

MINUTES
WILLIAMSTOWN BOARD OF SELECTMEN
January 28, 2008
7:00 P.M.

Present: David A. Rempell, Chairman, Richard C. Steege, Jane B. Allen, Ronald Turbin, Tom Costley

Others Present: Pat McLeod, Jim Kolesar, Adam Filson, Jeff Strait, David Fowle, David Fehr, William Travis, Peter Fohlin, Kathy Poirot

1. **CHAIRMAN'S OPENING STATEMENT:** Mr. Rempell recognized all of the folks involved in the Fund For Williamstown. Donors were honored at a dinner last week. Ms. Allen added that grant applications will be available at the Town Hall in February and the deadline will be mid March. Mr. Rempell said grants are available to both organizations and individuals.
2. **SELECTMEN MINUTES:** January 14, 2008 – Ms. Allen moved to approve the January 14, 2008 minutes. Mr. Turbin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.
3. **PETITIONER'S REQUEST:** None
4. **ITEMS FOR SELECTMEN'S CONSIDERATION:**

A. Williamstown Reads and Eats (McLeod) – Library Director Pat McLeod presented the library's annual Williamstown Reads Program – Williamstown Reads and Eats! She presented a February 2008 menu of recommended books for the public to read and a list of dates for free events at several locations in town, including an auction to be held on 2/29 at 5 p.m. at the Harrison Gallery. Ms. McLeod added that those who get involved will receive a tote bag co-sponsored by Wild Oats. There will also be a bus trip 2/14 to the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY for \$60 which includes a meal. Ms. McLeod said there are still seats left.

B. Release of Right of First Refusal – 677 Simonds Road, Countryside Landscaping Parcel (Filson) – Mr. Fohlin explained that the condition associated with the right of First Refusal have been met according the improvements to the property proposal to the Town, dated January 24, 2003. At this time Purple Moon LLC, d/b/a Countryside Landscaping requests that selectmen release and terminate the Town's Right of First Refusal by executing the release. Ms. Allen moved selectmen execute the release. Mr. Turbin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Mt. Greylock Regional School District Long-Range Financial Planning Committee Update (Kolesar) – Mr. Kolesar gave the committee's final report analyzing the regional school district's financial sustainability. He said there would have to be a change in the culture at the school in thinking more creatively to make it more competitive for school-choice money and to keep students here. Mr. Kolesar said that the school is currently "on the line", sitting just about where it's expected to be in term of costs and funding as compared to other schools. He added that a number of factors including fixed costs, such as health insurance and energy, declining and aging population, stagnant or decreasing state aid and a small tax base would predict when or how often overrides might happen. He said "there are ways in which the school should

be designating resources, some of which may be time and some of which may well need to be money, to deal with these issues such as group health insurance and pensions and building relationships with the community so that when the time comes for an override, people will understand it is time to take that step. Mr. Rempell said one of his concerns is there are fewer children in this community to go to public school but all that means is there are fixed expenses that have to be spread over fewer people. Declining enrollment will not solve the problem of expenditures going up greater than revenue. Mr. Rempell asked if a standing committee would be established. Mr. Kolesar said there had been discussions but nothing official yet. The report is available on the Mt. Greylock website.

D. Addendum to Berkshire Mutual Aid Agreement – Mr. Fohlin stated that by signing the addendum it would provide the flexibility that Berkshire town managers and administrators felt was needed to accommodate the work of rural boards of health and DPW's as well as volunteer first responders. Ms. Allen moved to approve the addendum to the Berkshire Mutual Aid Agreement. Mr. Turbin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

E. FY09 State Aid Governor's Proposed Budget – Mr. Fohlin distributed the Mass. Department of Revenue Division of Local Services FY09 Local Aid estimates. He pointed out that this is only the governor's draft and that the town's finance director had estimated the state would send \$18,940 more in aid in FY09, over last year's \$2.62 million. Mr. Fohlin said their estimate was spot-on to the dollar. Mr. Fohlin said the increase is contingent upon the governor's proposal for three casinos to be built in Massachusetts. The governor's draft proposes the state cut \$157,779 lottery aid and replace it with the same amount in Gaming Proceeds for Lottery Gap. Mr. Fohlin stated he expected the legislature to straighten this out.

Mr. Fohlin also noted that he is continuously confronted with supporters of increased state income tax and opposition to local overrides. He stated that he couldn't figure out why someone would pay \$1 to the state to get 30 cents back when \$1 dollar to local government would be a \$1 dollar return to the town.

F. Eby Purchase and Sale Extension – Mr. Fohlin stated that due to several conditions, the Eby Group has not been able to start their project. The conditions included subsurface conditions, environmental remediation, proximity to the river and demolishing the remaining buildings. Mr. Turbin moved to approve the extension. Ms. Allen seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT: See attached.

6. OTHER BUSINESS: Mr. Turbin reported that he attended a meeting on local aid and received a CD discussing local aid. Mr. Fohlin and Mr. Turbin passed the CD to Mr. Steege and Mr. Costley. Mr. Turbin asked if the selectmen thought it appropriate, he'd like it aired on WilliNet. Selectmen agreed that they would watch the CD and decide on it then.

Mr. Rempell said School Committee Chairman David Backus called him and offered to speak to the Superintendency Union at a future selectmen's meeting. Mr. Turbin, Mr. Steege and Ms. Allen thought a selectmen's meeting might be a good forum for his report and asked Mr. Rempell to see if Mr. Backus could attend the 2/11 selectmen's meeting.

- 7. ADJOURN:** Mr. Steege moved to adjourn at 8:25. Ms. Allen seconded and the motion carried unanimously. The next meeting is February 11, 2008 at 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Costley, Secretary

TC/kp