

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
September 23, 2021

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, September 23, 2021, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and noted that the meeting was being recorded by the reporters.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre (by remote participation)
Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Bera Dunau (reporter, Gazette), Dennis Hackett (reporter, Reminder), Paul Kennedy (Regional School Committee, Zoning Board of Appeals), Dan Nye (250th Anniversary Committee), Bonnie Roberge (Collector), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Appointments – Regional School Committee – The joint meeting with the Regional School Committee was called to order at 9:05 a.m. Paul Kennedy, Williamsburg representative on the Regional School Committee, explained that the committee was short two members from Williamsburg and recommended Allison Arbib, who had expressed interest and submitted her resume. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/Paul Kennedy) to appoint Allison Arbib to the Regional School Committee, until June 30, 2022. **So voted** (DB aye, Paul Kennedy aye, WS aye, DM aye). The joint meeting closed at 9:08 a.m.

2. Collector – Collector Bonnie Roberge gave her regular report. She said there is nothing major to report. Sewer rates will increase from \$5.70 to \$7.75. Collections are going well. She is getting a lot of questions about the confusing process of how the bills work. There have been a lot of property sales and refinancing and so a lot of requests for Municipal Lien Certificates. She noted that the MLC fee is only \$25; many other towns are charging \$50. Similarly the demand fee for real estate and other taxes is only \$5, not an incentive to pay. She suggested possibly raising fees. The fees go into the general fund. Online banking continues to increase; postal delivery can be problematic. She noted a glitch in uploading bills in August. Her records are balanced with the Accountant's as of the end of FY 2021. Her certification runs through December 31 and she has completed the education qualifications and has submitted for the five-year renewal. Some people are coming to her office without masks despite signs and are making jokes and refusing to put on masks. A suggestion was made to station someone at the door to be sure people entering the building had masks on. Board members thanked her and commended her for the very professional job she is doing.

3. Anne T. Dunphy School HVAC – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the school has chosen a contractor and materials have been secured – condenser units are scheduled for mid-October. The timelines are working well. He will continue to work on the Board's request for information about whether the town should go back to the original installer, who did the work incorrectly, for compensation. He will ask Town Counsel for their advice. Board members were not optimistic.

4. Mill River Greenway – Mass Trails grant – VHB contract – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the contract with VHB for engineering design work on the South Main Street switchback and pedestrian bridge. Mill River Greenway will provide the \$20,000 match. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the contract with VHB, a Mass Trails funded project, in the amount of \$80,000. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).
5. MIIA risk management grant application – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented information on the annual grant opportunity. Highway Superintendent Dan Banister had suggested applying for a Hathorn wifi inspection camera, which could be used to identify infiltration into the sewer system. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the MIIA risk management grant application for the Highway Department for just under \$8000. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).
6. 250th Anniversary Celebration Committee – Dan Nye reported on the current state of the celebration planning. He is the only remaining member on the committee and he is looking for people to fill vice-chair roles in specific areas. The schedule of events was planned prior to Covid; they can do the whole thing or scale it back. He is inclined to plan as if it can all be done, and events can always be taken off. The proposed dates are the first and third weekends in July 2022. Board members mentioned a parade and possible sources of bands, and thanked him for his work on the celebration.
7. Community Compact IT grant – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo proposed applying for an IT grant that is specific to GIS, software that engineers and planners can use for mapping and spatial analysis. He mentioned showing Assessors' maps, roads, natural resources, floodplains. It could be valuable to Assessors, Water/Sewer, potentially Zoning Board of Appeals, Woodland Trails, Open Space, and Emergency Management. It could expand the skills of current employees and board and commission members. There are two parts, individual licenses at \$700 each, and a public-facing interactive GIS format for the community, called Mapgeo, user-friendly with technical assistance and importing of data, at \$330 per month plus a \$6000 startup cost. He recommended a three-year trial with the grant, at no cost to the town, and then the town could decide whether it was or was not an investment the town would want to make. He is personally interested and could guide employees and community members. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to sign the Community Compact IT grant application. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).
8. Comcast letter – The Technology Committee drafted a letter for the Select Board to send to Comcast to try to get fast reliable internet service for town residents. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to sign the letter to Comcast to expand broadband service to Route 143. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).
9. Short-term rentals – A resident raised a concern about the numerous short-term rentals in town and none have permits under the new short-term rental bylaw. There was some confusion both about who is to spearhead the application process, and even whether the town actually had a short-term rental bylaw. This will be revisited at a future meeting.

10. Halloween – Some organizations in town, such as the Congregational Church in Williamsburg, the Fire Department, and the American Legion, are wondering about what plans to make for Halloween. There is hesitation about offering the traditional events. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will check with the Board of Health and report back next meeting.

11. Town Administrator's report –

Covid – There are no active cases in Williamsburg. There are anecdotes about reluctance to wear masks in public places. The Health Agent has said that first responders cannot be notified of addresses of active cases, because it is a HIPAA violation, and the Emergency Manager has written to Rep. Natalie Blais to say that that is morally and ethically wrong.

Review of audit – Nick Caccamo reported on the audit report. The existing long-term debt is about \$6 million, and borrowing for the Public Safety Complex will add \$4 million, debt that the town can handle. The auditor identified some issues. One Board member was satisfied with the departments' responses to the issues, another asked for details and some follow-up on whether they have been corrected.

ARPA – As the CARES Act spending is winding down, the town is now looking toward having about \$700,000 in American Rescue Plan funding. Eligible projects include such things as infrastructure – water/sewer, broadband, e.g., broadband for route 143 – premium pay to essential employees during the pandemic, and replacing of revenue lost as a result of the pandemic. Nick is continuing to do research into just what the town could spend it on. He proposed having a small working group and doing a survey about priorities. Then there would be brainstorming about projects, and ultimately a list of projects to authorize.

Vacation – Nick reminded the Board that he will be taking vacation time the week of October 8 to 14. It is an off week for the Select Board.

Depot Road culvert – Nick reported that the project is moving forward and the project coordinator is optimistic. They anticipate starting the first week of October, doing initial prep work, digging up the old culvert, getting the new one delivered mid-November and dropped into place and sealed up; it could all be done by the end of November, depending on the weather. The Road will be closed in October and November. Residents and departments will be notified.

12. Miscellaneous –

Helen E. James Building – The current plan is for the building to stand through March or April. Water will need to be turned off and pipes drained. The elevator will still work and be available for hazmat disposal operation.

Pedestrian sign – The sign in the road in Williamsburg was hit. It is normally removed by the end of October.

Public safety complex – The architect thought there might be grants available for construction. Nick Caccamo will follow up with the architect.

Transfer station complaint – A resident wrote that transfer station employees were unmasked in the area around the solid waste disposal. The transfer station is aware of the issues and taking precautionary measures. It was noted that wearing masks outside is not required.

13. Correspondence – Correspondence included a copy of a letter from Mass Department of Environmental Protection to a landowner about soil contamination.

14. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to accept the minutes of September 9, 2021 as presented. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye). A question was asked about how to keep track of small items that need follow-up. The Town Administrator and Administrative Assistant will consider this.

15. Warrant – The two Board members present in person reviewed and signed the warrant. Payroll warrant WP22-07 for \$110,573.34, and expense warrant W22-07 for \$158,314.71, payable 9/29/21.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Letter of interest with resume

VHB contract

Letter to Comcast

Letter from MassDEP

Minutes

Warrant

Adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk