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

Selectman Ohler called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

**Selectman Whiting made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

**Selectman Whiting made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

*Positive Community News:*

The improvements in the center of town look nice and are making the town look more welcoming. The Make it Happen Mondays are very effective. The town sidewalks this winter have been very good, clean and that is appreciated. The town crew is getting out earlier to care for the roads. Nutrition On Railroad is open again under new ownership and we wish them well. Selectman Ohler mentioned that we are working with the elementary school and using the bare walls here at the town hall to showcase some of the artistic work of the students. Currently the winter themed collection is from the 2nd graders. This morning Selectman Ohler attended the legislative session with the Northwest COG. 22 towns with the selectmen were in attendance. This is a short session for legislature but the group gave a 3 page list of things that hopefully the legislature will work towards accomplishing. Selectman Ohler explained more in detail.

*Colleague recognition:*

After many years of chairing the Railroad Days committee, John Lannen is stepping down. Selectman Ohler recognized Mr. Lannen and thanked him for his years of service. Ann Talmadge and Jennifer Crane will co-chair the events group which will now encompass railroad days as well.

*Public comment:*

There was a question about the 3 page list given to the legislature. Selectman Ohler explained these were wish list items and hopefully some of them will be taken care of this session but most will wait until next session. One of the top items is to figure out the town waste issues. There was a question about the solar projects in town. There are 2 and the town receives $10,000 per project. Discussion regarding the scale at the transfer station ensued including holding special meetings and discussing money to buy the scale. A signed petition was given to Selectman Ohler regarding the driveway near the Canfield building which leads to Station Place. Selectman Ohler will follow up on
this. There is a discrepancy on the google place web page with the hours of the tax collector being incorrect.

Old Business:

Old Turnpike South, Selectman Ohler went through pictures and information and did a site visit and saw firsthand the water issue coming off the mountain. There are so many issues playing into all of the water hazards, not only record rainfall but also residents taking it upon themselves to try and solve their own water issues which is causing problems in other areas. Selectman Ohler is going to have an engineer come out and work with the town to determine if there are issues with the drainage basins and/or the pipes. As far as the residential issues Selectman Ohler will consult with legal counsel due to the delicate nature of the situation. There was a discussion of the old railroad line which is now private.

Transfer Station: MIRA is being dissolved in a few years and this is a huge topic for concern as there will be no place to bring the trash. There are nearly 20 towns that are impacted by this. In regard to the scale for bulky waste, Selectman Ohler explained that it may be best to not spend an exorbitant amount of money on something when we don’t know what is going to happen to the transfer station. Currently there is no money in the budget for the purchase. Perhaps it could go into the next fiscal year budget, but Selectman Ohler’s thoughts were to table the scale purchase until it can go into the next fiscal year budget discussions. **Selectman Whiting made a motion to table the discussion until the budget discussions begin.** Selectman Bunce agreed that the situation is unknown, but there is still 3 years left with MIRA and in that time the scale could make enough money to make it worthwhile. Selectman Whiting stated that with the restructuring at the transfer station it will be better monetarily. **Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.**

Open Positions: There have been several interviews and are in the final hours of making offers for both positions. Both candidates have a wealth of experience and knowledge. Hopefully there will be announcements next week.

Optimization of offices: There have been small changes happening at the town hall. Thank you to Selectman Whiting and to Ron Carpenter for the new ADA compliant door opener. There are new water coolers in the town hall and signs out front for visitor parking. Coming up Selectman Ohler will be looking at the hours of the offices and staggering lunches so that the offices are open from 12-1 when residents need to come in.
Blackberry river: Selectman Ohler walked the river where the erosion issue is occurring, took pictures and had a conversation with the chief of the Army Corps of Engineers New England District. He along with his partner wanted to assess what the urgency was before allowing intrusion into the waterway. There is no imminent threat to the public’s safety, there are no houses in fear of being lost of bridges taken out. At this point they do not feel that it warrants any intrusion in the river. As a navigable waterway any intrusion would have to be approved by the Army Corps of Engineers and could take upwards of 3 years to complete. For now Selectman Ohler will look into putting up a more secure fence along the edge as well as signs warning of the erosion.

Board of Finance: Selectman Ohler read into record a resignation letter from Susie Clayton received January 31st. In the letter Ms. Clayton recommended Christian Allyn to assume her vacancy. Selectman Ohler explained that the Board of Finance Chair fills the vacancy not the Selectmen.

Campbrook waterway: There has been considerable flooding of the waterway. The town has gone in and tried to dredge and clean up debris in the past and could again. This is an opportunity to take care of the water ways in town and help the residents affected by the flooding. There needs to be an assessment to fix what is causing the issues. The culvert that goes underneath from Reed Street needs to be reassessed to ensure it is appropriately sized for the water volume.

North Canaan Events Committee: There was an explanation of the committee and how the events will now fall to them. It is unsure what the completed structure will look like, possibly sub committees etc. The Co-chairs are forfeiting the stipend that was earmarked for them. The town allots them $10,000 and the rest of the money for events is fundraising efforts.

Doughboy, War Memorial, Flag Poles: The Doughboy and War Memorial are being completely refurbished. Thanks to Carl Munson for his work. The cost coming in at just under $29,000 has been generously underwritten by Hugh Curtiss and family. The town thanks them for their very generous contribution. There are 8 flag poles in town that will be fixed including one at Sam Eddy Field which had fallen over. John Jacquier stated they would donate a new metal one there.

Budget process: All town departments have to submit their budgets by February 13th to the Selectman’s Office for their review. There are a lot of outside organizations looking for help as well. Selectman Ohler stated that the selectmen have a fiduciary obligation
to the town to ensure that all budget items are accountable and sensible and that we are getting the best for return on investment.

Eversource collaboration: Selectman Ohler spoke with our liaison Tim Waldron regarding vegetation management. There will be work being done on Route 44 from the Firehouse East to Norfolk. Selectman Ohler also has his contact information if anyone has a non-profit and might be interested in the Community Impact Grant that is available.

Fire Marshall report was read into record by Selectman Ohler. Anyone interested in energy assistance the State may be reopening that process.

Selectman Whiting report: The Youtube channel is now active. There are still some technical difficulties so for now we will be doing zoom and recording on the camera. He contacted the town attorney to ask if the town could fundraise for attorney fees regarding the regional budget and was told there is no issue with that. He got the information for the top 10 payers in town so he can contact them and explain how changing the structure of the region 1 cost distribution could potentially save them large amounts of money. He reached out to Sam Herrick to get some numbers and our cost has gone up $1.335 million just over the last few years. This is a ton of work. There was a discussion of ECS funding which has stayed the same even though our cost went up 30%. He met with Fran regarding the lease with the school and discussed some modifications. Dr. Roy will review the lease. The daycare will remain at the elementary school. Community Health and Wellness update the grand opening is tentatively sometime in April. They are going to work with the Governor for a ribbon cutting ceremony. They are still waiting on the elevator and are working on landscaping. Most of the staff has been hired. Selectman Whiting is working on a town projects policy. They will try to get 3 bids minimum but it is not always easy to get 3 so it will not be a requirement. Immediate repairs will not have to be bid on. Local contractors will get priority. Budget presentations are March 20. The Valentines Day Stroll will take place February 9-11.

Selectman Bunce report: He attended the NWC0G meeting and reached out to Curtis Rand to see how they were to move forward with the transfer station issues and they are not concerned too much yet. He attended a workshop for newly elected officials which offered several resources which the town can take advantage of. He is thinking the selectmen may be able to do more special meetings perhaps 1 a month so that they can discuss things happening between these meetings. There was information about a budget program to make the budget easier to prepare for the future as well as other
program trainings throughout the year. There was a grant for rural funding which several other towns were granted last year. Hopefully there will be more of that money, and we can apply for it. There was a question regarding the spending cap – currently anything over $20,000 must go to a town meeting. They continue to make progress on the newsletter (Canaan Connect) and hopefully will have a draft before next meeting. Selectman Ohler is open to special meetings, they just have to make sure they are structured appropriately.

Selectman Whiting stated there was an article in Republican American about Selectman Matt Riiska from Norfolk and their thoughts on the trash issues.

Closing Public Comment: There is a waterway between 2 properties on Orchard Street and maybe the town could look at dredging that as well. There was a question regarding the beavers in Canaan Valley - there is a licensed trapper working on getting rid of them. Question regarding the town hiring a grant writer. The new executive assistant has a large grant writing background and will be part of their job description. They are an hourly employee. There was further discussion regarding the residents on Old Turnpike. Selectman Ohler assured the audience he will handle things the way he feels is necessary. There was a question regarding residents using town culverts for their own personal use. The town does not allow this. Ann Talmadge invited anyone that is interested to come to their monthly events meetings on the 4th Monday of each month.

Selectman Ohler stated at 8:26pm the select board would now move into executive session for discussion of pending litigation, settlement issues, and potential PILOT agreement in High Watch Recovery Center, Inc. v. Town of North Canaan, Docket No. HHB-CV-22-6072927- S pending in New Britain Superior Court.

Select Board moved out of session and back to meeting at 8:32PM

Selectman Ohler called for discussion and possible action on settlement issues and potential PILOT agreement relating to High Watch Recovery Center, Inc. v. Town of North Canaan, Docket No. HHB-CV-22-6072927- S pending in New Britain Superior Court.

Selectman Whiting made a motion to accept the pilot amendment as written. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Selectman Whiting moved to adjourn the meeting. Selectman Bunce seconded the motion. Motion carried.
Meeting adjourned at 8:33pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ayerslea A Odell

Recording Secretary