

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
July 26, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in session on Wednesday, July 26, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also Present: Melissa Wilson, Joe Rogers, Mary Dudek, Melinda McCall, Sherry Loomis

1. Members of the public – none

2. Senior Center Director, Melissa Wilson, reported

- The Northern Hilltown Consortium secured a SIG grant to fund the newsletter for another year.
- The transportation program is busy. Rides averaged 30 per month from January to March, and 40 per month from April to June. More volunteer drivers are needed.
- The in-house meal program has expanded to two days per week, and is popular (18-20 people). Highland Valley meals are served on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and delivered on Fridays (5-6 people). More volunteers are welcome.
- Special Events included the April Open House and Volunteer Recognition (60-65 participants) and the ice cream social (40 people). The seniors who come for lunch are not interested in entertainment, but prefer to talk with each other. More events are planned for the fall.
- Staff is doing good work and are greatly appreciated.
- Renovations in kitchen are complete. Bathroom work will take longer due to the work involved in a public construction project.

3. Conservation Commission – storm-related emergency action in town and any future resiliency measures/funding coming from the state. Joe Rogers, Mary Dudek, Melinda McCall

- Marci Caplis stepped down from her position as Chair of the Commission. BOS will write a letter of appreciation of her service.
- Joe Rogers explained the role of the Conservation Commission in permitting repair work related to flooding. Though town residents have a long history of working with the river, all actions impact the Commonwealth as a whole. The Commission (CC) is a locally empowered arm of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The CC is meant to manage expectations of the state while working with the needs of the town. Members work with residents to find the least-cost options and to enable people to do their own permitting rather than hiring a consultant when possible. In addition, proper permitting reduces liability for the town if an improper repair causes more damage.
- The Highway Department, the Emergency Manager, or the Board of Health can request emergency certification from the CC on behalf of the town or individuals, triggering the

emergency certification through the DEP. This process circumvents the regular permitting process, allowing a faster response. In some cases the state Department of Transportation handles the process, as is the case with the closure of the South Main Street bridge, which is complicated by the presence of rare species habitat.

- The CC has received calls from concerned citizens about damage from the flood. It has not heard from the person whose bridge was destroyed. Commissioners have concerns about lack of communication with other town bodies, and would like for people who contact other town members to be directed to the CC. In emergency situations, DEP is responsive and flexible when work is done in a timely fashion, and within a specific time frame, but outside of that, work becomes a project that must be permitted. In addition, the point was made that work that was done incorrectly costs about three times more to repair than to do it correctly in the first place, and in addition adds to problems downstream. This situation applies only to state issued emergency, not those issued by the town. However, the state takes longer to act, and hopefully any actions taken by the town will be accepted retroactively.
- Commissioners requested that the town issue guidance for residents that directs people affected by storm events to the Conservation Commission. Joe Rogers will draft a statement that can go on the town website, the Highway Department, and the Board of Health. The Select Board would like to be notified of any emergency requests.
- Several town infrastructure projects were impacted by floods and some residents who live along the river have huge problems due to bank erosion. Due to the brief timeline when repairs are allowed by the DEP during emergencies, it would be beneficial to have plans in place for vulnerable properties so that action can be taken quickly. In addition, there are some structures that make flooding worse, such as the pinch point in the river behind Worthington Auto, that could be dealt with proactively. The town is submitting an MVP grant proposal for improving flooding resiliency, which could provide valuable planning information as well as be a key for securing resources.
- The idea of hiring a part time Conservation Agent, shared with other local towns, was considered.
- Selectman Bill Sayre requested a monthly report from the CC.
- Some residents do not abide by the wetlands regulations and do not get work permitted. The town does not have a wetlands by-law, but there is an alternative ticketing system that 200 towns across the state use. The Commission will gather information and examples for the BOS. Enforcement could be an aspect of the MVP study.

4. Appointments – Election Wardens and Pollworkers – possible vote to approve

- Wardens: DB made a motion to approve Election Wardens Glenda Cresto and Kathleen Luce for 1-year terms. WS seconded. **So Voted (2-0).**
- Pollworkers: DB made a motion to approve Pollworkers Dean Acheson, Pamela Acheson, Pat Casterline, DeAun Corbett, Joan Donovan, Charles Dudek, Cindy Foster, Gail Gagne, Thomas Hodgkins, Diane Merritt, Susan McAllister, Dortha O'Connell, Diane Punska, Rebecca Robbins, Fran Tilley, and Mary Jane Warner for 1-year terms. WS seconded. **So Voted (2-0).**

5. Appointment Vacancies – discussion

- Vacancies exist including on the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Conservation Commission. People are not responding to requests for volunteers. Facebook has given mixed results. Ideas were offered: posting on the town website via a page dedicated to open positions, bulk mailing to residents with request for volunteers (mailing cost is an issue), article in town newsletter and person-to-person discussions, outreach at transfer station, signboards directing people to the website, posting on All Things Williamsburg and Kind Things Williamsburg Facebook pages, listing openings on the Town Clerk's page.
- It was mentioned that Worth Noyes is interested in being the Police and Fire Chaplain.

6. Licenses – live entertainment – Burgy Bullets – possible vote to approve

- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to authorize a Live Entertainment permit for September 2, 2023, to the Burgy Bullets. **So Voted (2-0).**

7. Building and Electrical Inspection services – contract with City of Northampton – possible vote to authorize

- A motion was made by WS and seconded by DB to sign the Building Inspection contract. **So Voted (2-0).**
- A motion was made by WS and seconded by DB to sign the Electrical Inspection contract. **So Voted (2-0).**

8. Veterans' Services – inter-municipal agreement with City of Northampton – possible vote to sign

- A motion was made by WS and seconded by DB to sign the agreement. **So Voted (2-0).**

9. Highway – Kubota tractor – possible vote to sign contract

- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to sign a purchase order for a Kubota tractor for \$51,555.37. Discussion followed. Administrator Caccamo said that a contract will be needed. It was agreed to sign the p.o. in good faith that a contract will be forthcoming. **So Voted (2-0).**

10. Clinician Co-Responder agreement – one clinician would be shared by multiple towns through the Ashfield Regional Department of Mental Health Jail Diversion Grant.

- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to authorize the Chair to sign the Co-Responder agreement. **So Voted (2-0).**

11. Wage rates – Highway, Fire Admin – possible vote to approve

- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to increase the pay rate for the Fire Dept. administrative assistant to \$20.36, retroactive to July 1. **So Voted (2-0).**
- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to increase the wage rate of Highway employees by \$1 per hour, retroactive to July 1. **So Voted (2-0).** The Highway budget has enough money to pay this, though it will mean that there will be less money available for overtime.

- There was additional conversation about other positions that weren't discussed in the wage rate study, including stipends for committee members, pay for a committee secretary but no stipends, and pay for inspections.

12. Education – Resolution in support of H. 3567 and S. 2388 – possible vote to sign

- An email was received asking Select Board to approve drafts of these resolutions. Discussion followed about the BOS history on resolutions. A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to sign on. **So Voted** (2-0).

13. Certificates of Appreciation – Police, Fire, Highway, Emergency Management – possible vote to sign

- A motion was made by DB and seconded by WS to sign Certificates of Appreciation. **So Voted** (2-0).

14. Town Administrator's report:

- Public Safety Complex. The project is on schedule and the building should be ready to turn over to the town at the end of September. The building committee voted to support the full solar roof and canopy over the parking lot, by 6 to 2. Town Counsel is working to expedite the contract with Solect Energy for that project. The architect and contractor have withdrawn from the landscape portion of the contract due to liability issues around allergies caused by some landscape plants. The town will still have liability. There is money for the epoxy floor, which is a high priority.
- MassDOT public hearing – bridges project – July 27, 6 pm. MassDOT had scheduled a 25% design hearing for the bridges project on Bridge Street and S. Main Street before the flood and closing of the Bridge St. bridge. Public comments are being accepted. The road bed will be re-done, some temporary easements are needed. NC feels it would be best to wait to see what happens at the hearing before the BOS issues a written comment due to complications from the closure of the Bridge St. bridge. He will write a statement urging DOT to expedite bridge replacement if possible because if the other bridge fails, the Police, Haydenville Fire, and residents would be stranded. Abutters have not been notified, as notification is not required by DOT. NC will be at meeting and announce that any comments should be sent to the BOS.

15. Correspondence

- A letter from EcoGenesis concerning abatement of a fuel release at 74 Village Hill Road was reviewed.

16. Minutes – none were at hand.

17. Other business:

- There will be highway work and new signage along Route 9 between Haydenville and Williamsburg centers.
- DB will review minutes prior to meetings.

- Board members noted with sadness the passing of Dave Mathers on July 21. His presence, wisdom, and deep love for the town will be deeply missed. They mentioned some possible ways to honor him, and also talked about next steps.

20. Adjourn – a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 11:03. **So Voted** (2-0).

Documents used:

Senior Center Update
Information on Emergency Declaration, Joe Rogers
Guidelines for Emergency Certifications, DEP
2023-2024 Pollworkers table
Vacancies in Town Positions, 2023
Live Entertainment permit
Invoice for FY 2024 Building Inspection Services
Agreement for building inspection and zoning enforcement services
Veterans' Services inter-municipal agreement
Purchase order for Kubota tractor
Grant information for Clinical Co-Responder agreement
Town budget document
Eco-genesis Public Notice of Abatement

Approved:

Clerk