

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
February 16, 2017

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, February 16, 2017, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. The chair noted that the meeting was being recorded, at the request of the reporter.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Bill Turner (Highway Superintendent), Alison Bowen, Gaby Immerman (Mill River Greenway), Emmet Anderson (Mill River Greenway).

Highway Superintendent Evaluation: The Board complimented Bill Turner on his knowledge, grasp of procedures and techniques. The members acknowledged his network of resources with other highway departments and MassDOT, as well as the suppliers of materials. The Board commended him for keeping up with the new innovative products and updates in laws and regulations. Members individually noted his planning and organization skills and his utilizing crew talents to their best advantage. The Board encouraged Superintendent Turner to continue to work on his communication with the crew, supervise in a positive manner, manage stress in healthy ways, and be more hands on and available at project sites. Overall, the Board felt that the Highway Superintendent is doing his job well, acknowledging that it isn't an easy job with everyone "looking over your shoulder" and commenting on how it should be done. Members noted that he does an impressive job with so many road miles and a small crew. They expressed appreciation for his professionalism and managing the volume and quality of work with a department that is stretched very thin at times. Members thanked him for his commitment and work over the last year. Highway Superintendent Turner noted that his newer employees are working out very well; they are motivated and have different talents that have filled in gaps. He is appreciative of the crew and their work.

Highway Superintendent Goals / Projects: Superintendent Turner stated that the major projects over the next year are chip sealing Petticoat Hill and Briar Hill Roads, and the water main work on Fort Hill Road. The department will also continue to patch potholes, maintain equipment, track maintenance, clean drainage ditches, complete general road and water / sewer main upkeep and continue to support other departments. He will also be working with the Town Administrator to identify dangerous trees for removal. The Board asked for him to continue to strive to bring cohesiveness to his department, improving the ability to work well together and maintaining a positive relationship with the public. Equipment goals are the purchase of the wheeled excavator with town funds and the loader with Chapter 90 funds. In response to the question of what he most needs if he could have it, Highway Superintendent Turner stated that with all the different aspects the Highway Department is involved in, he could use more help. The Board requested a list of a projects planned over the next three years.

Highway Department Report: Bill Turner reported that things are going well, truck 1 needs work which will be done between regular projects and snow events. While other communities are reporting a shortage of salt, Superintendent Turner stated that he has not had an issue with our supplier. With the many snow events, the crew has been focused on snow removal responsibilities. Discussion about painting of crosswalks included that MassDOT is responsible for Rte. 9 and does them once a year; however, last year the Town contracted for all of them in the village centers to be done with cross-hatching. Unfortunately, the ones in the Haydenville village center were done at the same time as road work on Bridge and High Street, which made them not last as long. The Town Administrator will contact MassDOT about crosswalk signage for the Haydenville village.

Public: Alison Bowen addressed the Board of Selectmen with a request for a guardrail on North Farms Road where she went off the road during the unexpected snow event on October 27, 2016. Ms. Bowen detailed the conditions, her terrifying experience of going off the road totaling her 11 year old Subaru and having to put down her dog injured in the accident. Ms. Bowen feels that a guardrail would have prevented her from going off the road, limiting the extent of damage to her vehicle and injuries to her pet. While saddened by the event and with sympathy for Ms. Bowen's experience, the Board of Selectmen noted that both the Police Chief and Highway Superintendent have informed them that Ms. Bowen's going off that side of the road while travelling from Northampton is very unusual and that it is the first accident at that location. In their professional opinion that area does not warrant a guardrail. The Board stated that they will request that the Police Chief and Highway Superintendent reassess it again in the spring and the Town Administrator will report the decision to Ms. Bowen.

Capital Planning Articles: After discussion of each of the requests, the Board moved and seconded (WS, DB) to forward the Mill River Greenway request for a survey in the amount of \$48,000, a new police vehicle in the amount of \$46,000, the wheeled excavator in the amount of \$170,000, and the loader in the amount of \$70,000 (Chapter 90) to the Capital Planning Committee.

Budgets: The Highway Department budget request was all level funded and forwarded on to the Finance Committee. Shade Tree Committee and Tree Removal / Planting budget lines were discussed. It was decided to combine the funding into one line item and just call it Tree Removal / Planting. Highway Superintendent Turner, speaking as interim Tree Warden, noted that the number of dangerous shade trees is beyond what the current \$7,000 budget can cover. Quotes from last year estimated the work for identified trees to be about \$20,000 and many more trees have been identified by residents and the Highway Department. The Town works well with National Grid in identifying trees that threaten the wires and getting them removed at no cost to the town; however, many of the trees don't fit into that category. Hampshire Council of Governments will be including cutting of Trees in the county bid, which will make the process much smoother and will allow the town to get a better price for cutting trees. The Board agreed to increase that budget line to \$20,000. The Board voted to approve the Fire Department budget request including the \$2,999 increase in FD expenses. The Chief did ask for a new budget line for sending a fire fighter to the academy. The budget line would be about \$4,000 to cover 240 hours at the fire fighter call out rate plus \$300 for the medical exam. The line would only be used

when there was a committed member. The new budget line was not detailed on the budget request form. The Town Administrator will follow up with the Chief and the Board will discuss at the next meeting. The Senior Center budget request which included a request for three hours of staff time, currently funded by the EOEA grant, to be covered by the town. The EOEA funding could then be used for other programs. Generally members supported the proposal but will hold it over for discussion at the next meeting. The Select Board budget lines were reviewed briefly, but will hold off to have a detailed discussion and make decisions when there is a full Board in attendance. The Town Administrator reported that the other communities had not received the Highland Ambulance budget yet and were surprised by the increase. Goshen and Cummington were interested in following up with Highland Ambulance about the increases. The Board would like to have Town Counsel review the contract to determine the leverage the Town has with discussing the assessment. The Board briefly reviewed the Hampshire Regional School budget which represents a 1.51% increase. It was noted that the increase in Group Insurance is greatly impacting the school and the town budgets.

Mill River Greenway: Gaby Immerman, Chair of the Mill River Greenway Committee, discussed two parcels of land, one owned by Eversource and another on River Road that may be of interest as part of the Greenway. Ms. Immerman detailed conversations she has had with Eversource regarding its surplus parcel located in Haydenville. The Mill River Greenway Committee feels it would be a great park area in Haydenville. However, she hasn't heard anything regarding the proposal requesting that Eversource donate that portion of the parcel to Williamsburg and arrange for the abutters of the parcel to purchase the rest. The Town Administrator will work with Ms. Immerman to send a letter to reestablish contact with Eversource and express Williamsburg's interest in discussing options regarding that property. The property on River Road is being explored for preservation of open space for future foot trails. Ms. Immerman shared graphics of the property outline and stated that she has been communicating with the Open Space Chair, Sally Loomis, about its value to the community as conservation land and the possibility of its being tied to the Greenway. She explained that the group would go after grants and donations if a purchase were ever proposed, but at this point it is just an exploration of ideas. The Board stated its support for exploring but not committing to anything. Concerns were raised about the town's ability to fund future maintenance and upkeep of park areas.

Follow-up Items:

The Town Administrator will follow-up with Joshua Garcia, PVPC, about a shared planner. Bill Sayre also asked about the mats / rugs being purchased for the gymnasium floor prior to Town meeting. The Town Administrator will follow-up with the principal.

Town Administrator's Report: Charlene Nardi reported briefly on the following items.

Legislative Breakfast Events: March 3, 2017, 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. at Greenfield Community College, 1 College Drive. Registration is online.

Finance Law: Stacey Mousseau, Town Accountant, and Melanson Heath, Auditor, confirmed that spending public funds for feasibility studies or repair of buildings not owned by the town or outside of the community is not legal. This came up because of discussions of the Smith Charities and Hampshire COG requests for funding support of their historic buildings. It was also

noted that spending public funds on a public event such as the town-wide picnic or an advertisement in support of another community event is also not allowed under Massachusetts Finance Law.

Conway 250th Anniversary: The Board decided to purchase a congratulations advertisement in Conway's anniversary book. The auditor said such an expenditure is not legal. The Board members and Town Administrator will split the \$50 cost and the Town Administrator will send it in.

Police Chief Contract: Denise Banister reported that she met with the Police Chief. The details of the conversation and request will be discussed at an executive session meeting in the future.

Correspondence: There was none to review.

Minutes: Moved and seconded (WS, DB) to approve the December 22, 2016 minutes as written. **So voted.** (2-0). Moved and seconded (WS, DB) to approve the February 2, 2017 minutes with changes. **So voted.** (2-0). Moved and seconded (WS, DB) to approve the evaluation of Fire Chief Connell. **So voted** (2-0).

Warrant: Approved and signed the warrant.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Documents: Accident report, photos, Mill River Greenway Correspondence, parcel information, GIS maps, Budget Requests, capital planning requests

Warrant and expense report

Adjourned at 9:31 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk