

MINUTES
SELECT BOARD MEETING
TOWN OF COVENTRY

Saturday March 4th, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

Board Members Present:

Mike Marcotte / Chairman; Bradley Maxwell; Scott Morley

Town Officials Present:

Amanda Carlson/Select Board Clerk

1. Mike Marcotte called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. General Audit Discussion.

- Mike Marcotte opened the meeting by welcoming the 19 residents in attendance.
- Scott Morley stated that copies of financial audits were available on the table at the back of the room. The Graham & Graham Audit of the 2015/16 fiscal year was the first successfully completed audit in 12 years. This was a two-year process that came at a high cost to the Town and the Board understands there are questions about this process and cost to the tax payers. Scott explained that the meeting was an open forum for questions, discussions and concerns of the Town.
- The Board was asked if there were any new developments since the last informational meeting. There were no updates to report by the Board.
- The recently adopted financial policies were discussed. Residents questioned the Treasurers unwillingness to cooperate with the Board in adopting the policies. Residents indicated that this was a sign that the Treasurer was unwilling to change anything, or to work with Town Officials to take recommended corrective actions issued by the Auditor. The Treasurer was not present to comment.
- The Board was questioned on the court's decision to make the current Delinquent Tax Collector ineligible to run for the elected office. No determination has been made at this time. The Board urged voters to consider Article #3 of the Town & School Meeting Warning allowing the Board to appoint the Delinquent Tax Collector.
- Residents expressed concern that this will take the power away from the community. The Board stated that the new person will need to have a lot of financial knowledge and be willing to work

with the Board and Auditor to fix the current records. Allowing the Board to appoint will enable them to interview and research candidates and check references. The voters have the ability to turn over the appointment the following year and return the position to an elected office.

- The Board explained that with appointment, performance standards can be set and the person is held accountable for the actions. Currently with Elected Officials there is no recourse the Board can take if the office is not effectively executed.
- It was stated that the Board needs to take some responsibility for the situation continuing for so long. Residents thought that the Board ignored the problem too long and questioned the level of motivation and investigation in previous years. Residents did not feel that they were fully educated on the magnitude of the problems that's were occurring in the Town Office.
- The Board responded that it was an incredibly difficult situation and that over the years they had continually hoped to receive cooperation from the Treasurer's Office. The Board conveyed information in Town Reports and through poorly attended informational meetings. The Board stated that this is a painful and hurtful process that after numerous attempts to correct needed to finally be pursued more aggressively for the sake of the Town. The past cannot be changed but the Board can work with the voters to do what's best moving forward.
- Residents expressed concern with the Treasurer's office and questioned that if the current Treasurer were to hold office for the next two years of their term, could the Town expect reports of more missing monies. It was questioned if the Office could adopt a "no cash" policy. The Board responded that it had been discussed but not implemented. The Board could adopt that policy and post signs; however, it would not be enforceable and it would still be up to the Treasurer's discretion if she chose to accept cash.
- The Board was questioned if there has been any investigation into the duties of the Town Clerk's Office and if property records were being received, filed and handled correctly. The Board stated that over the year's attorneys have expressed frustration with the records and that the Board has had conversations with the Clerk.
- The Board was questioned on the option to raise the bond amount for the Treasurer. Mike Marcotte stated that this is a determination that they will leave up to the Towns insurance carrier – VLCT.
- The accuracy of previous Town reports was questioned and it was stated that they should be reissued to residents.
- The report of the missing 2012 Grand List was questioned. They Board stated that this was recovered and reviewed for accuracy. No manipulation of the Grand List was discovered at this time.
- Residents expressed their anger and frustration over the situation and the problems with the Treasurer's Office and the missing monies. It was stated that the solutions seem to be addressing the symptoms and not the problem in the office.
- Voters asked what they can do to help the Select Board at Tuesday's Town Meeting. Mike Marcotte replied: come and vote, encourage others to come and vote; Article #3 allowing the Board to appoint a Delinquent Tax Collector was critical for voters to show that they want to

take back the offices. The Board emphasized that the most important thing was for voters to state their issues but remain civil.

- There was concern expressed about floor votes and voters were reminded that they can request a paper ballot for any election.
- The Board was questioned on the cost of the audit and the continued cost to the Town. Scott Morley responded on behalf of the Board, that there is a serious and significant cost to this situation and if we don't correct ourselves and make sure the office is in order, they thousands more will be spent. The Board has continually requested and pushed to receive reports and documentation necessary for performing routine audits. Documentation was not provided, therefore, the Auditor had to recreate the books of the Town. The Board has taken all of the recommendations by the Auditor seriously and has, or is in the process of, implementing them. There has been little, if any, cooperation from the Treasurer's Office so far and if that continues it will come at a significant cost to the Town. The Board estimates a cost of approximately \$5000 a month for corrective action if no changes are made in reporting and recording of records. With no municipal tax the tax payers have not been personally effected by the situation, but that is money for the future of the Town and should be taken seriously.
- It was commented that this never would have continued so long in other Towns because there wouldn't have been enough money to pay bills and it would have effected taxpayers quickly.
- Residents expressed gratitude to the Board for their time and effort. Mike Marcotte gave Scott Morley the credit for all the time and effort he has dedicated to the Town addressing the issues on behalf of the Board.
- *The Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector was not present to offer response to any of the above comments or questions from the Board or residents.*

3. Meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

The next Select Board meeting will be held on Tuesday March 7th, 2017 at 4:30 p.m.

Michael Marcotte / Chairman

Bradley Maxwell

Scott Morley

Amanda Carlson / Select Board Clerk