

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
October 21, 2021

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, October 21, 2021, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also present: Rebecca Brooks, Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Penny Robbins, Kenneth Taylor (Fire Department), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Denise Wickland (Police Chief)

1. Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Connell gave his regular report. He said that the department has responded to 143 calls since July 1 (this fiscal year), and 344 since January 1 (this calendar year). The number of calls is on track to be a record, well above the number from years past. Emergency medical calls are just under 50% of the calls. Engine 1 had minor damage when its door was struck by another vehicle. He reviewed issues with the other vehicles. The department had a ceremony honoring members for length of service. Most firefighters are vaccinated though vaccination is not required. Active membership continues to diminish. Recruitment is ongoing but with little success. A joint meeting was held with Chesterfield and Goshen fire officers, discussing working more closely together. They are looking at group purchasing and having an additional single fire tone for all three departments to streamline mutual aid responses. Radio coverage in certain parts of town is always problematic no matter what tower is used. They are working toward a solution. Budget – Board members raised a concern about the budget and said they wanted to have a conversation with Fire and other departments about responses to a storm. Chief Connell noted that when wires are down it is the Fire Department's responsibility, and that the cost for firefighters is lower than for Highway. He invited Board members to come spend time in the department office and attend trainings, to get a better understanding of what the department does. Board members were concerned that there wasn't enough money in the department's budget for what it does and encouraged the Chief to ask for what he needed, including the reasons, so that the Board can support the budget at Town Meeting.

2. Police Department – Chief Denise Wickland made her regular report. She said the budget looks good. Officer Peter Fisher has finished the Academy and is now full time. Call volumes are up 50% from last year – increases in medicals, sexual assaults, children removed by DCS, investigations – and they are managing the best they can. The state police, which is normally their backup, is stretched thin. Personnel and budget issues – Cost of police departments for small towns is skyrocketing. The state is mandating the Bridge Academy, and everyone has to be POST-approved, currently more than 300 hours, expected to increase to 500 hours. The department has to pay wages for training and officers will then be employable elsewhere at higher wages. It would cost less to send one person to the Academy and hire them full-time than to send the part-timers to the Bridge Academy. She said the town is lucky that the part-time officers are dedicated to working here. She figured that it would cost \$22,000 from starting with a new recruit to putting them to work with a badge. A separate budget line for certification

training would be a good idea. She suggested \$25,000, which would cover the Bridge Academy and the full-time Academy in the future. All of the current officers are interested in the Bridge Academy, though some may not be eligible because of past medical issues. The Board suggested looking at a draft budget in January, before budget time.

3. Mountain Street – The Board had submitted comments asking MassDOT to consider a design that more closely resembles Alternative 4. MassDOT’s response was that they are at 25% design and Alternative 4 will be further considered as they move forward. Residents raised concerns about costs to the town especially legal fees, possible lowering of property values, environmental impacts, the increase of traffic, and the ugly design. Discussion included that environmental mitigation will be handled by the state, the Board can’t engage the Conservation Commission until the design is better known and the state submits an NOI, MassDOT may be able to work with Complete Streets on Alternative 4, the Board can advocate for traffic calming measures, and that an assessor thinks that it’s unlikely that property values will be affected.

4. Appointments – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to appoint Rich French to the Technology Committee, term to June 30, 2022. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to appoint Tariq Abu-Jaber to the Planning Board, term to expire June 30, 2026. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to appoint Steve Smith and Lisa Bertoldi to the 250th Anniversary Celebration Committee for the duration of the committee. **So voted** (3-0). William Sayre disclosed that he is married to Lisa Bertoldi.

5. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program – The Administrative Assistant presented the applications for the program, five regular ones, and one that is over the maximum income level. The Board would like the one to be able to continue to work on the town signs and suggested paying out of the Selectmen’s budget. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the five applications for the Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program. **So voted** (3-0). The Administrative Assistant will get in touch with the sixth to see if he is willing to serve with the different method of compensation.

6. Anne T. Dunphy School HVAC repair – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo described the history of correspondence and concluded that, contrary to the initial understanding, CARES money could not be used for this project. The town would need to document that the air quality was now worse than before the pandemic. He recommended using the \$81,000 from the Stabilization Fund, as approved by Town Meeting, and using \$105,000 from the coming ARPA funds. The town will be receiving approximately \$730,000 in ARPA money, from a combination of state and county funds. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the spending of up to \$105,000 from the ARPA funds for the Anne T. Dunphy School HVAC system. **So voted** (3-0).

7. MA legislative maps – The new state house and senate districts are scheduled for being approved this week or next, with the changes to happen in January 2023. The town is losing Rep. Natalie Blais, who has served the town well, and will be reassigned to be part of Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa’s district.

8. 250th Anniversary Celebration – The town has \$40,000 for the event, less than hoped for. They are still trying to figure out how to spend the earmark by June 30.

9. Personnel review process – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo has made minor revisions to the forms. He plans to send them out next week, to be returned in early November.

10. Veterans' Day plans – The observance will be on November 11 at the Veterans Memorial. Final plans are not known yet. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will be in touch with someone about the public address system. Dave Mathers will welcome people and Denise Banister will make closing remarks.

11. Uneven ground – A telephone message had reported uneven ground at the bottom of the ramp by Florence Bank in the center of Williamsburg. There were emails among the Board of Selectmen about getting this fixed quickly. Suggestions were made to ask Highway Superintendent Dan Banister to make the bricks even or place a warning cone in the area. Nick Dines said that he and volunteers would reset the bricks in the spring when the library walkway is done. Dave Mathers as chair said that he would get in touch with Dan Banister about a fix till spring.

Board members were concerned that this discussion occurred outside of a public meeting.

Motion was made and seconded (WS/DB) to enter into the minutes the response to the emergency situation at the bank and note that the document containing the emails was available. **So voted** (3-0).

12. Town Administrator's report –

Covid – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that there are five active cases in town, four of which are close to being out of quarantine.

Depot Road culvert – The work is under way. They discovered a ledge on the southeast side, which had not been found in the boring based on the original plan. Maxymillian adapted quickly and the project is moving forward.

Hill Engineers contract addendum – Dave Mathers and Nick met with Hill Engineers and shared the Board's concerns. Hill explained the need, and Dave and Nick felt it was reasonable. Hill acknowledged the work Nick had done and will do extra work not originally included. The initial contract was for \$24,500 and the new contract changes that to \$37,500, which is within the budgeted breathing room. The contract addendum will come to a future meeting.

Hybrid meeting project update – The cost would be \$2000 not including labor. There is budget money for tech upgrades, and there are unused retainer hours. The Board would be interested if it were covered by grant money.

Highway garage door replacement – \$21,000 was appropriated at Town Meeting and the bid came in \$9000 higher. Highway Superintendent Dan Banister would like to move forward with the full project. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to pay the additional \$9000, using \$4500 from the Highway budget maintenance line and \$4500 from the town Building Repair line. **So voted** (3-0).

13. Boston Post Cane – Oldest citizen – The town's oldest resident, Betty Levrat, died recently. The new oldest resident is Paula Wentworth. A presentation ceremony will be planned.

14. Licenses –

Live entertainment permits – Board members do not want to issue annual permits at this time and will continue to issue permits for up to six months. The Board asked the Administrative Assistant to remind a business that they need to apply.

Used car dealers license – A local business has started the process of applying for a dealer's license.

15. Miscellaneous –

Library survey – The library will be doing a survey at the Transfer Station and in front of the Williamsburg Market.

Personnel – Denise Banister reported that she has taken a job as Executive Assistant to the Select Board in Cummington.

16. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of October 7. **So voted** (3-0).

17. Warrant – Selectman Dave Mathers will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP22-09 for \$118,069.10 and expense warrant W22-09 for \$638,552.00, payable 10/27/21.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Fire Department report

MassDOT response on Mountain Street

Letters of interest

Senior Volunteer Tax Relief applications

Personnel review forms

Emails about the uneven ground

Minutes

Warrant

Adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk