

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

Meeting called to order at 5:00 P.M. by Chairman Kevin Gaspar, Sr., Selectman Michael Cioper and Selectman Roger Cabral Meeting Minutes Approved- February 20, 2018 & March 6, 2018

MEETING MAIL

APPOINTMENTS

OLD BUSINESS

TOWN MEETING WARRANT REVIEW- There were 8 capital improvement funding requests from the school department totaling roughly \$345,000. The biggest proposed expenditure is \$100,000 for repairs and resurfacing the driveways and parking areas. The boys bathroom needs pipes, temporary roof repairs, \$75,000 for an engineering study to determine the extent of a larger roof repair in the next few years, \$20,000 for drainage work on the playground, \$75,000 for camera & security systems for both schools, \$65,000 for the replacement of the clock & bell system at both schools, \$15,000 for an electronic sign. The school is also looking to set up a special education stabilization education account. Since some students need to be outplaced the transportation and tuition are very expensive some of these costs could go up to \$200,000 per year.

The board had a discussion on Article 17, which asks the Town to accept Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 41B to require that all Town payroll be made through Direct Deposit. Chairman Gaspar stated that he would like to get rid of the article altogether. Selectman Cabral disagreed. "Direct deposit is the way one gets paid in 2018," he said "It makes it more efficient for everyone." Mr. Noble stated that there was some pushback from employees, and because there were at least 54 articles he really did not need to present this one at this time at this meeting. The Selectman also discussed Article 19 to see if the Town would impose a local sales tax on the sale of restaurant meals within the Town at a rate of .75% gross sales receipts. Mr. Noble stated it would be .07 cents on the dollar, with annual revenue of approximately \$68,000. Mr. Noble stated it was invented for a revenue source for OPEB, or Other Post Employment Benefits, which are benefits that government agencies provide to their retired employees. Chairman Gaspar stated he would like to consider amending the article to reduce the OPEB benefits to 50/50 vs. 60/40. He said that there have been past mistakes and the liability on OPEB for the town of Acushnet is certainly one of them. Selectman Cioper stated that he did not think retirees should fund "past mistakes." Chairman Gaspar read from an article by Geoffrey Beckwith, executive director and CEO of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, in November 2017 that reiterated his own opinions regarding OPEB. "The problem is communities are already strapped for cash," "The only way out is reform. We need to have meaningful reform that will provide savings not in 15-20 years but immediately," Chairman Gaspar stated it was his opinion that something needs to be done immediately and the Town has a huge liability that does not seem to be going away. He recommended a 50/50 split with retirees on the insurance to at least put a dent in the liability for the future. Selectman Cabral stated that he felt

there were two issues that are not the same. He said that the liability is certainly there, and they could start putting money aside to fund the existing obligation. Mr. Cabral said the second issue is that 60/40 is not that generous with healthcare, and what Mr. Gaspar is referring to are two very distinct issues. Selectman Cabral said he would be pleased to look at the competitive analysis of other Towns and how they share the health care costs with their retirees, however it was distinctively two different subjects. The board did not vote on the article.

Selectman Cabral reviewed an article he put forth to change the Town Clerk to an appointed position, versus elected. Cabral stated that the article was put forth to protect the Town Clerk's office and was in no shape or form a strike against the current Town Clerk, Pamela Labonte. Now that the Town Clerk position is full-time and carries a salary of \$70,000 that he would like to see it appointed and not at the will of someone who wants to win a political popularity contest. "I just want to see the right person be appointed to the job. I think it protects Ms. Labonte as well," said Selectman Cabral. Selectman Cioper disagreed, saying he did not think that it was about politics. "I don't want to take the vote away from the voters," he said. "I do not favor taking the voters rights away." Selectman Cabral reiterated that the Town Administrator position, and the Finance Director position are professional appointments that are not elected. "We want the right person for the job," he said. "I believe that the Town Clerk is a professional position and all the other professional positions in Town are appointed not elected." Chairman Gaspar agreed with Mr. Cioper and did not want to take the rights of voters away. Chairman Gaspar made a motion to table the article, with Mr. Cioper seconding the motion. Mr. Noble then said there is still discussion after a motion. "This is to protect the Town Clerk position and not a slam against the current Town Clerk," Selectman Cabral said. Since the motion was made and seconded, the vote to table passed 2-0 with Selectman Cabral abstaining.

The town is looking for \$20,000 for installing wireless microwave communication systems, \$42,500 for office furniture for the renovated offices, a vote to accept the provisions of 111M & N income protection to EMTs, Capital for Highway & Water 5 ton truck, mini excavator, meter reader server, pickup truck totaling \$325,500-Chairman Gaspar thinks they could forgo the pick-up at this time. The Soil Board is looking to change its representatives and for \$50,000 for technical assistance with Keating permits, COA is looking for \$125,000 to upgrade bathrooms/w showers, generator so the COA can be a certified shelter. The town also wants to do a wage & classification study for union employees. The Board discussed the marijuana zoning by-law, the transfer of the Russell Memorial Library to the Housing Authority and 10 CPC funding projects but did not vote on all the articles. They will discuss them again before voting on their recommendations.

NEW BUSINESS

COUNCIL ON AGING DIRECTOR/PROGRAM COORDINATOR'S CONTRACT APPROVAL-After the resignation of the former COA Director, the Board approved the Interim Council on Aging Director/Program Coordinator's contract back in October of 2017 for a 6 month period. At this time the new contract which begins April 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019 needs to be approved.

Selectman Cioper motioned to approve the Council on Aging Director/Program Coordinator's Contract beginning March 20, 2018 through June 30, 2019, Selectman Cabral seconded and all were in favor. Motion Passes.

ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION WARRANT APPROVAL-The Town Clerk needs to post the election warrant at least seven days before the April 2, 2018 Election to notify the residents of the town who are qualified to vote when and where the election will be taking place. This year all precincts will be voting at the Acushnet Elementary School at 800 Middle Road. The polls will be open from 10 a.m. -8 p.m. Also on the ballot is a question regarding prohibiting marijuana establishments. Mr. Noble advised "Again, if you vote YES you do not want recreational marijuana in the Town of Acushnet, and if you vote NO, you are okay with recreational marijuana in Town," said Mr. Noble.

Selectman Cabral motioned to approve the Annual April 2, 2018 Election Warrant, Selectman Cioper seconded and all were in favor. Motion Passes.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

The Selectman gave Mr. Noble his performance review. Chairman Gaspar stated he was confident in Mr. Noble's desire to achieve, "but please slow down," he also stated the Town was "blessed" to have both Mr. Noble and Julie Hebert, the Town Accountant on board.

Selectman Cioper said he gave Mr. Noble very high marks on the performance review and felt he was an over-achiever. He also said that he felt Mr. Noble was bringing the Town forward fast and felt that he was leading them in a positive direction.

Selectman Cabral reiterated what the other Selectmen said, stating that he was very happy with Mr. Noble's job performance.

"I'm happy to have you in Acushnet," Selectman Cabral said.

INFORMATION ONLY

Received correspondence from MASSDOT regarding the bridge inspection reports on Hamlin Street.

KP Law Final Enforcement for 42 South Main Street-Tucker Roy Marine Towing & Salvage. 900 Middle Road correspondence from the Enforcement Officer please bring your property into compliance to avoid a non-criminal disposition.

Notification to abutters under the City of New Bedford Wetlands ordinance regarding Seth Daniel Drive.

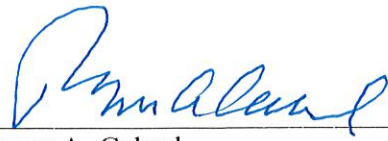
ADJOURNED REGULAR SESSION AT 7:45 P.M.



Kevin Gaspar, Sr.



Michael Cioper



Roger A. Cabral