

**Board of Selectmen  
Minutes  
March 26, 2009  
Center School Offices  
7:00 p.m.**

Select Board Chair Alan Sanderson, Jr. called the regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Whately to order on Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. Also present were Selectmen Paul Newlin and Jonathan Edwards, Town Administrator/Town Clerk Lynn Sibley, and Municipal Secretary Barbara Hancock. Minutes from the March 10<sup>th</sup> meeting were accepted as written. The payroll warrant was reviewed and signed.

**Town Administrator, Lynn Sibley: Gaffney Driveway Update** – In a recent letter to the Selectmen, the Gaffneys have requested a stop sign be installed at the end of Webber Rd where it meets Haydenville Rd. Highway Superintendent Keith Bardwell has not gotten word yet from Mass Highway regarding sign usage at that intersection. Keith is concerned that even a stop sign may not reduce the Gaffney's problem of pulling out of their driveway. The driveway will remain a blind drive even with a stop sign at Webber Rd. Keith had suggested the residents may want to cut back their banks and add a retaining wall. **Senior Center Potluck** – Reminder that the Board is invited to a 'Celebrities Potluck' at the Senior Center on April 20<sup>th</sup> and they are the celebrities. **Sunderland Letter**- The Board reviewed and signed a letter supporting Sunderland's request for Frontier to reopen for negotiations the teacher's contract and reconsider non-union COLA raises. The Board is in support of exploring all budget items but did not go so far as to support the request for a wage freeze. The letter offers some support to Sunderland as a member town, even though Whately is not financially desperate this year. **Federal Stimulus**- Whately will receive additional educational funds through the federal stimulus program. An additional \$22,182 in Ch70 and another \$15,987 and \$622 in funding is expected. It is unclear how or when those funds can be used. Whately received some of the money in an attempt to bring Whately's Ch 70 funding up to foundation budget calculation. **Franklin Regional Transit Center** groundbreaking is scheduled for April 17<sup>th</sup>. The Center will be located at the old Toyota of Greenfield location on Olive St. The Center is also expected to receive stimulus funding. **Hadley 350<sup>th</sup> Celebration** – Hadley has invited Whately's town officials, fire and emergency departments, and all groups to participate in their parade to celebrate their town's 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Selectmen are going to make an effort to attend. Participants must respond by April 3<sup>rd</sup>. **Tri-Town Beach Commissioner** – Suzanne Cycz does not want to serve on the commission for another term. The Selectmen will check with a couple of recommended individuals as possible appointments to Suzanne's vacancy in July. **FrCOG's Discount** – FrCOG has reduced the regional assessment by 10% for FY09 and FY10 to help towns with their budgets. **Stan Rosenberg's Conference** will be held April 4<sup>th</sup>. Sessions on the Municipal Relief Package and the Federal Stimulus will be discussed. Lynn plans to attend and Paul is also likely to attend.

**William Smith, Whately's Representative on the Frontier Regional School Committee** – Bill appeared before the Board to discuss an issue that arose during the first K-12 Union #38 Regionalization Committee meeting. The Committee is set to consider the benefits of regionalizing Union 38 from Kindergarten through grade 12, as it is regionalized now from grades 7-12. Apparently the Massachusetts Dept. of Education requires school committees to have representative votes from each town equal in proportion to the percentage of students from those towns. Mass. Courts have cited several acceptable arrangements to satisfy this requirement: Weighted vote, District-wide elections, Appoint rather than elect the committee representatives, or Increase the number of committee representatives for towns with more students to achieve an equal percentage of committee representatives to that of student population. Bill recommends increasing the number of school committee members from Deerfield to 5 and Sunderland to 3. That would create a twelve member committee and the percentage of representatives would be equal to the percentage of students attending Frontier from each town. That way votes don't need to be calculated for a weighted vote. Bill felt that district wide elections would discourage representatives from stepping

forward for positions, which is already a problem and may result in someone from a town being elected without the town's support. Bill argued that the larger towns pay a proportion of the budget equal to their student population and should have a proportionally larger vote on the school committee. The school committee has had two committee members from the four member towns. The subject of increasing school committee representation for the larger towns has been before town meeting in the past and failed, even in Deerfield. This issue would need to be resolved in order to consider regionalizing. Further discussions will be held on the subject. The regionalization committee hopes to have this question appear on the member towns' annual town meeting warrants in 2010.

**Town Clerk, Lynn Sibley: Elections-** Nomination papers are available until April 17<sup>th</sup>. Four incumbents are not running for reelection this year: Select Board, Assessor, and 2 Library Trustees. Two people have taken out papers for the Library Trustee position but only one has returned them. And one person took papers out for the Select Board but has not returned them yet. No one has shown interest in the Assessor's position.

**Highway Dept:** Lynn updated the Board. **Haydenville Rd Bridge** – FrCOG signed the takings and the Attorney has approved them. However, Mass Highway is concerned with conveyances. The advertising date for the project has been postponed until May 30<sup>th</sup>. The Selectmen were very concerned with the project's delay causing the project to go unfinished through the winter. Lynn will contact Mass Highway to emphasize the safety concern regarding the bridge condition and the dangers it presents with it narrowed especially through the winter. Mass Highway has indicated to Lynn that the advertising date may be flexible. **Long Plain Rd** – Still working with the Conservation Commission. **STRAP** – Engineering costs for this project may be costly because of its close proximity to the brook. But Lynn clarified that engineering costs can be included in the grant. The \$500,000 grant maximum will probably not cover the entire project. The Board felt they would complete however much could be done with grant funds. A Commonwealth Capital Application must be completed also. The Selectmen agreed to move forward with the application. The Selectmen discussed briefly the new economic impact section on the application. Conway Rd may not serve as a throughway to many employment opportunities but the dirt road does cause significant runoff into the nearby brook raising many environmental concerns. And the Town would not be able to address the project without STRAP grant funding. **Intermunicipal Agreement** – The Selectmen reviewed the revised agreement with Hatfield for the use of their grader. The Selectmen were happy to see the annual usage changed on the contract from 8 days a year to 64 hours and a 30 day notice of termination clause was added. The Board signed the agreement, which is scheduled to go before the Hatfield Selectmen on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

#### **New Business**

**Door 2 Door Drill** – Lynn held a meeting last night for volunteers who plan to participate in the April 18<sup>th</sup> emergency management drill. Forty volunteers attended and worked on organizing the event. A total of 80 volunteers will be needed to run the two shifts on the day of the drill. A tabletop drill will be held on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and FrCOG will be on-hand to test the group and the plan with practice scenarios. Lynn encouraged the Selectmen to attend the April 2<sup>nd</sup> tabletop. The Chair of the Board is normally the public information officer. Lynn will serve that role with Jonathan shadowing. The Selectmen will call the chiefs of police and fire to encourage their full participation. It was mentioned that a database of residents' cell phone numbers would be helpful in an emergency where electricity and phone lines were down. The Board discussed the Connect CTY system that will appear on the annual town meeting warrant for a vote this year. The automated system can store cell numbers, work numbers, and emails. The system would be able to notify residents regarding emergencies in town, evacuations, closed roads, and updated information as it becomes available in the event of an emergency.

**Baystate Ambulance Agreement** – The Selectmen reviewed the new 21-month agreement with Baystate Ambulance. The intercept fees increased to \$250 to be paid on Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield accounts only. Currently Whately pays \$200 per intercept for Medicare accounts only. However most ambulance companies currently charge \$225 and include all insurance accounts. The contract may be extended one year if both parties agree. This is a revised contract, which originally included fees for all

insurance companies from \$275 for Greenfield hospital and \$300 for Northampton. Lynn is awaiting clarification on some wording in the contract.

**COOP Plan** – Homeland Security requires towns establish a chain of authority in the event of an emergency. Lynn has the plan nearly complete. The Selectmen agreed that the chain of authority for the Town would start with the Select Board Chair and continue as follows: Vice-Chair, Clerk, Town Administrator and Municipal Secretary.

**Comcast** – Lynn reviewed the recent notification of changes to Comcast’s pricing that mainly decreased prices for larger package subscriptions.

**Conway Highway Garage** – Conway is considering purchasing a building for a new garage. The building they are considering is larger than they actually need and wondered if Whately may be interested in renting some space. Whately’s highway department does have equipment that is stored outside because we have no space in our garage. The Selectmen would be interested in considering the possibilities.

**Annual Town Meeting Warrant** – The Selectmen reviewed a draft of the April 28<sup>th</sup> warrant. The first few articles handle town finances and the Board briefly discussed some of the following articles: Adding revolving fund accounts for the cemetery commission and for trench permit fees; COLA and budget figures were left blank awaiting the Finance Committees decisions (the Selectmen decided to support a 2% COLA), Replace the water department truck; Modify the police car lease vote to a purchase; Improve Westbrook pump station; Lightening protection at the main water pump house; Connect CTY; Establish non-criminal disposition to help enforce town laws and regulations by imposing fines which may be voted for each applicable offense or vote for all regulations; Establish CPC, a CPA committee appointed by the Select Board. Discussed the required membership of a recreation commission member and the absence of a housing board representative; and a Vote regarding the Moderator’s method of vote counting at town meetings. The Board also discussed other possible warrant articles. An article could be included that would separate Chapter 61 and 61A land (Forest, Farm, and Recreation) from Commercial tax classification and include it as Open Space. The change may make a dual tax rate more appealing for Whately. The Town could also vote to establish its own trench bylaw that would set up a fine schedule and give the police authority to write violation tickets. And finally, the Town could adopt a section of MGL that would allow elected officials to be covered by worker’s compensation insurance. The Finance Committee will finalize the warrant at their April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting and the Selectmen will review and sign it at their April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**State Police Agreement** for dispatch service was reviewed and signed. It is a no fee standard contract.

**Emergency Management Antenna** – The state will install an emergency management agency antenna on the building with the consent of the Select Board. The building already has antennae on the roof and Lynn’s current MEMA portable antenna is not sufficient. The Selectmen signed the consent form.

There being no further business to come before this meeting, it was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Paul K. Newlin, Clerk