Mr. Groh stated that they earn the minimum wage of \$8.25 per hour and that the money is in a summer fund that is paid into by the parents.

9) FIRE PROTECTION CONSULTANT:

Mr. Groh began by reviewing a list of items to be included in a study on fire and emergency services for a fire protection consultant's review. He asked for the citizens to please give their input on these items or to suggest any additional items.

- Review and analysis of current recruitment and retention.

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- Review and analysis of all existing apparatus as to age, condition and appropriate service life.
- Review and analysis of number and styles of apparatus in use today and the appropriateness of those items for the needs of the town.
- Review and analysis of the town's apparatus needed over the next 25 years.
- Review and analysis of station placement distribution and resources and resource redundancy.
- Review and analysis of response in the districts.

Mr. Groh stated that they expect to spend approximately \$7,500.00 to hire a consultant. He then asked for any comments or questions.

John Sharpe asked a question regarding the consultant's qualifications and how will the BOS make their decision on selecting the consultant and will they have the Fire Advisory Committee make the selection.

Mr. Groh stated that, right now, he is looking at someone who is local and has been in the field for over 30 years. Mr. Sharpe suggested that the consultant be someone either involved, or has been involved, with a fire company or fire service, and is this consultant something that would go out to bid. Mr. Groh stated that anything over \$10,000.00 or more would have to go out to bid.

Alvan Hill asked is this an unusual request and Mr. Groh stated that a lot of questions come up every year regarding the fire departments; do they want to go to a tax district for the fire service, consolidation of fire departments, retention of volunteers and so on and it is usually around budget time and always too late in the fiscal year to make any decisions. He stated that they are trying to start this process of reviewing the fire department issues early in the budget process, which starts in January, and the proper time to start the process is now, way before the budget process begins.

Steve Bodreau commented that the town needs to talk to all of the fire departments and not just the Fire Advisory Committee and why pay for a consultant when they have a Fire Advisory Committee. Mr. Groh stated that he is not looking to reproduce what the Fire Advisory Committee has done, but he explained that he is looking for someone to help them out more than anything else, and they would like to hire someone from the outside who can be objective in reviewing the situation. Sally White suggested that they create a list of consolidated items to send to the fire departments for their review and comment instead of spending more money when they have people within the fire departments who are experienced and more than capable of doing the same job as the consultant.

Kevin Walsh asked where are the funds going to come from, and Mr. Groh stated that they would have to make a request to the BOF and they would have to tell the BOS where the funds come from. He also inquired as to when the Fire Advisory Committee's report will be available and Mr. Groh stated that their secretary has resigned which is holding things up but they are working on it. Mr. Walsh agreed that one advantage in having someone come in from the outside and being objective would be the way to handle this since he has heard of turf wars among the fire departments. Mrs. Forrester added to his statement by saying that to have a benchmark, or a way to measure their performance, is always a good way to do things.

Mr. Sharpe commented that he has heard a lot of discussion about consolidation among the fire departments and that what a lot of people don't realize is that each fire department is an independently owned entity and they get a small amount of funds from the town and he further stated that he can't thank the town enough for what they do get. He agreed that bringing in a consultant may be the right thing to do and bringing in someone from the outside would ensure that they would be completely 100% unbiased. He agreed with Mr. Bodreau that they should talk to the fire department to get their input and not just the Fire Advisory Committee.

Sally White commented that it is important not to demoralize the members of the fire departments, especially since they are all volunteers, and that they may not want to leap up to a government consolidation. Mr. Groh stated consolidation didn't come from the Selectmen and he does not want to consolidate but it has come up in conversation previously. He further stated that he is looking for an objective person to help out the fire departments. He also realized that they are all private and all volunteers and they appreciate what they do, but the town is charged with public safety and they want to help them out to better serve the community. He stated that a consultant can tell them what is needed and what is not needed and perhaps make some suggestions on how to make better decisions on the budget and spending.

Mr. Sharpe went on to explain in detail what the regulations are on replacing fire gear and equipment including when to replace tires on different apparatus. He further stated that they do not have the funds to replace equipment when they are required to do so. They have equipment that is outdated and they also

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cannot afford to do the testing of any of the equipment to determine what is actually unusable. He did comment that since they are a small town that most of the equipment does not have the same usage as a large city. He stated that they get approximately \$40,000.00 and their fixed expenses are approximately \$72,000.00 and they do a lot of fund raising to help out. He stated that they spend too much time on fund raising and not enough time on training.

Mr. Beausoleil commented that taxpayers do not know what the fire departments are up against and what their requirements are. He said that there are a lot of questions on redundancy with equipment and maybe there is a very good reason for this. He further stated that maybe having a consultant will help out with this issue. Mr. Groh stated that he understands the volunteer hours and the training and how difficult this is but if they have something in writing it would better explain what they need. Lisa Sharpe suggested that they add to the list of items - Review and Analysis of Training and Qualifications.

Mr. Groh thanked everyone for their input. Mr. Beausoleil stated that they should move forward in this fiscal year. Mrs. Forrester suggested that they need to find a consultant who can meet the needs of a small town with volunteers and not a city with paid firemen. She also stated that they should have the Fire Advisory Committee process the interviews. The BOS agreed to make a request to the BOF with their plan at their next BOF meeting.

Motion made by Mrs. Forrester, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, to make a request to the Board of Finance for a sum of money up to \$9,500.00 to hire a separate consultant to perform a study on fire and emergency services for the town.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

10) TAX REFUNDS:

Motion made by Mr. Groh, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, to refund the following overpayment as recommended by the Tax Collector, Rene Morin.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes
Mrs. Forrester – Yes

Kevin Bergeron \$ 214.04

11) OTHER BUSINESS:

- Motion made by Mr. Groh, seconded by Mr. Beausoleil, to appoint Selectmen Kerstin Forrester as the new Chairperson of the Fire Advisory Committee.

Mr. Groh - Yes
Mr. Beausoleil - Yes

- Mr. Groh received a memo from the Town Planner regarding the 12 unit residential development affordable housing appeal drainage proposed as part of the development. The P&Z Commission public hearing on the subject of the 12 unit residential development which includes 4 units set aside; said units to be restricted to income eligible buyers, was opened at the P&Z Commission meeting May 29, 2013, and continued to June 24, 2013. It was requested that the BOS review and provide formal comment to include in the public hearing record regarding the attached copies showing specifically the proposed drainage construction which is shown to be located within the town's Buckley Hill Road right-of-way and which upon completion the town will be responsible for maintenance and repair. Noted was the previous proposal for the property with special permit to construct a 4-unit residential development showing the same drainage proposal was approved by the P&Z Commission in 2007. The approval subsequently has lapsed. The plan was previously forwarded to Leo Adams from public works asking for review and

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comment and he indicated that he had no concerns regarding the proposal. Mr. Groh stated that the highway foremen doesn't have any issues with handling the drainage that is currently there. Mr. Groh further stated that the plan was not brought before the BOS for any comment back in 2007, and he further stated that he would have had the same concerns then as he does now on adding work to the town. He commented that they are responsible for the roads and P&Z is responsible for the land use of that property. The BOS reviewed the plans for a spillway from the housing area with two catch basins. They stated that as long as the property owner is responsible for the spillway that they wouldn't have any issues. Mr. Groh commented the he will type a letter to the P&Z Commission stating their concerns on adding work for the highway department for any new drainage.

12) CITIZEN'S COMMENTS:

- Roger Tremblay had several questions regarding the new tax district for Quaddick Lake. He asked where the town meeting will be. Mr. Groh stated at the Quinebaug Fire Department on July 13, 2013, 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. He asked who will be able to vote. Mr. Groh stated that you have to be a year round resident and are registered to vote. Lastly, he inquired how they are going to verify that year round residents are voting. Mr. Groh commented that the only way to verify year round residency is by using a paper ballot and presenting I.D.
- Sally White asked what the authority is that alters voting. Mr. Groh indicated that there is a law that states that to implement any new tax district of any kind that only the residents that are affected of the said district can vote and that they have to be full time residents and be registered voters. Also if the new tax district is implemented, then the other residents who are registered voters can vote on other issues such as the budget.
- Ms. White stated that she has seen five buses that do not appear to be in use and have been parked for a long time and what is the status of these buses. Mr. Groh stated that he has received an email from Dr. Jolin regarding a list of buses that are no longer in use and that it is the responsibility of the town to dispose of the buses. Christine Campbell commented that she heard at the BOE meeting that they are waiting until there are enough of them to scrap. Mr. Beausoleil stated they won't dispose of the busses until the school asks them to scrap them and if scrapped, the money goes back to the town.

13) ADJOURN:

Motion made by Mr. Beausoleil, seconded by Mrs. Forrester, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Mr. Groh -Yes
Mr. Beausoleil -Yes
Mrs. Forrester -Yes

Recorded and transcribed by Patricia Lacasse