

TOWN OF MARLBORO
REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
Thursday, September 26, 2019
5:00 PM

ATTENDANCE: Present were Select Board members Tyler Gibbons, Chair; Jesse Kreitzer, Vice Chair; Julia von Ranson, Member; Linda Peters, Town Treasurer; David Elliott, Road Foreman; Sally White, Bob Elliott, Cathy Cunliffe, Staley McDermet, Nat Waring, Sunny Tappan, Gail MacArthur, Dave Matt, Alain Ratheau, Edie Mas, Nancy Anderson, Bob Anderson, Bradley Poster, Catherine Hamilton, Luann Kreitzer Town Residents; and Lauren MacArthur, Select Board Assistant.

CALL TO ORDER: Tyler Gibbons, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.

Scheduled Business:

Tyler opened the public discussion about the possibility of hiring a fourth road crew member and the possibility of paving a section of Higley Hill Road by outlining the agenda and setting a half hour for each topic.

David Elliott introduced the topic of hiring a fourth road crew member and some of the benefits of doing so. Gail MacArthur asked if this hire would eliminate the hiring of part time help in the winter and David said it would. Right now, the town is spending around \$17,000/year on a winter road maintenance assistant. Linda estimated that hiring a fourth full-time road crew member would cost the town an additional \$43,000/year, including salary and benefits (and taking into account the elimination of the winter maintenance assistant position).

Sunny Tappan stated that she would be in favor of an additional full-time road crew member if it meant that more tree-limbing and ditch maintenance would occur. Dave Matt asked if it is challenging to find an assistant for winter work and David Elliott stated that it has not been hard in the past, but it might not always be easy to find a qualified worker, ready to step in for seasonal work. Edie Mas stated support of the proposal as it increases the pool of people, especially considering that not all of the regular road crew members are always present (if out sick or on vacation, for example). Bradley Poster expressed frustration that Moss Hollow is in poor condition and potholes have not been fixed. Staley McDermet restated that it would be challenging to reduce the size of the road crew after it has been expanded.

Nancy Anderson wondered if hiring someone part-time would be sufficient. Tyler asked Linda and David to discuss whether contracting work or hiring a part-time road crew member were possibilities and David stated that it is challenging to call upon someone at the last minute, if seeking help in the event of winter storms or other events requiring immediate action. He also stated that it's usually less expensive to do work "in-house", rather than contracting others to come in and do work, with mowing as an exception, (since the Town does not own mowing equipment). Bob Anderson shared his experience outsourcing jobs such as hiring haulers of gravel.

Gail MacArthur asked if there are particular qualifications in a new road crew member that the Town would be looking for. Many agreed that road-grading experience would be important.

Tyler read notes from residents who could not attend this evening's meeting, including Allison Turner's note of support for hiring a fourth road crew member. Marcia Hamilton stated in an email that she supports the hiring of a fourth crew member with experience, especially if able to run the road grader. Staley asked if all road crew members are usually trained to use all equipment. David Elliott answered that not all members are, but they try to get everyone trained. David also mentioned the new state requirements for ditches and drainage. Jesse Kreitzer stated that safety and productivity and long-term planning for projects are key considerations in this decision.

Tyler and David Elliott introduced the discussion of paving a section of Higley Hill. David stated that the section is actually 1.9 miles in length, although only and that Higley Hill is the most heavily used road in the town. (When the state did a study of use, they counted 350-489 cars/day on this section of road.) This section is problematic especially during mud season as travelers begin traveling on pavement in Wilmington and then hit the dirt on the Marlboro side. Funding for paving was explained and David reviewed the costs of paving vs. maintaining dirt roads, using estimates based on the assumption that the blacktop would last approximately 18 years. To put pavement longevity in context, David stated that Higley Hill was last paved in 2011. South Road was paved in sections in 2000 and 2006 and the whole thing was repaved in 2015 (while it was still in decent condition). Augur Hole was last paved in 1996. Bradley Poster observed that dirt roads seem safer than paved roads. Edie asked which end of Higley Hill would be paved, and David answered that he is prioritizing the lower end (to Hughes Rd.), as it would help to open up access to Stearns Hill, Lower Dover and Hughes Rd. Dave Matt stated that he believes paving would be too expensive, would increase traffic, encourage motorists to go faster, and would ruin the rural character of the road, which he values highly. Sunny Tappan stated that she really likes the gravel roads and is concerned about the increased danger at the intersection of Lower Dover and Higley Hill if cars are driving faster due to the paved surface. Sunny wonders if the town would have to build up the base of the road to be able to pave. David responded that the culverts would need to be in good shape with a good base and filter fabric first. Cathy Cunliffe shared concern about traffic increase and change in the character of the road. Alain Ratheau said that speed should be addressed in another way and that the dirt road is unsafe and hard on cars. Edie Mas stated support paving the upper part of Higley Hill because the dirt road has become very wide and straight and people slide around on it. Edie believes it is a safety issue and defining the road with a shoulder line would be helpful. Bob Elliott stated that they started paving this road fifty years ago and thinks it's time to finish it. He did a survey 15 years ago and asked residents who lived on Higley Hill if they wanted the road paved and many residents were in support of the idea. Gail MacArthur echoed the concern that pavement encourages speeding.

Tyler read comments that had been emailed or mailed to the Select Board from town residents who could not be present at this meeting. Allison Turner stated by email that this section of road uses a lot of the Road Crew's time and energy, and it would make sense to pave. Francie Marbury and Brent Seabrook, via email, strongly opposed paving

because it will increase amount and speed of traffic. Brian Reynolds and Diane Woolridge wrote a letter in favor of the paving, and Marcia Hamilton also wrote an email in favor in paving, stating that she believes it would save the town money. Marcia also sent a copy of Bob Elliott's 2013 survey.

Unscheduled Public Comment: Bradley Poster spoke with the Select Board about the condition of Moss Hollow Road. He is concerned that, even in good weather, Moss Hollow is full of potholes and the difference between Halifax and Marlboro sections of the road is striking. In response, David Elliott planned to check the conditions of Moss Hollow immediately.

Changes to the Agenda: "Linda Peters, Town Treasurer: Tax Sale" Added to "Scheduled Business"

Linda Peters has spoken to Sarah Vangel from Costello, Valente, and Gentry about cleaning up some of the old delinquent property tax records. There is a consideration of doing a tax sale, but Linda would first like to follow a recommendation to turn over a list of "repeat offenders" to Costello, Valente, and Gentry, who will send a collection letter on attorney letterhead. The town would need to pay for this letter. If the town collects the taxes, then the billable hours could be reimbursable. (\$180/hourly rate and some paralegal work at the rate of \$90/hour). The letter would be sent first to the twelve people that habitually do not pay taxes. There is currently \$60,000 of uncollected taxes, (not including interest and penalties). Linda would like to use what's left in the legal expenses budget line-item to work towards collecting these taxes.

SeVEDS had reiterated their request to be included in the general budget via a follow-up email to their recent visit. The Select Board considered their request, and decided not to include them in the general budget, but to keep their appropriations request a separate line item at Town Meeting.

APPROVAL AND SIGNATURE OF PAY ORDERS: The Pay Orders were approved and signed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The Select Board approved minutes from the regular meeting on 9/12/19. (Gibbons, Kreitzer)

OLD BUSINESS:

Jesse has called the tick-testing subsidy program coordinator at UMass, but was not able to reach him in order to get information on direct payment and other specifics for setting up the program.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Select Board signed the liquor license renewal submitted by Pizzapalooza.

INFORMATION ITEMS AND MAIL:

The Select Board received information about VLCT PACIF's Reasonable Suspicion Training.

Lauren MacArthur would like to resign from the DRB Administrative Assistant position. The position will be advertised.

The Select Board received information about recent Japanese knotweed eradication actions at the Town Garage and the Historical Society by Longview Forestry, part of a long-term, town-approved plan to keep Japanese knotweed in town under control as much as possible.

The Select Board received information about an opioid class action law suit. Marlboro will be included in this class action suit unless a form for opting out is returned. The deadline for responding is 11/22/19.

The Select Board received an email from Carla Meskill with comments about the poor condition of Moss Hollow Road.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lauren B. MacArthur,
Assistant to the Select Board

