

*Minutes*  
*Williamsburg Board of Selectmen*  
*March 14, 2019*

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, March 14, 2019, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that the meeting was being recorded by the Country Journal reporter.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also present: Kim Boas (Energy Committee), Rob Chambers (Chambers Advisory Group), Jennifer Hoffman (Senior Center Director), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Nathan Rosewarne (Treasurer), Peter Shea (Hampshire Country Group Insurance Trust), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Technology Committee: David Martin, David Nardi

Capital Planning: Mitch Cichy, Dick Kisloski, Gil Loud

Teachers' Association: Paul DeMarco, Karen Schweitzer, Mary Ellen Woods

1. Telephone system – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi and the Technology Committee recommended changing to a VOIP system (Voice Over Internet Protocol) to upgrade the town phone system, at no increase in cost, and introduced Rob Chambers of the Chambers Advisory Group. Rob Chambers strongly recommended the nexVortex system, saying that it has a lot of features and great customer service, adding that nexVortex is a fabulous company. Features include call answering, caller ID, call forwarding, voicemail to email, text and cell phones, access from outside the office, portability if the offices move, and ability to receive calls in a power outage. Conference calls would involve an additional extension at \$12.99 per month. There is a one-time installation charge of \$855. Charlene distributed a side-by-side comparison of the current Verizon system and the proposed system. Some Verizon lines would be kept for now, namely, lines for fire alarms and other alarms, elevators, and faxes.

2. Energy Committee – electricity – municipal aggregation – Kim Boas, chair of the Energy Committee, reported that the 18-month contract with the electricity supplier is coming to an end. When bids are received, the decision on the new supplier will need to be made that day. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize Kim Boas to make a recommendation on the next electricity supplier and to authorize Charlene Nardi to sign the contract to lock in the price. **So voted** (3-0).

3. Capital Planning – The Board had invited the Capital Planning Committee for a discussion on the capital plan and how to make it realistic and workable. The first discussion was about the Public Safety Complex and the need to decide what is happening, and included the wait for the OPM Steering Committee's recommendation, the need for consensus and support of the people in town, the need to address a lot of concerns including green space, size of complex and money; an answer is projected for middle of summer or the end of the calendar year. The next discussion was about the James building and included the question of what the building is costing the town, the savings in insurance by having the renters there, the need to take care of the building since there is not the will in the town to sell the building, and repair of the elevator which just passed

inspection and the roof which may be able to get away with a patch for another year. Other topics included the need to have inflation reflected in the costs on the capital plan, the need for a capital budget, concern over exceeding 10% of the town's budget, a question about whether free cash has been certified, and a question about filling the vacancy on the committee. The committee was asked to give official changes in the plan to Town Administrator Charlene Nardi, unless someone on the committee can manage the spreadsheet.

4. Senior Center – Senior Center Director Jenn Hoffman made her regular report. The only budget change is a request for \$500 for the HEN program. She will be recruiting an Outreach Coordinator for 4-6 hours a week; the money is already in the budget Labor line. The number of volunteers is increasing and she has made a Volunteer Handbook. There are a number of projects relating to Aging in Place, including creating Block Associations, working with others on food insecurity, and working on a program to provide home services. She has recently been doing a huge amount of client outreach, visiting clients at rehab centers, hospitals and homes and researching services. Planning for the Senior Prom fundraiser in May is underway. Programming includes talks on Alzheimer's, a medical information forum with Cooley Dickinson Hospital, other aging in places programs. New classes include a meditation and mindfulness class, an evening ukulele class, and an evening Zumba class. She is looking for more exercises classes to bring people in and is talking about starting a hiking group. Board members were pleased that she brings a lot of good energy and that there is a lot of life in the center.

5. Assessors – ballot question – farm excise – Denise Banister reported that the Assessors would like to eliminate the farm animal excise tax because it takes a lot of time by town employees for very little money – last year the revenue was \$1600 – and they would like to support the town's remaining farms. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to support eliminating the assessment of excise under M.G. L. c. 59, sec. 8A on certain animals, machinery and equipment, and to put the question on the ballot. Denise Banister disclosed that she is an Assessor. **So voted** (3-0).

6. Group health insurance – The Board had previously voted to accept the provisions of Mass. Gen. Laws chapter 32B, sections 21-23 (on May 11, 2017, and February 28, 2019). Because notice had not been given to the collective bargaining units before those votes, the issue was revisited. Joe Shea, Executive Director of the Hampshire Group Insurance Trust, explained that although the Trust is in sound financial shape, they are looking at changing some benefits, namely, increasing some co-pays and deductibles but not increasing premiums. He pointed out that in comparison with other local plans, this plan has more benefits and lower premiums. The Insurance Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of the 69 units, approved the proposed changes. He added that the changes affect current employees, not retirees. Treasurer Nathan Rosewarne said that the cost to the town is about \$650,000 per year. Paul DeMarco, Karen Schweitzer and Mary Ellen Woods, representatives of the teachers' union, asked the Board not to adopt the statute sections, saying that doing so takes away the right to bargain and creates a complicated process, and that several local towns (Shutesbury, Easthampton) chose to use a more informal process. They also argued that the proposed changes put the burden on the employees while the savings go to the towns, and on the people who use the plan rather than on all plan participants. Some of the discussion focused on the requirement that 25% of the first

year's savings has to go to the employees. Other discussion was on litigation that when plan changes are made before the statute sections are adopted, that is not allowed. Before the union representatives left, they asked the town to support legislation to increase funding for public schools and public higher education in Massachusetts. Further discussion included that the town's attorney recommended voting again to accept the statute sections, that the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer recommended voting because it is fiscally responsible to the town taxpayers, and that the union does not currently have the right to negotiate health plan changes and that accepting the statute sections would not take away the right. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) for the Town of Williamsburg to accept the provisions of M.G.L. c. 32B, §21(a) for the purpose of allowing the Town to make plan design changes to the Town's group health insurance plans in accordance with M.G.L. c. 32B, §§21-23. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) pursuant to the provisions of 801 CMR 52.02(1), to elect to engage in the process to change health insurance benefits under M.G.L. c. 32B, §§ 21 through 23. **So voted** (3-0).

7. Letters – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the letter to Governor Baker on the Mass. Foundation Budget review for rural schools. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the letters to Rep. Blais and Sen. Hinds on the Chapter 90 funding formula. **So voted** (3-0).

8. Appointments – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to appoint Don Lawton Inspector of Animals for a term through April 3, 2020. **So voted** (3-0).

9. Licenses – live entertainment – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to grant a live entertainment permit to the Burgy Bullets Snowmobile Club for a D.J., on Saturday March 23 from 6 p.m. to 12 midnight. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve live entertainment for live acoustic music Saturday March 16, 6 to 10 p.m., to Valley View Farm. **So voted** (3-0).

10. Infrastructure priorities – The Board considered town infrastructure projects to recommend to Rep. Blais for her advocacy. The top three were the Depot Road culvert, the public safety complex, and the Helen E. James building roof. The Mountain Street project has already been approved, but she will be asked to advocate for releasing the funds in the bond bill. The Mill River Greenway is important but it was felt that there are a lot of possible funding sources for it. The Board also considered the engineering costs for the Complete Streets sidewalk work on South Street and East Main Street.

11. Complete Streets – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the Complete Streets award of \$275,000 to do the sidewalks on South Street and East Main Street is for construction only and does not include the cost of engineering. There is a quote from TEC for \$72,500 for engineering; other engineering quotes could be solicited. The Board would like to do the project but was reluctant to spend this additional money. One suggestion was to put \$5000 a year into sidewalks instead of using the grant. The Board decided to put the engineering cost on the Town Meeting warrant and let the voters decide. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to put the Complete Streets engineering proposal on the Town Meeting warrant. **So voted** (3-0).

## 12. Budgets –

Selectmen – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented the proposed budget. It includes Town Computer Service an increase of \$1600 for, to cover 15 hours of work plus backup, emails and other software costs; Town Telephone an increase of \$160; Building Inspection program an estimated increase of \$3875, or 9.9%, because of increased activity and salary increases; Comprehensive Insurance a decrease of \$1746, because of taking the expected regular credits into account. Other changes include decreases in Workers' Compensation and Police and Fire Accident insurance, decreases in Ambulance Service and Ambulance Debt Service, and increase in Town Internet because of the changeover to Comcast.

Police – Board members discussed the proposed increase. Charlene will do computations based on number of hours and hourly rate as presented in the Police Chief's narrative.

Fire – There was a question about the Labor line and the Fire Chief will be asked to tabulate labor expenses to date. Board approved the budget as submitted, to be discussed with Finance.

Highway – The Board discussed the request for an increase in Road Maintenance of \$20,000, to \$85,000. It was noted that the budget line has not been increased in a long time, and the increase is only half of what is needed. Although a suggestion was made to reduce it, the Board decided to approve the budget as submitted and discuss with Finance.

Schools – Charlene reported that the Smith Vocational budget for the town is \$588,147, an increase of \$224,102 over last year. When combined with the Hampshire Regional budget increase of \$146,727, it seems the town may need an override.

13. Boston Post Cane – The presentation is planned for Thursday, March 28, at 5 p.m., before the regular Select Board meeting.

14. Commercial solar projects – It had been suggested that the Planning Board consider limiting the number of commercial solar projects in town and asked the Select Board for feedback on the idea. Board members felt mixed. The Board supported leaving it to the Planning Board to study the issue of limiting or putting a moratorium on commercial solar projects.

## 15. Town Administrator's report –

Road safety, traffic calming – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that she received very few responses from other towns; one town has a committee for dealing with requests. Board members were reluctant to set up a new committee and pointed out that this is not a big issue in Williamsburg.

Fire Department AFG grants – Applications have been made.

Annual Town Meeting articles – She had sent the Board a list of the expected articles.

Sen. Hinds and public safety infrastructure – Sen. Hinds is asking for a study of public safety infrastructure throughout the state to identify which facilities are in the greatest need, in order to establish funding.

Collector's salary – She reported that she and chair Dave Mathers had met with the Collector, made an offer and had a discussion.

Fire Department voluntary OSHA audit – She reported that the audit went very well and that the inspector was impressed with the department, especially its record-keeping and procedure manuals. One issue is that there is something in the basement that the inspector thought might be asbestos.

Water licensing – Two Highway employees, Jennifer Westlake and Bryan Osetek, passed the recent water licensing exams.

Solar on landfill land – Two responses were received from the Request for Proposals; the Energy Committee is reviewing them.

Sen. Markey – Sen. Ed Markey is planning to visit Northampton on March 24 for a town-hall-style meeting to discuss the Green New Deal.

Newsletter – Newsletter deadline is April 29 and Charlene asked for things to include.

Electric inspection fees – Inspection department has requested an increase in the fees.

16. Town park land – Mill River Greenway had asked if they should have the park land boundary marked better. Charlene will tell them to move forward with marking based on the ANR plot plan.

17. Correspondence – Correspondence included a letter from Eric Cerreta about the High Street sidewalk; performance reviews for police officers; and an envelope from the Collector with the mailing address showing clearly, after changes to her system.

18. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of February 28 as presented. **So voted** (3-0).

19. Warrant – Approved and signed the warrants: payroll warrant WP19-20 for \$106,734.09 and expense warrant W19-20 for \$148,289.40, payable 3/20/19.

20. Miscellaneous –

Senior Center – People commented that the new Senior Center Director is going a great job.

Time off – Charlene Nardi will be away for the April 11 meeting.

Documents used:

Agenda and notes

Telephone system comparison of Verizon and NexVortex

Capital planning spreadsheet

Senior Center budget

Health plan comparison

Letter to Gov. Baker about Rural School Aid

Letters to Rep. Blais and Sen. Hinds about Chapter 90 funding

Live entertainment

Budgets

Resident letter about sidewalk

Minutes

Warrant and expense report

Adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Approved:

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Clerk