

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
November 5, 2020

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, November 5, 2020, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: William Sayre, David Mathers and Denise Banister

Also present: Dan Banister (Highway Superintendent), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Highway – Highway Superintendent Dan Banister gave his regular report. They have been very busy recently, mostly downed trees, some plowing and salting. They have put new brakes on Truck 5, and the sander is now totally rebuilt. The hotbox for patching roads has needed all new wheels and tires. Winter equipment is ready. Some water meter readings are very high, some very low; data can be downloaded to show daily usage; some meters have been replaced. The sewer at the Town Offices was plugged up. New LED lightbulbs at the Highway Garage are much better than the old fluorescent and the remaining lights will be replaced. The budget is good. Equipment budget is fine. He is worried about a couple of dangerous trees; a crane will be needed and the roads (North Street and High Street) will need to be shut down; he is working with Tom Por, Tree Warden. They will need to shut down water service on Route 9 from South Street to the Pharmacy because of a leak and no shut-off valve. Chevrolet is not currently making extended cab trucks but may in the spring; the 2001 truck being replaced is used for everything. A letter was received from residents about the projected reopening of Nash Hill Road and potential problems with speed and traffic. He said speed humps are not feasible because of plowing; 20 mph is not possible because the road doesn't fit the criteria. Town Administrator Charlene Nardi will write to the residents, and include the fact that the Whately end of the road needs to be open for safety, when the Williamsburg end is closed by a storm, so that residents aren't trapped. Elsewhere a sign in the town's right of way will be referred to the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer to determine whether the size is legal, whether it needs a special permit, and to convey that it needs to be moved out of the way of plowing. Other topics included a concern about bridges melting and freezing, and trash being dumped by the road. Board members thanked him for accomplishing a lot.

2. Audit engagement letter – The town's auditor, Melanson, informed the town that although there is a three-year contract, audit standards now require an annual engagement letter. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to sign the audit engagement letter for FY20. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye). The cost is \$17,500, and that is the amount in the budget.

3. Recycling Dividends Program – The town has been awarded \$4200 for recycling under the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the contract. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye).

4. Appointments and resignations –

Energy Committee – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to accept the resignations of Mary Dudek and Gerry Mann from the Energy Committee, with thanks for their service. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye).

Energy Committee – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/DM) to appoint Jim Piermarini and Neal Anderson to the Energy Committee, terms to expire June 30, 2021. **So voted** (DB aye, DM aye, WS aye).

Local School Committee – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to accept the resignation of Cindy Kassell from the Local School Committee, effective November 12. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye).

5. Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program – This is a new program from the state Department of Energy Resources to fund energy improvements and help revitalize commercial, industrial, multi-family, and non-profit buildings. Concerns were raised by the Town Collector that there may be a lot of record keeping for not a lot of benefit, and that the town should wait until it knows more. The Collector also noted that the Assessors are in the middle of a town-wide revaluation and that the computer systems may not be able to handle what is needed. The Board decided to hold off and revisit this in the summer or fall of 2021.

6. Pole hearing – National Grid requested permission to install a stub pole on Village Hill Road. The Board set November 19 at 9 a.m., at its regular meeting, for the public hearing.

7. Helen E. James Building, Commons Corporation lease – The lease expires in December. This will be considered at the next meeting. Meanwhile the thinking is not to increase the rent amount, and to renew for perhaps six months, since other plans for the site are developing.

8. Veterans' Day update – The Veterans' Agent has said that there will be a virtual event, pre-recorded for November 11 at 11 a.m. The chair will read a proclamation.

9. Fire Department – Select Board Chair William Sayre met with Fire Chief Jason Connell about items that need to be addressed.

Communication – The communications issue is urgent. Portable radios are not satisfactory and firefighters fall back on using their personal cell phones. Hatfield has a tower, in conjunction with Westhampton, but Williamsburg does not have permission to use it. The Board will reach out to the Hatfield and Westhampton Boards of Selectmen about using their tower as a temporary solution, if not a permanent solution. Another possibility is to put a repeater on a cell phone tower in Williamsburg. Charlene will speak to the Fire Chief about details and will reach out to the Hatfield Town Administrator.

Fleet and capital planning – Engine 3, a 1992 vehicle that is used all the time, is due to be replaced in FY22, at an estimated cost of \$160,000. The question is how high to make the box; a truck that size would not fit in the current housing but would fit in the new public safety complex. This truck won't be voted on until after the public safety complex is voted on. The Board would like to hear more about the specs. Regarding Engines 2 and 4, Fire Chief Connell is proposing that the two be swapped in the capital plan: that Engine 4, currently due to be replaced in FY24, be pushed off to FY28, and Engine 2 be changed to a tanker, to improve the town's ISO rating, and be moved up from FY28 to FY24. Board members agreed that this made sense, but with a caution to see how the public safety complex may affect the tax rate and the capital plan.

Fire Department capital plan stabilization fund – Fire Chief Jason Connell was concerned that the Fire Department's items tend to get pushed off and suggested that the town consider a special stabilization fund for the Fire Department. Board members acknowledged that the Fire

Department requests do get put off, but generally agreed that a separate stabilization fund is not a good idea. Setting up multiple stabilization funds would make money less easily available in an emergency. The town generally borrows for buying vehicles and does not have extra cash on hand. There is no obvious source of funding for such a stabilization fund. A conversation with the Fire Department is needed; however, ultimately the question of how to plan for expenditures is in the hands of the Finance Committee/Capital Planning Committee and will be brought up with them during budget time.

Fire Chief's salary – Fire Chief Connell has asked the Board to look at his salary compared with other department heads. He feels that it is not commensurate with the time and commitment he puts in. It was noted that the Police Chief salary increased when the position became full-time, and that the Fire Chief could be paid for calls if it came from his budget. Board members will look at the salary question in budget season.

10. Town Administrator's report –

Sewer agreement update – KP Law will be working on behalf of the Water/Sewer Commission to resolve concerns of the Commissions about the FY20 invoice and the agreement/contract with the City of Northampton.

Town Offices sewer – The Town Office Building sewer pipes were blocked to a stack of brown paper towels. Charlene send a message to everyone in the Town Offices not to put anything except toilet paper in the toilets, including paper towels, so-called flushable wipes, and feminine products.

Senior Center personnel – Charlene and Senior Center Director Melissa Wilson met a volunteer to resolve concerns. The Select Board chair also reached out to the volunteer.

Virus update – Everything is fine; there are no positive cases. Each department keeps her informed about any issues.

COVID-19 orders and enforcement – She had shared the Board of Health's enforcement guidelines, which included oral and written communication before any fines are imposed. The Board discussed the recent Governor's orders about size of public and private gatherings and mandatory evening closing. An inspector from the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission made a visit to a business in town, found no issues, asked some questions and left.

Anne T. Dunphy School trim – Eric Payne, the contractor, confirmed that he will do the work in accordance with the specs sent to him.

Williamsburg Market renovation – The business will be closed for two weeks for renovation and will have a PODS storage container in front on the sidewalk. Workers will be parked in the parking spaces. Highway Superintendent Dan Banister and Charlene approved.

Letter from resident asking about public input on marijuana cultivation – Charlene said that she explained that there are public input opportunities for the Community Host Agreement, the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals processes.

Cleaning up tax title properties – A resident shared a concern about the appearance of a town property that is in tax title and asked that the town clean it up; however, the town is not allowed to use public funds on property that it doesn't own.

Update on insurance coverage – The town's insurance agent explained that there is coverage when an emergency responder's car is damaged when responding to an emergency but that coverage does not extend to cars parked in town-owned parking lots. The insurance company has also notified the town that the Haydenville Library and Old Town Hall, which had been

considered unused, will now be put back under the town's normal policy, instead of the extra, expensive policy.

Water and sewer revenue and expense figures – She sent the figures to the Board but has not yet reviewed them. The Board will invite the chair of Water/Sewer Commission to a meeting during budget season to explain to the Board how the budget works.

Drug and alcohol testing – She has recently learned that municipal employees with commercial drivers' licenses are required to have drug and alcohol testing. MIIA, the town's insurance company, recommends Custom Drug Testing, and all the towns that use them are happy with them. The cost is reasonable – \$100 a year plus \$35 for alcohol breathalyzer and \$65 for drug urine testing. The town would be part of a consortium of member towns, and the testing would be done with a few hours' notice to the town contact person. She plans to move forward to engage them. The town's personnel policy should be updated to spell out the drug and alcohol testing.

Grants and reports – She has submitted a second CARES Act grant application for PPE and air ventilation systems for town buildings, and the Green Communities annual report with the help of PVPC. The MVP annual report will be done by Nick Dines and Gaby Immerman. The Emergency Management Director was awarded the EMPG grant in the amount of \$2700 for a heavy-duty laptop.

Nash Hill Road – Residents of Nash Hill Road shared concerns about the re-opening of the road between Whately and Williamsburg, which has been closed for several years due to structural issues with the Whately bridge. Charlene will respond.

New COVID rules – She reviewed the rules for curfews, wearing masks outside all the time, size of gatherings, alcohol service to stop by 9:30 p.m., everyone home by 10.

11. Miscellaneous – Evaluations – Evaluations should be done before next meeting if possible and then Charlene will schedule zoom meetings for the evaluator, the employee, and her.

Building Supervisor update – Highway Department will be asked to check regularly on the roof drains at the Helen E. James Building. Several possible names for Building Supervisor were suggested. This will be kept on the agenda until it is figured out.

Police ventilation – Charlene will check with the Police Chief. This will be kept on the agenda until the issue is resolved.

12. Correspondence – Correspondence included the Highland Ambulance Quarterly report and a notice of a ZBA hearing for 5 and 7 Main Street.

13. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to approve the minutes of October 22. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye). **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of the OPM Steering Committee on October 29. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye).

14. Warrant – Selectmen Dave Mathers will review and sign the warrant. Board members thanked him for the great favor he is doing.

Adjourned at 11:28 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk