

**Selectmen Meeting
Minutes
September 3, 2014**

All board members were present. Attendee was Administrator Ward. Chairman Sargent opened the meeting at 7:00PM.

Review of the Minutes

No minutes were submitted for review.

Public Comment

There was none.

Liquor License Change of Manager- Wachusett Bottled Liquors

Chairman Sargent reviewed the board has received an application to change the manager of record for the Wachusett Bottled Liquors, to Robert Tucci for the establishment located at 663-671 Main Street. Selectman Connolly made a motion to approve the change of manager as presented. Selectman LeBlanc seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Administrative Business

DPW Monthly Report

Superintendent McGown submitted a monthly report relative to the operations of his department for the month of June 2014 for the Selectmen's review and approval. Selectman LeBlanc made a motion to accept the report as presented. Selectman Iacobucci seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

One Day Liquor License Permit

Chairman Sargent reviewed the board has received a request for a one-day liquor license permit request from Clinton V.F.W. Post #523 in conjunction with the upcoming Clambake event to be held on September 7, 2014. Selectman LeBlanc made a motion to approve the request for the One Day License permit for clambake event at the Clinton V.F.W. Post #523 as requested. Selectman Iacobucci seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Old & New Business

Water Street Reconstruction Project Engineering Contract

Superintendent of the Public Works is recommending the Board of Selectmen approve an amendment to the design contract for Kleinfelder Northeast, Inc. in the amount of \$23,500 for the storm water drainage system on the Water Street Reconstruction Project. Selectman Iacobucci made a motion to approve the amendment to the design

contract for Kleinfelder Northeast, Inc. in the amount of \$23,500 for the storm water drainage system on the Water Street Reconstruction Project as presented. Selectman Dziokonski seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Goals & Objectives

Chairman Sargent asked the board to table the discussion until the next meeting, the board agreed. He asked for an update to be provided to the board on the completion of the Veterans Memorial Project for the next meeting. He explained the vendor indicated it shall be completed by September.

Informational

Resignations of Senior Center Director and Park & Recreation Director

Selectman Iacobucci reviewed he has read the notice of the resignations of the Senior Center Director Ms. Tena Zapantis and Director of Park & Recreation Ms. Jessica Brodie, he wanted to thank both for their hard work and dedication to the community. Both have done a great job with the departments. Selectman Connolly seconded the comments. Chairman Sargent also agreed stating both Tena & Jessica are hard workers. The board agreed.

Committee Reports

Senior Center Building Committee

Selectman LeBlanc reviewed the Senior Center is at 70% completion, there is still work remaining including the installation of the elevator. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of November.

Chairman Sargent explained this will conclude the open portion of the meeting; the board will enter into Executive Session under Article 1 regarding Non-Union Personnel followed by a second Executive Session regarding Article 3 Police Union Negotiations.

Veterans Agent Mr. Gerald Coppenrath explained he would like to exercise his right to an open meeting.

Non-Union Personnel Matter : Veterans Agent Gerald Coppenrath

Chairman Sargent began the discussion explaining to Veterans Agent Mr. Coppenrath the board has been investigating letters of complaint received regarding his performance, there have been constant complaints, the most recent letter received is from a Veteran stating he did not write a letter the board received but instead, you wrote the letter and had him sign it without him reading it. He asked Mr. Coppenrath if he wrote the letter. Mr. Coppenrath stated yes and Mr. Hutchinson signed it. Chairman Sargent explained Mr. Hutchinson states he was forced to sign the letter while he was

on his way out for an appointment, he was in the car and signed without reading. Chairman Sargent asked if Mr. Coppenrath wrote this letter during work hours. Mr. Coppenrath explained correct. Chairman Sargent stated Mr. Coppenrath was plagiarizing by taking ones words and presenting them to Mr. Hutchinson to sign. He explained he had Mr. Hutchinson sign the letter written by Mr. Coppenrath praising his work, he considered this plagiarizing, he explained he is skeptical of Mr. Coppenrath work. Mr. Coppenrath reviewed the board received a letter of complaint 1 month ago, from Mr. Hutchinson, and when he met with the board to review the board sat like mutes and didn't comment. Chairman Sargent reviewed he is running the meeting and the discussion will be regarding the letter he has referenced only. Mr. Coppenrath explained he had gone through the first letter the board received and answered all the concerns, he has received no response or discussion from the board other than he was argumentative. He then reduced the information and brought to Mr. Hutchinson, wrote the letter went to his house and did find him in a car; he showed him the letter and asked him to sign it. Mr. Hutchinson never objected to the information in the letter, he must have read it; letter is of bold text and straight forward. He continued stating he thanked Mr. Hutchinson for signing the letter gave him a donated afghan, Mr. Hutchinson thanked him. He then returned to the office and gave Mr. Ward the letter. He then received a phone call from Mr. Hutchinson with a request for a copy of the letter. Mr. Coppenrath explained he had been working with the Veteran and had filed the claim forms required for him to apply for benefits. Chairman Sargent asked if the letter received by the board praising Mr. Coppenrath work was written by him and then brought to someone else to sign. Mr. Coppenrath explained he was providing an explanation and was interrupted. Chairman Sargent stated he was not keeping the discussion just to the letter received by the board. Chairman Sargent asked if board members had any questions or comments. Selectman Connolly stated based upon the complaints, numerous written and verbal, he made a motion to have Town Administrator Ward begin the termination process of Mr. Coppenrath's employment. Selectman LeBlanc seconded the motion. Under Discussion: Selectman Dziokonski explained he is undecided on his vote to terminate, he doesn't know if there is sufficient evidence of him doing the job , he reviewed Mr. Coppenrath's recount of the board sitting like mutes at the last meeting is not accurate, board members did speak. He reviewed there was a letter of reprimand to be issued as a result of that meeting ; because the board found Mr. Coppenrath to be argumentative, with lack of professionalism and his dress was inappropriate. He explained he has a different recollection of the meeting. The board was not mute. He asked Administrator Ward if the letter of reprimand had been issued. Administrator Ward explained no, the letter had not been issued. Selectman Dziokonski explained the issue before the board tonight regarding the letter of complaint from the Veteran which had been addressed at a prior meeting, along with numerous complaints regarding Mr. Coppenrath's performance. As a result the board agreed to issue the

letter of reprimand. Then the board received a letter from the Veteran saying the prior letter is to be rescinded, he hadn't read it prior to signing it. He explained Mr. Coppenrath shouldn't be putting a Veteran in the middle of the dispute between the board and himself. He explained Mr. Coppenrath has been spending a lot of time defending his position rather than doing his job. This is not the way to approach a human service program. Mr. Coppenrath explained on several occasions he hasn't received notice of the oral complaints, he wrote a letter dated July 30, with a request to have the questions of the Veteran who didn't receive any answers submitted, he hasn't received them. The complaint is bogus and the oral complaints have never been shared with him. Selectman Dziokonski reviewed it may be one of two problems, either you are not doing a good job and they are substantial complaints or you are doing an adequate job leading them to believe you're not, your domineer says different. Mr. Coppenrath stated the board is wrong, he doesn't have the job of a social worker, he is an advocate for Veterans seeking benefits. He has 40 years experience as an Attorney and does a great job for Veterans. The board rushes to judgment, in the room there are many Veterans willing to testify on the benefits and services they receive. Selectman Iacobucci asked Mr. Coppenrath about his statement of being a registered lawyer. Mr. Coppenrath acknowledged he is registered in three states. Selectman Iacobucci stated he should know better, he had no business typing a letter and putting it in front of someone to sign. He explained Mr. Coppenrath is a representative of the town as a public official; this action questions the town's integrity, as an Attorney Mr. Coppenrath should know better. Chairman Sargent explained the board will not hear from those in the audience at this time, this is not a public hearing. Selectman Iacobucci asked Mr. Coppenrath about a letter which wasn't in the packet for tonight's meeting but was prior, where the Veteran explained he had to go out of town for service. Mr. Coppenrath stated the Veteran was confused. Selectman Iacobucci explained if one Veteran feels jilted with service, it's too many. Discussion continued with Selectman Iacobucci asking Mr. Coppenrath what the State Ethics Commission would think of a Veterans Agent writing a letter and having a Veteran sign it. He finds Mr. Coppenrath to be insulting to the board which two Veterans serve on. He explained if Mr. Coppenrath was doing his job the board wouldn't have to be here in discussion tonight. Selectman Connolly stated he doesn't agree with the innuendo Mr. Coppenrath has made regarding the board has had a secret process or hidden agenda. It has been very open over the past two to three years with the dissatisfaction with Mr. Coppenrath's work performance; there have been at least 3 or 4 meetings and 4 or 5 written complaints received. Mr. Coppenrath stated the board refuses to believe the public is hard to please; they accept complaints as the gospel and dismiss everything he tells them. Selectman Connolly explained the board has accepted Mr. Coppenrath's response every time, they have given him the benefit of the doubt, now it is gone there are too many complaints. Chairman Sargent stated there have been constant complaints regarding the Veterans

Department, the board has discussed repeatedly, now plagiarism has been used where Mr. Coppenrath presented his own ideas and tried to pass them off as someone else's in a letter to the board praising himself. Mr. Coppenrath informed Chairman Sargent he is misusing the word plagiarism. Selectman Dziokonski stated he couldn't believe Mr. Coppenrath told the board he is unable to please people all of the time, he is very aware you cannot please everyone. Over the past 10 years as a Selectmen, the board has received complaints of Department Heads, he explained he hasn't received half as many as he has in the last 5 years of Mr. Coppenrath, he is stopped on the street, there is a constant stream of complaints. He explained procedurally he knows the letter of reprimand is to be issued, and perhaps a 2 or 3 day suspension would occur next with no improvement then termination is considered. Chairman Sargent explained at the last meeting Mr. Coppenrath was informed if there was no improvement termination was the next step. At his time the board has made a motion and seconded it for the Town Administrator to begin the discharge process for Veterans Agent. The vote was unanimous. The board informed Mr. Coppenrath to call the Town Administrator's office tomorrow. Mr. Coppenrath explained this is not over. Chairman Sargent stated the board is going into Executive Session under Article 3 for Police Union Negotiations Discussion and this concludes the open portion of the meeting at 7:40PM. Roll Call Vote to enter Executive Session under Article 3 Police Union Negotiations discussions: Selectman Iacobucci 'aye', Selectman Connolly 'aye', Selectman LeBlanc "aye", Selectman Dziokonski' aye', Chairman Sargent "aye".

Selectman Iacobucci made a motion at 7:55PM to adjourn. Selectman LeBlanc seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Corbosiero
Administrative Assistant to the
Clinton Board of Selectmen