

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
March 3, 2016

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, March 3, 2016, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. The acting 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: Danielle Grenier (Animal Control), Shayla Howe (Animal Control Officer), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Bonnie Roberge (Collector), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Personnel review – Town Collector Bonnie Roberge – Board members feel that Collector Bonnie Roberge is doing a very good job. She is efficient, pays attention to detail, is knowledgeable about procedures and keeps up-to-date, work is done in a timely way and pretty much without error, and receivables are good – altogether a professional operation, and the town is lucky to have her. It was noted that there have been comments about lack of availability and a perception that she is not sympathetic. A suggestion was made to relook at options for covering when the Collector is away. Bonnie responded that she is very surprised at comments of lack of availability – she does not need to go to the bank much because of remote deposit, she has lunch at her desk, she goes to few meetings, she takes little sick time, and she has taken only half of her vacation this year. Payments may be left with the Town Clerk or Town Administrator, and she is trying to expand online payment. She pointed out that having someone covering when she is out is difficult because taxpayers have questions and the substitute would need a lot of training. As for lack of sympathy, she said that there have been a few difficult situations with raised voices but any situation that has arisen has been talked out and the person has walked away happy. Board members were satisfied and acknowledged that it is a difficult position, and that people can be upset especially when money is involved.

2. Budget – Collector – Town Collector Bonnie Roberge explained that Tax Title Expenses budget line is so that attorneys in Boston can write letters, which get more attention from delinquent taxpayers than letters from the Collector's office. Concerning her expense line, she said the bulk of her expenses come in the spring, and there is upheaval this year with software and it is unclear how much it will increase. She said it is her understanding that it is better to plan for expenses and send it back rather than to need to ask for a Reserve Fund Transfer. She went on that with the new Water/Sewer electronic-read meters there will be issues.

2.a. Personnel review, continued – Collector Bonnie Roberge – Concerning interaction with taxpayers, Bonnie pointed out that people can be frustrated when she cannot fix motor vehicle excise tax bills, which come from the state even though they have her name on them. Another source of taxpayers' frustration is problems with mail delivery, due to changes in the post office; unfortunately, according to law, people are supposed to be aware that they owe taxes whether they get a bill or not. Last year she tried to remedy this with a reminder robocall, but people were

confused by it. On the other hand, she said a few people have sent notes of appreciation and thanks for her good work. She mentioned improvements that her office has made, in software, budgeting, making partial payments, and increasing education about online payments. She is comfortable with the condition the receivables are in, and she enjoys working with the public. She feels good about her department and so does the Board.

3. Personnel review – Administrative Assistant Eleanor Warnock – Board members stated that Eleanor is doing a great job. Members expressed their appreciation for Eleanor's efficiency, dependability, attention to detail, and thoroughness. They noted her knowledge regarding practices and procedures, and her knowledge of where to find answers to questions. They said that it is a pleasure to work with her, that she effectively and independently manages the daily and seasonal work load, anticipates the Board's needs often before the Board realizes that it is a need, and records accurate minutes. She is always ready and willing to help and she represents the Board of Selectmen very well to the public. Members wondered if Eleanor would like to change things or had ideas to make things more efficient and encouraged her to speak up if she did. Eleanor noted that she and Charlene speak on a daily basis and share ideas together. The Town Administrator thanked Eleanor for her all her work, stating that she relies on Eleanor's skill set and values her continuous support; together they make a valuable team for the Board of Selectmen. Eleanor stated that she appreciated all the Board members' good words and their continued support of her. She truly appreciates the respectful and productive way the Board members work together, noting that they each have different perspectives and expertise.

4. Animal Control – Animal Control Officer Shayla Howe introduced Assistant Animal Control Officer Danielle Grenier and gave her regular report. She said that there have not been as many calls as last year. She is currently working as Animal Control Officer for the City of Northampton. She and Danielle both graduated from the Academy in October. There is increasing use of the Animal Control Facebook page, information is getting out, and people work together to find missing dogs. She requested purchase of Shelter Manager software, for \$310 per year, to hold reports, vaccination records, licenses, call logs, complaints, etc. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to spend \$310 from the Dog Revolving Account for the annual fee for Shelter Manager software. **So voted** (2-0). She is looking into a better kenneling situation; animals have been housed at her home but she is planning to move. She added that the town Highway Department has been helpful. She hopes something will happen with Northampton or maybe a regional shelter. She was reminded that she needs to bill for the days she keeps animals. She said the feral cats are under control. Board members thanked her for the great job she is doing.

5. Audit – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented the auditor's draft Management Letter. She has asked the departments to respond. Some of the concerns were issues from prior years that had not been addressed. Discussion touched on old inactive accounts that need to be researched and closed, e.g., old articles from Town Meeting; bank accounts in the town's name in case there are any without proper town authorization; and tax title collection efforts that might be more aggressive.

6. Budget – Fire Department – Charlene presented the written budget request from the Fire Department, pointing out that it was the same as what was previously discussed, and including an increase of \$3000 for testing and certifying hoses by an outside organization. Board members were supportive of having the testing done outside; Charlene will ask the Fire Chief how the change will affect the budget labor line.

Budget process – In the discussion it was noted that the budget should not include unnecessary money, because the town should not be taxing people unnecessarily; that budgeting could start from scratch (Zero Based Budgeting), rather than just looking at amount of increases. Charlene will look into educational materials for that kind of budgeting and then the Board will consider bringing it to an All Boards Meeting.

7. Salary survey – Board members plan to send the salary survey to the Finance Committee, saying they would like to discuss bringing town salaries up to the median of towns of comparable size and budget. Collector – Board members discussed the Town Collector’s request to combine her fees into her salary. Concerns were expressed about the potential conflict of interest when an employee keeps the fees charged, about paying one employee at a rate much higher than other town employees and about setting a precedent. Since the salary survey did not include fees, Charlene will collect further information and the salary will be revisited at a future meeting. It was suggested that the current framework stay in place as long as the current Collector is here and consider changing it when a new Collector is hired. Other departments – Some departments determine what they pay their employees. Charlene will send salary survey information to Assessors, Library, and Water/Sewer for their review and consideration. Miscellaneous – The recommended increases are to be made before the cost of living adjustment is calculated. Merit increases are a discussion for another year. Fire Chief – It was noted that the survey results for the Fire Chief position were not easy to compare and interpret. It was suggested that the salary be increased by 10%, or halfway to the median. The Board noted that the Chief is doing a very good job but remembered that they are making decisions about the positions, not about the current people. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to raise the Fire Chief’s salary by 10%. **So voted** (2-0). COA/Senior Center Director – Again, the survey results are not comparable. It was noted that most smaller communities don’t have a Council on Aging at the same size and activity level. Board members thought her current salary is not far off. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to increase the Senior Center Director salary to \$19 per hour. **So voted** (2-0). These amounts will be put into the salary survey as recommendations.

8. Town Meeting articles – Charlene presented the current list of articles for Town Meeting, including possible changes to Planning Board Site Plan Review procedure to allow more public participation, regularizing the school Medicaid reimbursement, establishing a special revenue fund for cable revenue, and repurposing money that was designated for a server in an old Town Meeting article.

9. Town Administrator’s report –

Town Master Plan – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the town has been awarded \$12-14,000 in DLTA funds and that Dillon Sussman of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission wanted to clarify whether the town wanted to address how to reuse town buildings and how to shape the village centers, or whether to work toward a Master Plan, which focuses on

land use and a wider view of the town. She noted the CIRD grant for a community workshop focusing on the village center and healthy aging. Board members reviewed a description of the components of a Master Plan and agreed that that was not what they had in mind and that they were more interested in pieces of a Master Plan, specifically services and facilities and goals and policies.

Hilltown CDC – She reported that she participated in a webinar meeting to discuss a new Mass. Historic Programmatic Agreement, to allow historic buildings in Williamsburg to be repaired without needing approval from the Mass. Historical Society. This agreement used to be done by HCDC but now needs to be done by the town. It will be used by Hilltown CDC when working on their buildings.

Shared IT grant application – The towns sharing the Technology best practice under the Community Compact Program have applied for an additional \$400,000 grant to upgrade municipal and school building technical infrastructure. Time was short; details can be ironed out. Chesterfield is the host community.

Personnel – There was another incident where an employee was injured. Charlene will be in touch with all departments about notifying supervisors immediately when there are incidents, and specifying whether time off is vacation, sick time, or injury when calling in. The town insurance company recommended changing the personnel policy to require a doctor's note about return to work following any injury.

Kopelman & Paige – Attorney Brian Winner has left. Charlene is talking with Town Counsel often.

Public records request – There has been a public records request for executive session minutes. She will release the records that are public and notify the individual if there are no public records.

Nexamp net metering – The Energy Committee met with the company and thinks that this is a good deal; the proposed agreement has been sent to Town Counsel for review.

Town Counsel and personnel issues – When department heads want to take actions relating to personnel and human resources issues, Charlene has discussed with Town Counsel and communicated back to department heads.

Capital planning – library – The Board received a letter outlining capital planning needs for the libraries for presentation to Town Meeting. There is no cost information as yet. It was noted that the town's capital projects have not been prioritized.

Health Agent update – Property process is moving forward. Two properties are in receivership, 3 Myrtle Avenue and 23 Old Goshen Road. Property at 7 Laurel Road is doing a short sale. Board members think that the Health Agent is doing a great job.

Emergency Services Communication System Oversight Committee – Don Turner, the town's representative to the HCOG committee, has been unable to attend meetings, due to the timing of the meetings, and is planning to resign. Another person has been recommended for the role.

Deputy Collector – Charlene reported that the Collector followed up with the Deputy Collector on the Board's concerns. By law a warrant is to be served at whatever address the Registry of Motor Vehicles has.

3 North Main Street – The property at 3 North Main Street, next door to the Williamsburg Fire Station, and the Fire Station property at 5 North Main Street have no clear boundaries and the deeds are missing. Charlene recommended that the town negotiate a boundary agreement with the current owners of 3 North Main Street, which will give the property enough space for off-

street parking and enable the owners to sell the property and not just rent it out. Board members approved. Charlene and the Fire Chief will follow up.

All Boards Meeting – An All Boards Meeting will be scheduled for late April. Topic suggestions were a Public Safety Complex presentation and a discussion of budget and salary.

Town boundaries – Charlene presented the folder with records of the town boundaries. She noted that the perambulation should be done every five years and that it had not been done since 1981. The Woodland Trails Committee may be interested. Adjacent towns could be invited to walk. Some boundary walks are easy and straightforward, some are not. Suggestions were to get GPS readings and to have people scout out ahead of time.

Solar – She reported that energy companies are asking for public forums for the next phase of solar energy. There was some discomfort with the appearance of endorsing a private company. The Energy Committee will be considering the issue. A suggestion was made to have a forum with three or four companies making presentations.

Reverse 9-1-1 – The Emergency Management budget pays for a reverse 9-1-1 system, currently Blackboard Connect. Charlene and Town Clerk Brenda Lessard went to presentations on Regroup and Code Red; they were very impressed by Regroup, which is also less expensive than the current system, at \$2500, but is not currently operating in Massachusetts municipalities; Code Red was not as impressive but is used by many local towns and cities. She recommended Regroup, assuming references are good; Emergency Manager Denise Banister would like to go with Charlene's and Brenda's recommendation.

10. Minutes and evaluations – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of February 18 as corrected. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to accept the employee evaluations for Town Administrator and Highway Superintendent, done on February 18. **So voted** (2-0).

Executive session minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) that the Board vote to publicly release the executive session meeting minutes from

- May 10, 2005
- May 26, 2005
- June 9, 2005

since the executive session purpose has, at this time, expired. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded that the executive session minutes from the Board's

- January 27, 2005
- February 7, 2005
- February 10, 2005
- February 10, 2005
- February 15, 2005
- February 15, 2005 (second)
- March 31, 2005
- June 2, 2005

executive session meetings shall remain confidential because release of the confidential minutes would defeat the lawful purposes of the executive session since the minutes discuss complaints and the reputation of public employees or are covered by attorney/client privilege. **So voted** (2-0).

11. Warrant – Approved and signed the warrant.

Documents used

Agenda and notes
Audit FY15 Management Letter
Budgets
Salary survey
List of Town Meeting articles
Master Plan description
Letter from Division of Local Services on Community Compact
Library capital planning request
Town boundary information
Minutes
List of executive session minutes
Warrant and expense report

Adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk