

*Minutes*  
*Williamsburg Board of Selectmen*  
*October 19, 2023*

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, October 19, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: William Sayre and Denise Banister

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Stephen Smith (Planning Board), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Planning Board – Comprehensive Plan survey results – Steve Smith, chair of the Planning Board, presented the results of the Comprehensive Plan Visioning Survey. He said there was a great response, 20% of the town, more older people than younger. PVPC (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission) has been very helpful in the process. Two important things to respondents were open space and being close to metropolitan areas and colleges. They liked higher density in town centers but not apartment buildings. The only thing they would decrease was industrial development. There were quite a lot of free-form additional comments. The next steps in visioning are holding community meetings, starting November 30, and holding focus groups on various topics. After that is creating the Comprehensive Plan. The cost for the plan itself is expected to be \$100,000, and there is money available, for instance from the state Community Compact, MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Prevention) grants, and other resources. It was noted that the organization that helps write the RFP (Request for Proposals) should not be an applicant to write the plan, and the town might want to write the RFP in house. Most towns create a committee specifically for the Comprehensive Plan rather than having the Planning Board manage it. The expected useful life of a comprehensive plan is five to ten years. This visioning gets the town a long way toward the comprehensive plan.

2. Highland Ambulance – Selectman Denise Banister, member of the Board of Highland Ambulance, reported that they are busier than ever. They are starting an ambulance replacement process. The town's assessment will increase because of the new ambulance, but the building has been paid off. A big issue is that Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements don't cover the cost of services. In addition, when people call for an ambulance and then don't get in, there is zero reimbursement. The Fire Department is trying to find ways to help such people without involving the ambulance.

3. PVPC agreement for Upper Mill River Watershed Planning – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the draft agreement for technical assistance in administering the recent MVP watershed grant. Tasks would take place in FY24 and FY25, and cost \$750,000 over those two years. The majority of the plan is engineering work, plus a lot of community engagement. The grant pays for the work, no town funds are needed, and the match is through in-kind contributions. The watershed area is essentially Williamsburg, with some water flow from Goshen. The result will be a series of reports, e.g., web mapping, series of workshops, field assessments. It should show 50 year, 100 year, 200 year storm events and show the weak links. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the agreement between the Town of Williamsburg and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission regarding the Upper Mill River Watershed Planning for Flood Resilience. **So voted** (2-0).

4. Green Communities application, B2Q electrification scoping study of the Meekins Library – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the report from B2Q summarizing their findings from the electrification study of the Meekins Library. They assessed what it would take to decarbonize the Meekins, install a Variant Refrigerant Flow (VRF) system like the one at the new Public Safety Complex for heat and air conditioning, and take the oil furnace off line. This report would form the basis for a Green Communities grant application, due this week. The grant could be for up to \$500,000, and the estimate is a little over \$500,000 if electrical system upgrades are needed. Part of the grant application is a letter from the Chief Executive Officer of the town saying it would commit to a 25% match if awarded the grant. This amount would need Town Meeting approval, so the letter would be saying that the Board of Selectmen would pursue an article for the \$125,000 at Town Meeting. The Board of Library Trustees has not yet weighed in but the Library Director is in favor of moving ahead with the project. It was noted that there is no generator at the Meekins, but the ones at the old fire stations will be available soon. It was also noted that the VRF system is considered the current best practice in electrification of buildings and should result in a reduction of heating costs. The Board agreed to sign the letter for the application and to put the \$125,000 on the next Town Meeting warrant as a capital expense.

5. Senior and Veterans Volunteer Tax Relief Program – The Administrative Assistant presented the applications for the tax workoff programs for the year starting November 1. There were eight applications for the Senior program and one for the Veterans program, similar to last year. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the eight applications for the Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program and the one application for the Veterans Volunteer Tax Relief Program as presented. **So voted** (2-0).

6. Police cruiser – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the purchase order for the new 2023 Chevrolet Tahoe, to be purchased from McGovern Municipal Headquarters, for \$57,018.25. Procurement was done through the Greater Boston Police Council, which the town belongs to and which is related to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Commission. \$66,000 was approved at the June 2023 Town Meeting as a free cash appropriation. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the Purchase Order #10192023-WPD for the 2023 Chevrolet Tahoe. **So voted** (2-0).

7. MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo said he had reached out to departments for suggestions for projects, with no response, so he reiterated his suggestion of getting new bus shelters for the village centers. He showed a design that Nick Dines liked and is similar to what Williamsburg already has, less ornate than the Victorian style. It is made of tempered glass, not plexiglass. The Board was in favor of adding a solar-powered cell phone charging station. It was noted that both the Highway Superintendent and the school custodian recommended that the shelters be turned to face away from the road because of snow plowing. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to apply to MassDOT for the Shared Streets and Spaces grant for two bus shelters. **So voted** (2-0).

8. Old Town Hall – restoration – Select Board chair William Sayre reported that an ad hoc group met recently to talk about restoring Old Town Hall. They are excited about the project and did a draft document of goals for a committee. They want to recruit people to help and are not in favor of hiring a consultant. There is \$70,000 earmarked from ARPA funds. There is money available through the PVPC for historic structures, and this building is on the National Historic

Register, along with several sections of downtown. (This is different from a local Historic District with enforcement, like Elm Street in Northampton.) The building's use by the Historical Society for display should help tourism and should meet the requirement of economic development. An ad hoc group was suggested rather than a committee and could people from the Grange, since they are renovating the Grange Hall. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo was asked to put together a quick review on procurement and also on an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) assessment for the ad hoc group. The project will be put on a future agenda.

9. Town Common Committee – Selectman Denise Banister will convene the committee and the site should be accessible October 30. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo has been in touch with Hill Engineers to do a topographical survey and with Stockman & Associates to do a wetlands evaluation. This had sort of been done by Berkshire Design for the Public Safety Complex; the land is no longer flagged; they may be willing to provide files and drawings. The idea is to start fresh with the Town Common Committee. Nick Dines had requested the topographical survey on behalf of the Town Common Committee.

10. Playground at Town Offices – The town received an email from the church next door asking about safety at the playground behind the Town Offices. It was remembered that the church had put in raised beds and Haydenville neighbors were involved in a play structure. The structure that is there now is not in great shape and there is a bees' nest in it. It was suggested that we take everything out, after we check with the church about the raised beds, and then possibly consult the Recreation Commission about a plan for the space. In the short term, things will be taken out; longer term it could be an opportunity for a nice little park.

11. Animal Inspector – It was reported that Don Lawton is ready to stop being Animal Inspector when his term is up and that he recommends increasing the Inspector's pay. In particular he recommends paying hourly rather than by incident and raising the amount. The current budget is about \$1000 and is paid through a Board of Health budget line. A yearly stipend, rather than paying per incident or per hour, was discussed. Questions raised included how many barns are inspected, how many incidents there are a year, how long an incident takes on average, and what he would recommend for a yearly stipend. Several people were suggested for the position.

12. Town Administrator's report –

Public Safety Complex – It was reported that the final punch list is being done now. The town is still waiting for the solar contract from the lawyers. There was a question of who would pay for the borings for the solar canopy and the geologic technical analysis if the project doesn't move forward. The furniture and hookups are going in, the fence is coming down at the end of the month and the public open door is scheduled for November 11. The budget is short of money and there were thoughts about where to cut back, as well as pointing out that the town borrowed less than was authorized – Town Meeting approved \$4.1 million, the town borrowed only \$3.6 million, with the MVP grant covering the other 0.5 million. Other possible sources of money were mentioned.

Select agreement – The contract is still being hashed out by the lawyers. William Sayre plans to call the town's attorney to say it needs to get done.

STAM regional meeting – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will attend the Small Town Administrators meeting next week in Westhampton.

Rural Affairs – The new Director of Rural Affairs in the state Executive Office of Economic Development has been holding regular check-ins and it was suggested that she be invited to come to a Select Board meeting.

Municipal aggregation – The recent postcard from Colonial Power, which is managing municipal electric aggregation for the town, cites a new residential supply rate of 14 cents per kwh, four cents lower than National Grid.

Mill River Greenway public forum – South Main Street – A good turnout is expected for the meeting tonight. The goal is to have dialog and reach consensus so that the town can speak with one voice to MassDOT's 25% design of the Bridges Project, which includes part of South Main Street.

13. Correspondence – The Haydenville Library is being closed due to health hazards including mold and radon. The Board of Library Trustees is evaluating the best path forward. It was noted that the library is not normally open. Other correspondence included a note of thanks from Marcianna Caplis, a letter from resident Charles Dudek about the rail trail, and a letter from Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa about dividends from recycling.

14. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of September 7, September 21, and October 5 as presented. **So voted** (2-0).

15. Warrant – Chair William Sayre will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP24-09 for \$147,807.24 and expense warrant W24-09 for \$180,058.98, payable 10/25/23.

Documents used:

Agenda and notes  
Comprehensive Plan Visioning Survey  
PVPC agreement for Mill River Watershed Planning  
B2Q electrification scoping study for Meekins Library  
Senior and Veterans' Volunteer Tax Relief applications  
Purchase order for Police cruiser  
Bus shelter descriptions  
Municipal Aggregation postcard  
Haydenville Library notice  
Minutes  
Warrant

Adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

Approved:

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Clerk