

Town of North Canaan
Board of Selectman
January 3, 2024

Present: First Selectman Brian Ohler, Jesse Bunce, Craig Whiting

Selectman Ohler called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm

Selectman Whiting made a motion to approve the minutes from December 4th meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

News from the Community: The candle ceremony was very nice that the boy scouts did honoring the State Police, the Fire Dept and the Ambulance. Rick Weaver had 55 years in service with the fire dept. Selectman Ohler thanked the town crew for all of the work the last couple days cleaning up the transfer station in advance of the new opening tomorrow. The town looked great for the holidays with houses and businesses lit up. Compliments were received from the Jewish families in town for the Menorahs put in town and at the town hall.

Public Comment: A request to look at possibly putting double lines on dangerous curves on Canaan Valley Road. DOT has an initiative regarding safety problems around sharp corners. Their focus is on helping small towns and will do rural community assessments. A request was made to hold the Fire District accountable for the improvements needed on town sidewalks. The river erosion at Lawrence Field was discussed. Selectman Bunce stated there was no physical fencing up yet. Discussion of the liability and that the town doesn't follow through on items. Selectman Ohler acknowledged that he failed to get that solution but will work on it. The sidewalk to the barber shop will be getting a railing. A question was raised regarding the notice that video and audio recordings are done in the town hall. There is no audio recordings they were disabled as they were not audible and they were only outside the doors. The cameras are a safety feature. There was a discussion of ticketing of vehicles on Railroad Street. Tenants do not adhere to being asked not to park all day on street. There is no time limit on municipal parking.

Transfer Station: Communication was sent out with a diagram showing the reconstruction. Traffic flow will be altered – go in new entrance, stop at check in (blue building), proceed up the hill, all garbage will be thrown out from up above and then exit thru the old entrance. Registered motor vehicles will be the only vehicles not allowed (no ATVs etc.). In 3 years the MIRA contract is ending and the town is not sure what will happen. The State shut down the Hartford site for garbage and now it goes to Pennsylvania and is costly.

Town Hall Office Collaboration: The first 3 Monday's of January the Town Hall is closed, so beginning January 22nd from 8-11 contractors needing help in their process will be able to get the answers they need from Zoning Officer, Fire Marshal, Building Official. Torrington Area Health will also be available. Selectman Ohler will be in the office Monday's at 5am.

Virtual Meeting Options: Selectman Whiting has talked about the OWL multimedia platform that tracks the voice of the speaker for about \$1000 investment. Most likely will be put into the budget. In the meantime meetings will done by zoom. All boards and commissions should be meeting in the Town Hall

and should be holding meetings in person and via zoom technology. The zoom invites are linked on the agenda, the town website and the town Facebook page. Selectman Whiting has also created a YouTube channel for North Canaan.

Update on Job Postings: As of the deadline December 29th there are 20 applicants for the Executive Assistant position and 12 for the Town Highway superintendent. There was a discussion about the possible duties of the assistant and about hiring a grant writer. The town is taking into consideration location from the town hall. The town does not have its own grant writer.

Old Turnpike South Water and Trees: Selectman Ohler acknowledges that for residents it has been a very long upsetting process and it is a huge problem. Unfortunately, it is not a quick fix. They continue to try to find the source of the water and a solution. With 3 levels of development on the hill an engineer will need to explain what is the towns responsibility and what is up to the residents. He is hoping that they can come together and work to come up with a root cause and a solution while holding accountability. Selectman Ohler will also need to re-engage Eversource in regard to the trees. He is meeting with a liaison next week. A couple of residents from Old Turnpike Rd discussed their individual issues. Selectman Ohler assured everyone in the weeks ahead everyone on the road will be contacted and damage assessed. Selectman Bunce stated he has a DEEP contact that may be helpful. Erosion Control is under the zoning prevue.

Canaan Valley cell coverage: Has been an issue forever. In most places there is no reception. This is a safety issue. The Siting Council will have to weigh in, but hoping to be able to get some type of tower up there. There will be discussions with property owners. There are spots in Green Acres with limited reception as well.

Emergency phone messaging software: The town had a contract with Black Board which incorporated the school for emergency text messaging with the parents. Selectman Whiting believes it ended because LCD came up with a reverse 911 system that the Emergency Management thought was adequate. Selectman Ohler would like to consider purchasing a platform for an emergency for cell phones as many people no longer have landlines. Residents could opt in if they want to. Also Constant Contact is being looked into as a platform to send out newsletters, video links, events, etc.

Grant Opportunities: There is an importance to getting a grant writer. The Executive Assistant may have experience or hiring a contractor. The town receives emails about grants and would be helpful to have someone looking at the grants specifically.

ADA Parking access assessment: There are parking concerns in the center of town with limited handicap spaces as well as at the town hall. Selectman Ohler reached out to Stanley technologies regarding auto door openers at the town hall. He would like to add 1 more handicap space to the small municipal lot downtown. The lot will be restriped. The handicap ramp at town hall goes to the far end of the building but that door is not unlocked during meetings. Selectman Ohler is also looking to have the spaces in front of the town hall be established as visitor parking for 15/30 minutes. Signs will be going up soon.

Region 1 Project funding referendum: The referendum is Monday the 8th. Selectman Ohler met with people in charge of the referendum and the project went from 58 items to 12 items and he feels these 12 items are justified even though it is a large amount of money. They area infrastructure items which need to be addressed now and not wait 3 years when things will only worsen. There was a discussion of

the debt service ending from the previous project. Selectman Ohler is hoping that if North Canaan residents vote in favor of the project it will let the other towns know we are being good neighbors so that when discussions regarding changing state statute for a fairer split based on the grand lists the other towns will approve. Basing it on the grand list would likely save North Canaan about 7 mils whereas other towns would only go up under 1 mil. If the statute was approved, it would mean the bond would be redone as well. Selectman Ohler was asked why he feels that things are different now and that the other towns will be swayed to agree. Answer due to change in leadership, there are already a few towns in the region that are accepting of it, and he believes others are close to following suit. Selectman Ohler will meet with the other leaders of the towns to discuss. Time frame is likely 2025 due to the limited amount of time legislature is in session. The referendum is for all 6 towns to vote, and it is just yes or no. If it is voted down, they will continue to revamp the project looking for a yes vote.

Fire Marshal report: None

Resident state trooper: Selectman Ohler read report into the record. Resident trooper was able to break out his individual responses' vs the troop.

Building Inspector: Selectman Ohler read report into the record.

Zoning Enforcement Officer: Selectman Ohler read report into the record.

Social Services: Selectman Ohler read report into the record.

Selectman Whiting report: report attached below. Selectman Whiting will be uploading information from meetings to the YouTube channel and has requested the town video from Pig Iron to upload as well. He has spoken to Falls Village town in regard to their policy of offering first right to local contractors for any town projects. They are allowing us to copy their policy. Items will still go out for bid. Through his full time job, he had purchased an auto door opener and if it works for the town hall he will donate it as he cannot use it. He read a letter from Community Health and Wellness. They are awaiting the arrival of the elevator before they can get DPH approval. They are hopeful for a spring opening.

Selectman Bunce report: Regarding the issues with the river embankment at Lawrence Field, it is going to take a while to go through the Army Corps of Engineers and DEEP for approvals. Due to the severity Selectman Ohler will look where money can be pulled from and have a special meeting to vote on the funding. For now, snow fencing can be put up. Selectman Bunce also did research on a new scale for the transfer station. The scale is for up to 80000 lbs. It is \$8999 with free shipping and a 5year warranty. They will have to weigh each axel of large vehicles. Selectman Ohler will add this to the special board meeting. Selectman Bunce stated they have I-beams at the shop that may be good for the enclosure for bulky waste. The Selectmen okayed Selectman Bunce taking on forming a committee to start looking at a newsletter and its distribution. The Zoning board is starting to do overlay maps of cannabis areas to show where it would be allowed and not allowed. This will take place over the next few months. January 9th the zoning board will continue the hearing for the Honey Hill Project. The Wetlands board is busy with washouts.

Public Comment: It was requested that the agenda be easier to find on the town website. The starting rate for the Executive Assistant will depend on the experience and schooling. Hoping to have the crosswalk by Romas removed. The cross walk on Railroad Street is not an ADA rated crosswalk according

to DOT. Discussion of the blight ordinance. Due to the large expense, it has not been listed in the paper but with some environmental funding we can list it in the paper and then once it is posted have a town meeting to vote on it. We also need to figure out who will be enforcing it. Discussion of projects going out to bid. There is no State or town requirement, but the selectmen want to institute it. It is in the best interest of the town to go out to bid. Local contractors were always rotated out, but for critical infrastructure there is a benefit to retaining the same contractors. The car charger stations in the municipal lot are active with Eversource. It is nice to see the collaboration between the three selectmen and the hope is they continue to get things done.

**Selectman Whiting made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion.
Motion carried.:**

Meeting adjourned at 8:52pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ayrslea A Odell

Recording Secretary

Selectman Whiting report is attached below.

January Selectman Meeting

1. Canaan Foundation is accepting grant applications until January 31st, available for non-profits.
2. I talked with David Moran about the Boy scouts collecting cans, he will have an answer after their next meeting. Also, the Boy Scouts will be picking up Christmas trees Saturday, January 6th.
3. I have been staying in touch with Steve Harding about the school budget divide but also about the crop damage being done by bear in our town to local farmer's crops and the impossible requirements for them to use the newly approved crop damage permits.
4. A recommendation for the possible law firm to use in regards to the budget divide of region 1, Tom Ritter who is a partner from Brown Rudnick and deals with multiple state involved financial issues such as the hospital issues, UCONN and state pensions. He was speaker of the house and his son is the current speaker of the house.
5. Funding for attorney. I would like the board to grant me permission to reach out to the town attorney 1st, to see if it is legal to reach out to a few of our highest taxpayers, explain the potential savings and see if it would be beneficial for them to help support the legal expenses.
6. Have started a YouTube page but the video format is a bit different so I have to reload all of the videos through the camera directly to the site, so it will take some time. Hopefully the new links from Zoom will be easier.
7. Brian is looking into where we can get some funds to use for the new OWL setup.
8. Update from Community Health and Wellness
9. Falls Village Local Contractors Policy (shared with us)