

**Mansfield Light Commission Minutes**  
**September 30, 2015**

Present: Jess Aptowitz, Chair; Olivier Kozłowski, Vice Chair; Frank DelVecchio, Clerk; Doug Annino; George Dentino; Nick Riccio, Acting Town Manager and Gary Babin, MMED Director

**1. Meeting Called To Order at 7:00 PM**

Chairman Aptowitz called the meeting to order. The Chairman reminded everyone the meeting is being broadcast live and taped for future broadcast on Mansfield Cable.

**2. Director's Report**

**Discussion of and Possible Action to Revise MMED's Policy for Hanging Signs (Banners) Over Route 106** - Present before the Board is MMED Director Gary Babin.

Mr. Babin gave a general overview with regard to the banner policy that the Commission instituted in 2000 where a specific set of criteria was developed that has to be met in order for groups to hang banners over Route 106. He also noted there was a lengthy discussion in 2012 to amend the policy but no changes to the original policy were adopted.

Mr. Babin reminded the Board that procedurally the banners are submitted to Ms. Whalen for the Board of Selectmen's review and once approved; they are scheduled and forwarded to the Electric Department for hanging. Ms. Whalen added that until recently there have been no issues with the policy of prohibiting banners in the month of November. This has been challenged by a few groups (Hearts for Hope Foundation and Mansfield Women of Today). Ms. Whalen asked the Commission to keep in mind that the office has turned down four separate requests for November, submitted earlier in the summer, due to the current policy.

Chairman Aptowitz stated that if the Commission did decide to amend the policy, the right thing to do would be to approach the previous four applicants.

Mr. Annino would like to discuss the entirety of the banner policy as it appears there have been past issues with advertising and it has been on the Selectman's "to do" list. Mr. Annino felt that since there have been four applicants turned away previously any change should have an "as of" date, suggesting January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

Mr. Kozłowski asked for the reasoning behind not allowing banners after November 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Babin explained it is in order to accommodate placement of holiday lighting and Season Greetings signage, which needs to be in place prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The process begins in mid-November. Mr. Kozłowski felt the decision before the Commission is to either hang banners or the holiday decorations.

Mr. DelVecchio did not agree with the 2000 policy. He felt the holiday light commitment is a generalized statement as lights are hung all around Town (North/South Commons), which he felt is what takes up the most time. Personally, Mr. DelVecchio felt the banners look better than the Season Greetings signage. Aesthetics aside, Mr. Kozłowski questioned when the signage actually

needs to go up. Mr. DelVecchio stated it is apparent that the Town has a policy that doesn't allow for signs but it already has requests for more signs than it has space for.

Mr. Annino said he would much rather see the holiday tradition (lights and Season Greetings) carried forward as it is the front door to our Town and felt it would be a big detriment to not have that holiday spirit continued.

Mr. DelVecchio felt the bigger issue to be how to accommodate all the requests, suggesting a lottery. Mr. Annino is concerned about weather related issues and safety of personnel, which he thinks was the reasoning behind the "black out" dates in the original policy.

Mr. Dentino felt with the North Common redesign there should be an additional lighting allowance to enhance the area, which would then free up the cables across Route 106 for the banners. Mr. Babin stated the issue with that would be trucks driving onto the North Common which has been newly seeded and still soft which is why it was only decorated with garland around the light posts last year. Mr. Dentino understands the importance of banners to these groups and felt that benefit outweighs the holiday decorations.

Mr. Kozlowski asked for clarification of the actual process come mid-November to which Mr. Babin noted the department begins hanging lights and signage so that it is in place by Thanksgiving. Mr. Kozlowski asked if the Commission opened an additional two week block to hang banners (November 1<sup>st</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup>) would that substantially impair the department's ability to put up the decorations, to which Mr. Babin noted no. Chairman Aptowitz noted that the added time would theoretically help two groups.

Mr. DelVecchio would personally like to see the banners up as the groups have put a tremendous amount of hard work and effort into what they do. He felt the Commission was in a tough spot.

Mr. Annino felt the Commission could not do anything this year. Both the Chairman and Mr. DelVecchio agreed with that statement with Mr. DelVecchio stating he cannot see how to be fair in such a short time frame. He is open to suggestions of a fair way of allocating the signs. Mr. Kozlowski pointed out the Commission doesn't reach that point if it is leaving the policy as is.

Mr. Annino stated the Commission is trying to do the right thing for different organizations with the hanging of banners but felt that the Commission is now being taken advantage of as the policy has set aside a certain period of time for the holiday season and tradition but the Commission is now being asked to bend the rules. He went on to note there have been other instances where rules have been broken with regards to content and is almost at the point of saying no to all banners. Mr. Annino is also upset with the prospect of not hanging the Season Greetings signage in order to accommodate the banners. He did not feel it was a big sacrifice to not hang banners for three months out of the year while adding that it shows respect for tradition.

Mr. DelVecchio felt the banners to be a source of pride for the groups/organizations but questioned the impact on the success of the event.

Carol Shacat, 374 Essex Street, and Eileen Murray, 7 Plowshare Court, addressed the Board and are members of Mansfield Women of Today, a 30 year old organization. Ms. Shacat noted the group's house tour (November 29<sup>th</sup>) is its biggest and only fundraiser where proceeds assist the community in numerous ways: holiday meals to the elderly, scholarships to 2 graduating seniors,

home heating fund, Council On Aging and Field of Honor. Ms. Shacat noted the banner is the group's most important way to get the word out about the event and felt their design brings out the holiday spirit. Ms. Murray stated their banner has been hung every late November so rules must have been bent. Ms. Murray clarified that the event has not taken place in the past two years. Ms. Whalen cannot speak for what happened previous to that as she was not yet involved.

Diane Finegan, 53 Elyse Road, represents the Hearts of Hope Foundation a non-profit organization (2009). Hearts of Hope's mission is to provide financial relief to patients and families battling Cystic Fibrosis (2 of Ms. Finegan's 3 children have been diagnosed, sadly losing daughter Fallon in 2010). To date the Foundation has raised over \$500,000 with 100% of proceeds going back to CF patients. The Foundation has also established the Fallon Memorial Scholarship where 30 graduating Mansfield seniors have benefitted from over \$48,000 in scholarships over the past five years. Ms. Finegan noted that the Race now has over 500 runners and stated the banner helps keep Fallon's memory alive and the group is doing great work. She felt it is the best free advertising they get and asked the Commission to reconsider its policy.

The Chairman noted he was very sorry for Ms. Finegan's loss.

**Motion:** To amend the banner policy to allow for one additional two week block for hanging banners from November 1<sup>st</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup> effective immediately (Kozlowski/Dentino)

*Discussion:* Mr. Annino asked how the Commission was to take care of six requests with one additional block. Mr. Kozlowski noted that discussion will take place if this motion were to pass. Mr. DelVecchio stated it appears the Commission is creating a dilemma for itself. For clarification purposes, Mr. Kozlowski noted this would then shorten the "black out" block by two weeks

**Motion:** To amend the banner policy to allow for one additional two week block for hanging banners from November 1<sup>st</sup> through November 15<sup>th</sup> effective immediately (Kozlowski/Dentino)  
PASSES 3:2 Annino, DelVecchio NAY

It was decided to not discuss the content portion of the policy this evening.

**Review and Discussion of Financial Results for the Month of August, 2015 - Mr. Babin noted:**

- Year to date Net Income is \$248,000, which lags last year income
- A strong Operating Cash position of \$10.4 million
- Generation Charge Payable (money returned to customers) is at \$85,000
- Year to date Electric Sales are down 1%, continuing a trend
- \$3.5 million in the Depreciation Fund, expected to go down as the Department just paid some significant bills for work completed in front of School Complex

Mr. Babin reported that National Grid advertised a 29% increase in winter bills where the Department looked at what its Generation Charge will be and found it will be up about 6% for the fourth quarter and is projecting 10% for the winter months. Mr. Babin explained it is the nature of how the pricing in the market works.

**3. Review and Approve Board Minutes of January 21, 2015 and July 20, 2015**

**Motion:** To approve Light Commission Minutes of January 21, 2015 (Annino/Kozlowski) PASSES 5:0

**Motion:** To approve Light Commission Minutes of July 20, 2015 (Kozlowski/Annino) PASSES 4:0:1 Dentino ABSTAIN

**4. Citizen Comments**

This portion was included within the discussion regarding amending the policy for hanging banners.

**5. Comments from Commissioners**

Mr. DelVecchio asked for explanations to accompany any recommendations the Department brings before the Commission regarding amending the Banner Policy. Chairman Aptowitz would like this topic scheduled for the Commission's next agenda.

Mr. Annino is interested in lighting to go along with the work completed at the School Complex and asked Mr. Babin to think about that. Mr. Annino does not want the traditional street light as this is an opportunity for an important campus area of the Town. Mr. Babin noted this is a State of Massachusetts project with the plans probably completed which will designate where the lights will go and spacing could be important. Mr. Annino would like to see a special fixture.

Chairman Aptowitz has received a few calls with regards to additional lighting at the corner of Ware St. and Fieldstone Drive. The Chairman noted for the record he does live on Fieldstone. He asked if the lighting in the area could be reviewed. Mr. Babin noted the Department is currently conducting a streetlight patrol of the Town to repair burned out lights before the time change.

Chairman Aptowitz noted the Council on Aging luncheon with the Electric Department is Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Babin explained it is safety oriented luncheon.

**6. Any Items Not Anticipated By the Chairman 48 Hours Prior To This Meeting**

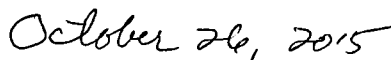
None.

**7. Adjourn**

To adjourn Board of Selectmen's Meeting at 7:50PM (Annino/Kozlowski) PASSES 5:0



Signature of Clerk



Date of Approval

/tdw