
Select Board Meeting Minutes 3/20/17

Select Board Minutes of the meeting of 3/20/17

Meeting Opened at: 9am

Select Board Members Present: Kenn Basler, Chairperson, Steve Weisz and Carol Edelman

Also in attendance: Senator Hinds, Representative Pignatelli, Cliff Weiss, Ray Tryon, Ray Coddington, Dennis Lynch, Larry Klein, Stephen Moore, Chief Backhaus, Adam Chait, Peter Chait, George Cain, BJ Johnson, Barbara Gauthier

The Board met with Senator Hinds and Representative Pignatelli to discuss the following:

- **Broadband:** Cliff Weiss of the Broadband Committee provided an update of where Monterey is now. The Board requested that Senator Hinds and Representative Pignatelli push MBI to get the companies qualified that haven't been yet and to release the funds; they are meeting with them tomorrow.
- **Cell service:** Public safety is Verizon based; Rep. Pignatelli and Sen. Hinds have reached out to Verizon who have stated that they are not in a position at the moment to put up a tower. The Board has a tentative meeting scheduled with Verizon in Springfield to discuss a tower on Chestnut Hill and requested if either are available to attend or at the very least send in letters of support. Everyone agreed that lack of cell service is unacceptable, and a safety concern. The tower company is ready to go once a carrier enters into an agreement.
- **Schools:** Approximately ½ our district children choice out to other districts, enrollment is dropping, yet our assessment keeps rising. One option discussed is the town becoming independent of a district in order to allow parents to choose their district, and having the town pay tuition. Representative Pignatelli explained that there doesn't seem to be an ideal answer that works for everyone. Senator Hinds said that there are some short term solutions being looked at, but agreed that a long term solution needs to be found. Pignatelli said ultimately it comes down to whether Monterey wants legislators to force the conversations for change, or wants to keep decisions on a local level. There is a Berkshire County Educational task force working on long term planning, and it will be up to the towns to choose whether to participate and push forward. It was also noted that the state's assessment formula cannot be understood by anyone, yet it's just accepted. Vocational education in South County also needs to be looked at seriously.
- **Chapter 90:** The Board feels that more money needs to be put into Chapter 90 or it needs to be looked at differently. Pignatelli stated that \$200 million is slated to be distributed for this year. Two out of the three criteria for determining how much a town will get in Chapter 90 funds is not a formula that fits small communities because we only meet one of the three criteria. The Board feels that the bidding process and requirements for prevailing wage need to be tiered by a community's population. It was suggested that the state have a 2 year Chapter 90 plan so it's easier for towns to plan. It was also suggested that we apply for the small bridge program (Monterey's bridges that currently need work do not fit the criteria for this program). It was also noted that with state programs that offer assistance, the turnaround time from the state is not conducive for getting projects completed in a reasonable time frame.
- **Health care:** Is the state addressing the profits that are built into the health insurer companies premiums? This is a going to be a difficult conversation going forward.
- **Sharing staff:** The Board feels that a solution needs to be looked at in order for small towns to create full time positions with other towns, specifically with streamlining shared health insurance and pension benefits. Pignatelli stated that all we need is an inter-municipal agreement with the other town we are sharing with, and the "main" town would bill the other towns for their portion. Pignatelli also noted that 2 part time jobs in 2 towns do not constitute sharing; it just means someone has 2 part time jobs.
- **PILOT [Payment in Lieu of Taxes]:** Monterey has an extremely large proportion of state owned lands which yield little or no tax revenue, and the town's residential properties must make up the shortfall.
- **College tuitions:** inadequate/non-existent tax breaks for families paying rapidly increasing college tuition and expenses. There are bills being filed this year and Pignatelli agreed that the state needs to do a better job at dispersing state aid.

Representative Pignatelli commented that Monterey has been well managed, and said it's admirable that we have a cushion and spend our monies wisely.

Miscellaneous Items Reviewed:

- Warrants were signed.
- The Board met with Barbara Gauthier to discuss the proposed FY18 budget:
 - a. Kenn attended the Finance Committee meeting on Friday. The Finance Committee is against putting less into stabilization and wants \$150k put in. They are also against the article for \$50k for Lake Garfield weed mitigation. The Finance Committee is having a public meeting tonight to approve their budget which will be turned over to the Board next Wednesday. Residents of Egremont also attended this meeting and requested Monterey's support in not passing the SBRSD district budget.
 - b. After much discussion it was agreed that the request for \$50k for Lake Garfield weed mitigation should be a separate article to allow for discussion.
 - c. Steve is recommending that we put \$100k into stabilization instead of the \$75k proposed last week. Barbara noted that the Assessors or Finance Committee should have figures available on what these amounts will do to the tax rate. It was agreed to recommend \$100k for the general stabilization and \$30k for the bridges, roads and culverts stabilization.
 - d. It was suggested to request permission to transfer the \$5k previously appropriated for the lake scientist special article to be used toward the weed mitigation, and the \$30k left from the Broadband Consultant to pay for the fire department compressor, at a special town meeting just before the annual. M. Noe will check with the DOR to see under which circumstances it is acceptable to transfer funds. We also have \$32k left in a special article for fuel covers which was approved several years ago.
 - e. Barbara inquired how much free cash we will be using, as we have over \$350k.
 - f. Town Audit: We still have \$13k left from FY15 and \$18k from this year; the audit this year will cost \$17,500 leaving us \$13,500 toward an audit in FY18. The proposed amount for FY18 should in theory be \$5k toward the audit to be done in FY18.
 - g. The proposed budget for the community center operations was discussed. Further conversations will be held before making a decision.
 - h. Kenn is going to review the transfer station costs, and will recommend lowering the transfer station appropriation by at least \$5k, as we have managed to lower our costs over the last year with all the changes we've implemented.
 - i. The Board is meeting with the grant writers on Wednesday to examine the program and determine how much (if any) will be appropriated for next year.

A motion was made and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at: 12:18pm

Submitted by:
 Melissa Noe, Administrative Assistant
 Approved by:
 Monterey Select Board

cc: Website (www.montereyma.gov)
 Select Board Members
 Minutes Book
 Town Clerk