

Tuesday, February 18, 2020
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Foxborough Town Hall
Andrew Gala, Jr. Meeting Room
7:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mark Elfman, Chair
Ed O'Leary, Clerk
David Feldman

Also Present:
William Keegan Jr., Town Manager
Christina Metcalf, Community Info. Specialist

Reading of the Agenda. Ed O'Leary led Pledge of Allegiance

1. 7:00pm - Citizen's Input – No input.

2. 7:05 pm Cable Television Advisory Committee - Mark Stopa & Mike Webber

2.01 License renewal presentation and possible vote

Mark Stopa – We have reached a point of agreement with Comcast on the renewal of license. The cover sheet set up what should be illustrated tonight. We went into this with a sense of purpose with a number of action items. We wanted to make sure we had appropriate capital funding and the same thing with the franchise fee, but the primary thing was to make sure that we had HD capability for our local cable channel, stereo capability and electronic programming guide and to continue the discount for Foxborough Senior Citizens and wanted to make sure the available service center was convenient to our residents. We are pleased to report we accomplished everything of those items with the exception of the electronic programming guide. I want to acknowledge that we all worked very well together and would like to thank Catherine Maloney from Comcast for easy and quick negotiations.

Mike Webber – October 27th 2009 is when the last license, that just expired, was signed. Foxboro Cable Access at the time was seeking a home. It was a struggle for us being a volunteer nonprofit based, with limited affordable commercial properties available and finally found 28 Central Street. We were previously in Comcast building on East Belcher Road but Comcast needed us to find another home. FCA Board of Directors negotiated a good situation for our current location. At first it was only available for lease and those expire and rates go up. TV studios are expensive to build and we were aware that we were not able to go through process twice. Then we were able to purchase with a mortgage the 28 Central Street space. The location has made us more visible and accessible. Foxborough had built out a municipal fiber network cable operation and that allowed the transition from cable operator owned infrastructure to town owned and maintained fiber optic network. Through funding for FCA through the license in past 10 years we built our studio and purchased the building. We also supports high school communications arts class and during this contract we were able to upgrade all that equipment as we had been doing this class since the 1980s. In conjunction with the school we redesigned the rooms, and equipment purchase and installation. The Ahern School broadcasts morning announcements during school. Dan Williams is the teacher that administers that broadcast. This was done with equipment from FCA. We also installed a video control room at Boyden library as well as dedicated cameras at the COA to cover their events. We installed control room at high school gym and expanded our reach beyond the TV truck that would drive around. We now have facilities in the building and it helps with volunteer availability. A number of high school students have taken advantage of these resources. Brady Gardner who graduated a few years ago, started volunteering for us in 7th grade until his senior year in high school. He now works with NESN. Another volunteer, Chris Kelley, works as engineer with system integrator in video and TV production. Jess Todd interested in sports broadcasting and did a lot of coverage with us and now working at ESPN. High school students are taking advantage of what we have to offer. Today is a different situation with this contract. We have a home, the strategy of purchasing the building worked out, strong and healthy volunteer base. We had a public hearing in 2017, with huge support, which sought a HD public access TV channel. All equipment has been HD equipment that has been installed in the past few years. The license does afford us some capital and operating revenue and we remain a volunteer organization.

MS – The reason we are here tonight is for you to review the renewal contract and sign off on it. Any questions about the renewal?

ME – How many volunteers do you have at any given time?

MW – It varies, but we have a core 30-40 volunteers that help on a regular basis with teen volunteers that help occasionally.

DF – Thank you for your work and thank you to Comcast. What are you goals for the next 10 years?

MW – We have an outreach issue that we want to work on. We need to make sure people understand who we are and what we do and expand educational opportunities. At the core of what we do is a public access station and is an extension of people's 1st amendment rights. Anyone can walk in the door, produce a program and create community dialogue. The local news continues to be under financial constraints and we continue to have conversation to help in that area. By training volunteers,

providing short style under 5 minute news bits for community updates. Continue to do the collaborations with town departments and schools.

MS –We knew when setting those goals, it would be challenging, but we remained insistent, were creative, and the willingness of Comcast to entertain new ideas that they may not have been previously interested in. We are very fortunate in what we have been able to get and be able to serve the needs of FCA and the town.

BK – Mark is being modest in how easy this has been. It is not a simple contract renewal and takes years to do this. It started in 2017 with in the initial hearing. Catherine said this was one of the better ones she's been able to do. I appreciate the work that was put into this.

Motion to approve the proposed Cable Television Renewal License between the Town of Foxborough and Comcast Cable Communications Management, LLC for the term of February 1, 2020 – January 31, 2030 by E. O'Leary 2nd D. Feldman. **Approved 3-0.**

2.02 Motion to approve the proposed agreement for a discount available to eligible Foxborough Senior Citizens from Comcast Cable Communication Management, LLC by E. O'Leary 2nd by D. Feldman.

Discussion: This doesn't show up in contracts so we have a side agreement letter to continue the senior discount, senior citizen's just have to call.

Approved 3-0.

3. 7:25pm Community Preservation Act Discussion - Discussion led by Ed Lawton

B. Keegan – I met with Mr. Lawton last week and this topic came up and the CPA has been in place for 10 years. CPA has been adopted locally by 176 towns and cities in Massachusetts. The community can agree to tax itself, 1%, 2% or 3% and the fund will get matched by the state. They have increased the funding. The CPA allows to focus for Recreation, Open Space, Historical Commission, and/or affordable housing. Foxborough hasn't spent a lot of resources on our opens space, like trails and potentially affordable housing as this has been talked about recently. Is it worth to develop, discuss, and form a committee?

E. Lawton – Chap 44b included in packet to Board. It is a surcharge on a tax bill, many towns do 1% and that is part of what the state will match. State collects money at RMV and other locations. It can go towards affordable housing managed by the town (Baker St.) historical open space, well heads. Money can be used for land acquisitions has to be registered with that deed. Aspects of section 3 and section B and B½. Section 3 has to accept B, the select board would approve and then go to state and then on municipal ballot. Needs a study, which would increase the number of funds that the state would match.

Opportunity to collect more money from B ½ potentially. There are 4 exemptions in Section 3. People in low income housing wouldn't have to pay the surcharge. Commercial properties are exempt from charge and residential real estate exempts. About \$75 collection for each person if its \$750k more places like Lane, Historical, affordable housing, expand affordable housing. Spoke with Selectmen from Weston and they adopted early on and went for 3% and currently bonding \$10mil. Would make municipal committee made up of conservation, housing authority, etc, needs to have quorum, make recommendations. The 1st year would get 5% and opportunity to back out and opportunity to increase or decrease. Would appreciate your support and study to get this going. Myself as a citizen as well as the other departments.

D. Feldman – This is something we should look into with a lot of opportunity, a subcommittee to do research and get a list of FAQs put together because of the surcharge. This would be money well spent big picture. This needs to be sold to the community.

M. Elfman – Is this a good idea?

Judi Johnson – This is part of our Open Space and Recreation goals and having CPA passed, we did discuss we would help. It has not been started. Putting together a committee, with help from the state, would need to determine what level that we could go from 1% 1.5%, 2% or 3% and then get it on the ballot and do a lot of education. Money's going out that is not coming back to the Town. There was \$60k that went out that is funding the CPA fund. It was 100% match to start and now there is a formula to determine state matching funds. We are still getting money back. Nantucket started this with 2% on sale on real estate, so the money we do get back goes through the CPA committee and have to spend 10% on each: Historical, Open Space, and Housing and then the 70% can be spent on other projects. It's my understanding that the Town can decide at town meeting and get a say in how the 70% spent. Town's people decide not government on how money is spent.

EL – The formulas they do equalize us with wealthy communities. The first round has 80% of the funds go out as a match and then the next few rounds they take your population and average income into consideration.

BK – I can think of 3 projects last year that we could have used these funds for and have come up as public issues. The Common, historic preservation and affordable housing that have been very big issues that have been very difficult to address from a town perspective because of how we can dedicate funds for competing issues. This is a good approach to helping this because this money can be specifically purposed.

EL – If we get going and foresee and take some parts of section 3.5 and get more than \$60,000 and can bond against future income from the Community fund.

ME – That's a great presentation and we will put together a sub-committee and look into this further.

Heather Harding – Just to put this in perspective a bit, the Town has usually paid \$58k-\$60k into this fund whether we use it or not. The average single family home value in Foxborough is \$441k. You then opt for 1%, 2% or 3% and then you can opt out low income and can take off the first \$100k value of property. If you adopted the average single family home value, opt out low income and opt and we omit the first \$100k then we would earn at \$50 at 1%, \$99 at 2%, and \$150k at 3%. If we started at the lowest and did 1% we would generate \$375k per year.

Jack Authalet – It's interesting that the name of this is Community preservation. It benefits the cross section of people in this town, it truly is a community embrace. There are other things that have helped us out a great deal, the Man Power Employment Act has also helped us, historic restoration on the outside creating jobs on the inside. That's how they did the hat shop on Bird Street and all the original buildings at the Foxborough state hospital. We've had the joy of a local bank creating low rates on historic homes and working with another bank to do that again. This gives us the opportunity to approach these things and everyone benefits directly or indirectly, it's a better community in which to live. When you take all these components, with all these different groups and have all those agree to this surcharge which we know this surcharge will be spent locally.

4. 7:45 pm Town Manager's Update

Next Tuesday financial presentation at 7:30pm.

SEMRECC Board of Directors – tomorrow at Mansfield Town Hall at 6pm for SEMRECC. State has agreed to provide additional funding and grants that will pay for our operations for the next 3 years, the 4th year 50% funding and year 5 at 25% funding. Will put \$300k saved in stabilization fund. We were able to save some money on the way it was set up. Have 25% of funding go to this year. The building is underway, good progress and ahead of schedule due to the good weather. Norton and Easton who want to get into the operation and half a dozen other communities who want to join SEMRECC and be able to expand the facility right out of the gate. Right now almost 12,000 calls since July, currently meeting all the federal standards and guidelines.

Citizen Academy – 52 people who have signed up for it. Through this we can educate and provide information.

No need to do student government day because the teachers will be teaching civics in the schools.

Admin will be giving presentation for Advisory Committee for general government functions.

5. 7:55 pm - Selectmen's Update

Ed O'Leary – attended hate crime symposium in Boston office and Chief Grace had assigned 2 people to prepare a response - Det. Mark Bohnenberger and Court Officer Karrie Kilroy.

6. Action Items

6.01 Motion to approve a donation to the Council on Aging/Human Services department from the Foxborough Historical Society for the Rendezvous with Rachel Revere Program in the amount of \$240.00 by E. O'Leary, 2nd D. Feldman.

Approved 3-0.

6.02 Motion to approve the November 12, 2019 Board of Selectmen's Minutes by E. O'Leary, 2nd by D. Feldman.

Approved 3-0.

7. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by E. O'Leary, 2nd by D. Feldman. **Approved 3-0.**