

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
February 11, 2021

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, February 11, 2021, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: William Sayre and Denise Banister

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Dan Banister (Highway Superintendent), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Kot Kasom, Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Fire Chief – Fire Chief Jason Connell reported that the department responded to 381 incidents in 2020, a record once again. Of these, 201 or 53% were sick person calls. There were 12 fires. Alex Kassell and Joshua Lapointe were promoted to Lieutenants at the end of 2020 and they have been doing an excellent job. Robert Lapointe retired and the department will miss him. Response during the daytime is hit or miss; 30 people are on the roster but only 7 or 8 can show up in the daytime. They are looking for more people but many people are reluctant when they know the time commitment. Engine 3 is in poor condition and the plan is to replace it with a light rescue truck. They have acquired a new multi-gas meter and two vehicle chargers through donations. A couple of firefighters have tested positive for Covid but have since recovered. Four firefighters declined the vaccine for personal reasons; everyone else received their first dose and are scheduled for the second dose. He has been talking with several people about the radio issue and they are continuing to work on finding a solution. He is waiting to speak with the Mass. State Police. The budget is good; he hasn't finalized the numbers for next year. He would like to increase the Administrative Assistant line over several years eventually to 20 hours per week, and would like to make the pay the same hourly rate as a firefighter. This position has been very beneficial for communication. He would like to bring up the firefighter's hourly rate to what a part-time police officer makes. In terms of grants, they have not yet received the reimbursement from the VFA grant for 2020 for forestry equipment. They have applied for a state grant toward purchase of a gear dryer. They are applying for two AFG grants, for a fill station and for a pumper/tanker to replace Engine 2, which has had issues its whole life. He will be requesting letters of support from legislators. He noted that the department works closely with Chesterfield and Goshen, training together and working like one big department through mutual aid. He also noted that he has not been able to get to Select Board meetings because they are in the daytime. Board members and the Town Administrator will talk about this. The Board thanked him for his report and his good work.

2. Highway – Highway Superintendent Dan Banister reported that the department has been very busy with the weather and with maintenance – quite a bit of snow and ice and quite a few breakdowns. He said the trucks are starting to show their age and the road salt is wreaking havoc. Truck 6, the 10-wheeler, has electrical issues; on Truck 3, small for side streets, the plow metal got fatigued; on Truck 2, the 1983, the steering shaft wore out; Truck 4, the newest 10-wheeler, lost all hydraulics. Salt has been ordered and is in good shape. He has accumulated 90

hours of comp time, over the limit, but because of the storms he hasn't been able to take it. There are two contractor snow plowers. The budget is holding up fine. He is proposing a level budget for next year. The labor line for a fourth person is available if extra help is needed in the summer. They have been buying a lot of tools to do maintenance. They have upgraded lights in the shop to LED, which are brighter. They are keeping up with plowing the snow and the roads are in good shape. A lot of trees have been falling – more money is needed for the tree account. The garage doors are bad and the department will put in a capital request for them again. They are still waiting for the truck approved at annual town meeting; meanwhile he has put the new plow on another truck and it does a much better job. The backhoe is due for replacement this year or next but it is not used much because of the excavator and he wants to postpone the replacement. They plan to replace the backhoe with a loader. Town Administrator Charlene Nardi noted that the provision about overtime and comp time needs to be changed, since there is not enough time between storms for him to use his earned comp time. One Board member noted that because of Dan's management skills, the crew members enjoy working there, and also noted that people are very pleased with the plowing. Board members thanked him for his report.

3. Marijuana – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that in July 2020 the town had put out an RFI (Request for Information) for Retail Marijuana but received no responses. At that time there were two groups looking for locations in the town. Currently another person is interested and has a location. There is no reason to wait and it would benefit the town to put out the RFI now. Mr. Kot Kasom explained that he is negotiating a lease at 23 Main Street, looking at opening in 2022. He said the site is properly zoned and meets the proposed adult retail requirements. He was reminded of the school nearby and given contact information for the Zoning Enforcement Officer. The same RFI that was used before could be put out, with just the date changed. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the Town Administrator to put out the RFI for a Retail Marijuana establishment. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye).

4. Elections – Change of polling location – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented the proposal of the Town Clerk to change the polling location back to the Town Offices in Haydenville. It had been moved temporarily to the Anne T. Dunphy School for the large November 3 election, but the school location cannot be used now because the school is open. The Town Clerk's report included that the Town Office location meets the requirements for site access, voting equipment, parking, entrance and building interior. It is a public building, is ADA compliant, and will not have an adverse impact on access to the polls on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income or age. It provides adequate space for Election Officials to perform their duties while maintaining social distance from each other. Board members agreed that moving the polling location back to the Town Offices was a good idea and agreed that there would be no adverse effect on access to the polls. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to change the polling location back from the Anne T. Dunphy School to the Town Offices, effective immediately. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye).

5. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief program – The Administrative Assistant presented a new application for one of the open slots in the program. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the new application to the Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye).

6. Letters to Sen. Adam Hinds and Governor's Office Director Jose Delgado – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented two letters, one to Sen. Hinds thanking him for his work to get the Mountain Street project and the South Main Street project into the Transportation Bond Bill, the other to Director Delgado asking him to advocate for putting the projects on the capital plan and releasing the funds. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to sign the two letters as presented, to Sen. Hinds and to Jose Delgado. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye).

7. Budget review – Technology – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi shared the Technology budget request. There are big increases in the tech lines, and also two town meeting warrant articles. The Tech Committee is now recommending what the town needs to handle the more than 40 computers and server and other technology, including additional service hours and new programs for cybersecurity. It is a big increase because the town has not been supporting this budget line as it should have over the past few years. The town's contract with Paragus is through the Hampshire IT program, now handled by Goshen. Paragus is local and responsive and has multiple employees. The rates are similar to other providers.

8. Town Administrator's report –

Covid and department updates – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that four people in the community have tested positive for Covid. All the departments are fine. Vaccinations – The Senior Center is gearing up to call everyone 75 or older and is committed to getting them the help they need to register for vaccinations. Most eligible people have had their first vaccination or have appointments. Protocols – While the new variant is more infectious, there are no new protocols at this time. Town policy for employees is to wear masks if they are within six feet of co-workers or are out in public.

Highland Ambulance budget/assessment – The organization's operational budget was reduced and the town's share went down by just under \$8000 because one of the employees is not looking for health insurance. The building and vehicle assessments were increased by \$214 and \$93, respectively. The organization will be asked to label the statement as an assessment rather than a budget, for clarity.

Solar developer pollution settlement – There has been a \$1.14 million settlement in the lawsuit for the pollution of the river by silt and dirt. The money is for remediation; the town does not receive any funds.

Bond rating – The town had a meeting with S&P Global and the rating came back as a continued AA+. There is an opportunity to increase it if some management policies are put in place. Charlene and Treasurer Nathan Rosewarne will work on this.

Depot Road culvert – The NOI will go before the Conservation Commission tonight. The hope is to go out to bid in the next month, for work in August or September when the river is at its lowest.

Blais and Hinds – A meeting has been scheduled for Monday, March 1, with Rep. Natalie Blais and Sen. Adams Hinds to talk about the town's legislative priorities for the coming year.

250th Anniversary – The Anniversary Committee recommends postponing the celebration to 2022 but is discussing what can be done this year that is safe. There are energy and excitement, leadership and ideas in the committee.

Hatfield's 350th anniversary– Hatfield has decided to have a 7-mile vehicle parade on May 30, 2021, for its 350th and has invited Williamsburg to participate. The Board would like the town to take part, especially since it was once part of Hatfield. Charlene will reach out to the Historical Commission, Fire and Police.

Cruiser accident – A cruiser skidded and hit a tree on Sunday, February 7. The insurance company has been notified. The vehicle is out of commission and they are not sure it is fixable.

Gas station – Zoning Enforcement Officer Louis Hasbrouck sent an email to the business owner giving a deadline of today for filing an application with the Zoning Board of Appeals or else fines would be imposed.

Flags – The Highway Superintendent estimates that 60 new flags are needed to replace flags along Route 9, South Main Street and North Main Street. They cost \$20 each including the setup. The electronic newsletter will ask for donations to the fund.

Sewer Wastewater Agreement update – Charlene reported that the town's attorney has reached out to Northampton's attorney to resolve issues.

Special Town Meeting alternative methods – Charlene reported that she had reached out to other Small Town Administrators for creative ideas for holding a Special Town Meeting. Most are holding meetings outdoors in tents or indoors in large spaces. There were no other useful ideas.

OPM Steering Committee – The committee's newsletter came out recently. The Gazette article and chair Jim Ayres did a very good job explaining the work that the committee did and why it came to its conclusion. People are encouraged to look at the materials before deciding. The All Boards meeting next week will be recorded and posted, in-person Committee pairs are scheduled to be out in the community on Saturday, February 20, at various places in town, the Committee and contractor will answer the questions posted on Facebook and they are working on handouts. Board members may post individually on Facebook or may vote as a board.

Police – Charlene reported that Police Officer Peter Fisher has been accepted to the Police Academy and will start in March.

9. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of January 28, 2021, as amended. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye).

10. Warrant – Selectman Denise Banister will review and sign the warrant.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Town Clerk's memo on polling location change

Senior Volunteer Tax Relief application

Letters to Sen. Hinds and Director Delgado

Technology budget

Minutes

Adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk