

Board of Selectmen
Grange Hall
February 3, 2016
Regular Meeting Minutes

Selectmen Present: M. Walter; E. Malavasi

Selectmen Absent: S. Link

Also Present: Natalie Castro (Pure Point Energy); E. Blaschik; L. Branscombe; R. Casner; M. Collins; K. DeNicola; G. Hungerford; T. Hungerford; F. Hunt; J. Leonardo; S. Jezek; J. Mondelci; R. Nemergut; M. Sassi; M. Sassi; D. Schenarts; S. Wheeler; L. Zemienieski

1. First Selectman Walter called the Board of Selectmen's meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and the attendees said the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of Agenda: Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Malavasi, to approve the agenda as written. Unanimous aye.
3. Approval of Minutes: Regular Meeting of January 20, 2016 and Special Meeting of January 25, 2016

The Selectmen agreed to table the approval of the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 20, 2016 and Special Meeting of January 25, 2016 until Ms. Link's return.

4. Correspondence:

- A. Letter from Department of Transportation – Pedestrian Walkway on the Swing Bridge: Mr. Walter called the Selectman's attention to a copy of a letter in their meeting packets from Chief Engineer Thomas A. Harley, P.E., Bureau of Engineering and Construction, Connecticut Department of Transportation (DOT), dated January 13, 2016. Mr. Walter reviewed the letter and noted that the DOT has agreed to "*...study different options for a sidewalk on the [swing] bridge as requested*". He noted that the letter further stated that if, "*...it is feasible to install a pedestrian walkway across the bridge ... the Department would expect the Towns to be responsible for building and maintaining the necessary infrastructure along both approaches to the bridge in order to create sidewalk connectivity*".
- B. Letter to Office of Policy and Management – STEAP Grant for Center for Community Agriculture: Mr. Walter called the Selectman's attention to a copy of a letter in their meeting packets from him to April Capone, Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs, Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM), dated January 29, 2016. He noted that the letter was his formal notification to OPM that the citizens of East Haddam had voted to reject the \$431,200 STEAP Grant for the Center for Community Agriculture.

Mr. Walter noted, for the record, that STEAP Grants can be repurposed and, in fact, East Haddam had requested and been approved to have such grants repurposed in the past. He

stated, however, that the voters chose not to repurpose the grant earmarked for the Center for Community Agriculture but rather to return it to the state.

5. First Selectmen's Report:

- A. Shagbark Solar Project– Virtual Net Metering Presentation & Partnership Discussion:
Mr. Walter introduced Ms. Julia Leonardo of Shagbark Lumber & Supply. Ms. Leonardo reviewed Shagbark's solar project and introduced the other members of the project group. Ms. Natalie Castro of Pure Point Energy began the presentation on Shagbark's proposed solar array project and reviewed the benefits of solar energy. She reviewed the project schedule and stated that the deadline the State imposed for connectivity is September 22, 2016, to remain eligible for funding. She noted that it is an aggressive schedule and that Shagbark will require the Boards of Selectmen and Finance approvals by February 8th. The item would then be moved to a Town Meeting.

The Messrs. Sassi reviewed the cost-benefits of Shagbark's proposed partnership with East Haddam. They stated that East Haddam could contract with Shagbark to purchase virtual net metering (VNM) credits for \$.90 on the dollar and realize a savings of approximately \$25,000.00 per year on its electricity costs. They noted that the solar array could produce approximately enough energy to off-set the cost of energy usage at the three schools and the contract with the Town would have a 25 year term.

In response to questions raised by Mr. Malavasi, Mr. Sassi stated that if excess energy is produced or the schools' usage drops, the VNM credits could be used for other municipal buildings. Mr. Malavasi expressed concern about committing the Town to a 25-year contract and Mr. Sassi stated that Shagbark will have a 25-year financing obligation for the project and that is how these partnerships are generally structured.

In response to other concerns raised by Mr. Malavasi, Ms. Leonardo stated that Shagbark's solar business will be set-up as a separate LLC and Atty. Jezek noted that the Connecticut Siting Council supersedes local board and commission authority on reviewing projects of this size. Mr. Walter stated that the agreement would be coupled with a tax waiver on the solar array but that Shagbark would still continue to be assessed property tax on its land and other buildings.

Mr. Malavasi asked Mr. Sassi to explain how the \$.90 per \$1.00 of VNM credit price was determined. Mr. Sassi stated that Shagbark's financing expense is expected to consume 80% of the VNM credits and the remaining 20% profit would be split by Shagbark and the Town of East Haddam. He noted, that that is the typical partnership agreement in these projects.

Mr. Walter noted that the Selectmen would attend the February 8th Board of Finance meeting and vote then on their recommendation to move the proposal to the Board of Finance.

B. Department of Transportation Horizontal Curve Safety Project Award: Mr. Walter advised that the Connecticut Department of Transportation had notified him that several roads in Town qualify for its statewide systemic project for horizontal curve safety. He noted that, if the Town agrees, the state will install new or replace worn warning signs and pavement markings on the identified roads at no cost to the Town.

6. Citizen's Concerns: Mrs. Hungerford introduced herself and stated that she and several of her neighbors on Algonquin Trail are concerned about the revisions to the approved plans for repaving the Elementary School parking lot to create a driveway and bus-turnaround location on their street.

Mr. Walter noted that the Elementary School Renovation Building Committee had been advised that it was not necessary to reroof the entire school and that only two of the three boilers need to be replaced and, consequently, there are now funds to implement some of the other safety/improvement measures on the Committee's list.

Mr. Mondelci, also a resident of Algonquin Trail, stated that he understands that the students' safety is a primary concern; however, he also expects the safety of the residents of Algonquin Trail should be considered. He also expressed concern that the change in the project plans were not properly vetted to the public and it appears that the Committee is moving forward with the changes to the parking lot project.

Mr. Casner stated that he also believes that the proposed changes involving Algonquin Trail must go through a public process, including a referendum.

Mr. Walter stated that he has made the concerns of the residents of Algonquin Trail known to the Elementary School Renovation Building Committee and others involved in the project and he is "optimistic" that Algonquin Trail will not be affected.

Mr. Blaschik expressed concern that he had voted to approve funds to replace all of the Elementary School roofs and for three new boilers and that now it appears that that will not be happening. He stated that he is concerned the Town will come back again in the future to request funding for the work that was not done.

In response to a question raised by Ms. Branscombe, Mr. Walter stated that his letter to OPM regarding the STEAP grant was dated January 29, 2016.

7. Unfinished Business:

A. Blight Ordinance Discussion: The Selectmen agreed to table this agenda item until Ms. Link's return.

B. Trowbridge Road/Middle School Property Discussion: There was no new discussion on this agenda item.

C. East Haddam Schools Capital Improvement Project Charge Amendment Resolution: Mr.

Walter advised that the Town has not yet heard back from the State on its proposed wording revisions for this Charge.

- D. Elementary School Renovations Building Committee Charge Amendment Resolution: Mr. Walter advised that the Town has not yet heard back from the State on its proposed wording revisions for this Charge.

8. New Business:

- A. Rathbun Library – Wine Approval: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen’s attention to an e-mail in their meeting packets from Michael Gilroy, dated February 3, 2016, requesting permission for wine service at an artist’s reception for Margaret Quinn at the Rathbun Library on February 5th.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Malavasi, to approve wine service at the Rathbun Library for an “Artists Reception” on February 5, 2016. Unanimous aye.

- B. Volunteer of the Month: Mr. Walter explained the Volunteer of the Month program to the attendees and solicited recommendations.
- C. Board/Commission/Committee Changes: There were no Board/Commission/Committee changes discussed at the meeting.
- D. Tax Refunds: Mr. Walter called the Selectmen’s attention to one tax refund.

Motion made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Mr. Malavasi, to award a tax refund in the amount presented.

- \$ 13.19 to Kyle Sarrazin.
- Unanimous aye.

9. Public Comment: Following up on the Selectmen’s discussion about the potential for the Town to partner with Shagbark on its VNM Credit project, Mr. Blaschik expressed concern about a state agency usurping the authority of the Town’s Boards and Commissions for review and approval of the solar project. He also expressed concern about the 25 year term of the proposed agreement. Mr. Blaschik further requested confirmation that the cost of the project is expected to be 80% of the projected VNM credits.

10. Selectmen’s Discussion: Mr. Malavasi stated that he had been in contact with the student that has volunteered to video-tape the Selectmen’s meetings.

The Selectmen briefly discussed the proposed Solar VNM Agreement with Shagbark and Mr. Walter stated that, given the aggressive schedule, the Board could give him signing authority as they have done with other contracts. Mr. Malavasi stated that, due to the unusually long term of the proposed Agreement, he believes the project should go through the established regulatory process for approval.

11. Adjournment: There being no additional business to discuss, a motion was made by Mr. Walter, seconded by Ms. Link, to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. Unanimous aye

Recorded

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Link, Secretary