

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
August 10, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, August 10, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Present: William Sayre and Denise Banister

Also present: Bev Bullock, Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), James Pentland (Gazette), Sharon Strzegowski (Collector/Treasurer), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Collector and Treasurer – Collector and new Treasurer Sharon Strzegowski gave her regular report.

Collector – For FY23 real estate taxes, \$35,000 is unpaid and she has sent out 15 letters. Two have paid and two others have reached out. The next step is an ad in the paper with the people’s names – a public shaming that people would rather avoid. After that is a lien on the property. While the lien is called a “taking,” she explained that it does not mean taking of the property, just a lien, so that if the owner sells, the town gets its money. One resident complained that the Collector is moving faster than the previous Collector, but she replied that she is going according to the state rules. For FY24 property taxes, due August 1, there is a 87% collection rate. For FY23 personal property, two bills are unpaid. One entity owes quite a lot; she has emailed them and gotten no response; she’ll try a letter. For FY24, there is a 98% collection rate. Excise taxes were just mailed last week. FY23 water/sewer has a 89% collection rate.

Postage machine – The new postage machine has arrived and is working very well. She has written up directions. There is a code for each department.

Treasurer – As the new Treasurer, she is doing things a little differently and has a different set-up. She has taken about 100 inactive people off the system. She is encouraging direct deposit and is setting up a portal so that the payroll stubs do not need to be mailed, to save some money. She is a certified treasurer and is taking the last class to be a certified collector and then will take the test. The former Treasurer is helping with the transition.

2. MassDOT Bridge Street project –

Resident concern – Bridge Street bridge closure – South Main Street resident Bev Bullock expressed concerns about the impact of the closure of the Bridge Street bridge on the neighborhood. The traffic volume across the South Main Street bridge has increased tremendously since the Bridge Street bridge closed and there are daily deliveries on large trucks to the businesses in the area. People don’t slow down for the turn from South Main Street onto the bridge and they come around the corner quickly, creating a danger for cars coming in from Route 9. Cars are backed up on the bridge waiting to turn onto Route 9 and people get aggressive and honk their horns. In addition, there is a stop sign for people coming down Walpole Road from Valley View Farm and buses do not stop or slow down. She hopes MassDOT will change their plans and replace the Bridge Street bridge first. Discussion included asking MassDOT to change the order of work, asking MassDOT for signage on Route 9 with a warning, having a conversation with the owners of Valley View to talk to the bus drivers or the wedding planners, and talking to the Police Chief about monitoring the area.

25% hearing, comments and next steps – MassDOT recently held the 25% hearing for the project, scheduled before the Bridge Street bridge was closed. The meeting was well attended and there was some public comment. MassDOT will take comments and make adjustments and come to the town for an information session in late September or October. The timeline is very short – the final design should be in place in June 2024, with advertising construction for bidding in 2026. Between the 75% design hearing and the final design, the town has to secure the easements – first getting approval from the town to engage in the process and allocate funding, then legal title work and permanent and temporary easements. The title work will cost only a few thousand dollars but the easements will be expensive, since the town has to pay fair market value, though there could be donations of easements. Comments from both Highway Department and Mill River Greenway Committee indicate that the plan for the sidewalk on South Main Street is excessive for the area.

3. Honoring Dave Mathers – Board members talked about what to post on the town website about Selectman Dave Mathers, who passed away on July 21. People have reached out with condolences. There will be an event to remember him at the American Legion on August 27.

4. Election dates – Town Clerk Brenda Lessard proposed possible dates for a special caucus and special election to fill Dave Mathers’ Select Board seat. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to set Tuesday, September 5, as the date for the special town caucus, starting at 6 pm, at the town offices. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to set Saturday, October 21, for the special election, voting hours 9 to 4. **So voted** (2-0).

5. Appointments – Public Safety Complex Building Committee – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to appoint Melinda McCall as full member of the Public Safety Complex Building Committee. She is currently an alternate. **So voted** (2-0).

Resignation – Highway – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to accept the resignation of Joshua Lapointe from the Highway Department. **So voted** (2-0).

6. MVP grant – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo said that the town has been awarded a second MVP action grant, this one for Williamsburg Mill River Watershed Planning, in the amount of \$682,085. It will involve significant work in data gathering, mapping, assessing and planning. It covers the watershed area to the west and north coming down to the Mill River. The final product will probably come with recommendations, which will allow the town to apply for grants. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the MVP Williamsburg Mill River Watershed Planning Grant in the amount of \$682,085.

7. Public Safety Complex solar PV – The town has been in discussion with Solect Energy, as an agent of Power Options, to build and install a solar PV system at the Public Safety Complex. Town Counsel says that the procurement has been recognized as done properly and the agreement is expected soon, probably at the next meeting

8. 4 Voice contract – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo explained that the contract with 4 Voice for the town offices’ telephone system is expiring. It was originally recommended by consultant Rob Chambers. 4 Voice has been a good vendor and the customer support help desk has been easy to reach. Price per phone line is \$19.99 and there are 23 lines, plus phone rentals

and additional charges, for a monthly total of about \$634. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the 4 Voice LLC contract, which includes hosted phone service, equipment rental and services, for a total of about \$7600 annually. **So voted** (2-0).

9. Vehicle purchase orders – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo explained that the purchases of the highway truck and the fire chief’s vehicle are going through McGovern Municipal Headquarters in Framingham, with the collective purchasing through the Greater Boston Police Council, of which the town is an associate member, resulting in a 10% reduction in MSRP. McGovern requested the purchase orders and will invoice the town after delivery. The vehicles were priced and specced by the department heads and Town Meeting approved the spending. Highway truck – The highway truck is a 2023 and is in stock, to replace the Ford that has been having trouble. The other new truck approved by Town Meeting is still on order. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign Purchase Order #08102023-HWY for a 2023 Chevy Silverado 2500 regular cab 4 wheel drive 8 foot bed, total price with accessory package \$39,048.50. **So voted** (2-0). Town Meeting appropriated \$60,000 but the Highway Superintendent chose the cheaper 2023 model and the rest of the money will return to free cash next year. Fire vehicle – **Motion** was made and seconded to authorize the chair to sign Purchase Order 08102023-FD for the Fire Chief’s vehicle, 2024 Chevy 4 wheel drive with accessory package, for \$67,208.75. **So voted** (2-0). The Fire Chief had requested \$70,000 at Town Meeting.

10. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program – The Administrative Assistant will soon be sending out applications for the new tax workoff year. The eligibility limits have been increased by the cost of living, 8.7% according to the Social Security Administration. The new absolute Maximum is \$58,305, the new Preference level is \$37,558. Board members concurred, acknowledging the reality of the cost of living and noting that the program isn’t filled up.

11. Old Town Hall discussion – The Old Town Hall needs work, mainly painting, windows, and some structural issues. Board members would like to stabilize the building and agree that it is probably a building the town will want to keep. The 30% rule says that if the cost of renovations exceeds 30% of the value of the building, that will trigger code requirements for upgrading, including ADA requirements. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo proposed to coordinate site visits to the Town Office building and the Old Town Hall on the same day. ARPA money is available and can be used if the work is under contract by December 2024. Future work could be funded by grants if the building is declared historical. The Historical Society could use part of the building, and something else could use it as well.

12. Town Administrator’s report –

Public Safety Complex – Completion date is projected for the end of September. Discussion included a concrete pad for propane tanks, an epoxy floor, a question and concern about the remaining money available, and waiting for information about the allergy/landscaping issue. Things are going well and discussions are starting about transition.

Mass Trails – The grant paid for engineering and design work for the South Street connector. The construction work is slated for funding through the Transportation Bond Bill that has been on hold. The redesign of the switchback, funded through Mass Trails two years ago, is similarly unfunded for construction and waiting for the Transportation Bond Bill.

Meekins – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the HVAC repair is projected at \$40,000, more than expected. The renovation was done 20 years ago and both the old building the new have issues. A substantive plan needs to be made.

13. Correspondence – Correspondence included a letter from MassDOT about the closing of the Bridge Street Bridge, and condolences from people at National Grid on the death of Dave Mathers.

14. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of June 15 as presented. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of June 29 as presented. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of July 13 as presented. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of July 26 as presented. **So voted** (2-0).

15. Miscellaneous –

Trophy case from Helen E. James School – Selectman Denise Banister will talk with the Town Administrator about a place in the auditorium for the trophy case, currently stored by M.J. Moran.

Conservation Commission – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to sign the letter to Marcianna Caplis for her many years of leadership in the Conservation Commission. **So voted** (2-0).

16. Warrant – Chair William Sayre will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP24-04 for \$125,211.82 and expense warrant W24-04 for \$137,432.50, payable 8/16/23.

Documents used

Agenda and notes
Collector and Treasurer’s report
Caucus warrant
Resignation
MVP grant
4 Voice contract
Vehicle purchase orders
Senior Volunteer Tax Relief application
Minutes
Letter of thanks

Adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk