

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
October 22, 2020

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, October 22, 2020, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: William Sayre, David Mathers and Denise Banister (to 9:46)

Also present: Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Dhanesh Patel, Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Daryl Springman (Deputy Fire Chief), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Licenses – public hearing – transfer from Daru Enterprises, Inc., d/b/a Main Street Package Store, to Ambika, Inc. – The public hearing opened at 9:00 a.m. and the chair read the notice of hearing. The Administrative Assistant confirmed that all the paperwork was in order for the transfer of license. Applicant Dhanesh Patel introduced himself and said that he and his wife were taking over the business in a simple transfer, same premises and same hours. Although he doesn't live in town, he has been coming here for years and knows the town well. Board members welcomed him and wished him well. The hearing closed at 9:06 a.m. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to approve the transfer of the all-alcohol package store liquor license from Daru Enterprises, Inc., d/b/a Main Street Package Store, to Ambika, Inc. **So voted** (DB aye, DM aye, WS aye). **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to issue the license when it is approved by the ABCC. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye).

2. Fire Department – Deputy Chief Daryl Springman gave the department's regular report. Call volume is about the same as last year. There are more inspections, and most of the failures seem to be of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Trucks and equipment are doing fine. They have bought or updated most of the equipment on the "needs list" and are looking at the long-term plans for the trucks. One suggestion from the ISO (Insurance Services Office) insurance risk analysis is to have a tanker truck in order to move more water and to give the town a better rating. They are considering replacing or retrofitting one of the two Class A pumpers to a small tanker-style apparatus. The current engines carry 1000 gallons; most city engines carry 500. A small tanker of 2500 gallons would work with the town's bridges and roads. One or two new people have joined the department. First Responder training has been valuable and both Narcan and epi-pen have been used recently. Department members were active during recent storms when trees and power lines came down. Communication is an ongoing issue. The fire stations had no phone when the internet went down. There is better communication in the trucks because they have higher power radios than the portable ones in the stations. If there were a large-scale disaster, they would have good communication; it is the smaller local communication that is a problem, including whether people can get through to the Dispatch Center. They are looking into various options, one of which may be installing a repeater in town. They are waiting to see if the state will change radio frequencies. Board members thanked him for the great report.

3. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program – The Administrative Assistant presented the applications for this year and reported that there are six regular applications and three from

people whose income is over the \$50,000 maximum (which was set last year when there were a large number of applicants), for a total of nine. There were no applications to the Veterans Volunteer Tax Relief Program. She noted that two of the over-income people have skills that are especially valuable to the town. Discussion included waiving or suspending the maximum-income rule this year, because this is a difficult year, times are uncertain, there are spots available, and some applicants have skills that the town relies on. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/DB) to approve the six applicants who are under the maximum, for the Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program. **So voted** (DM aye, DB aye, WS aye). **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/DM) to make an exception to the maximum-income rule and approve the three applicants who are over the maximum guideline. **So voted** (DB aye, DM aye, WS aye). The Board thanked the Administrative Assistant for putting this all together.

4. Resignation – Cultural Council – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to accept the resignation of Henrietta Wallace from the Cultural Council, with thanks for her service. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye).

5. Anne T. Dunphy School repair – trim quote – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented the quote from Eric Payne Construction to re-nail and repair the exterior trim, for \$8200, to come out of the Building Repair budget line. He said he would use stainless steel ring shank nails that are specifically made for this application. Straight nails had been used and had not been put into 1¼” wood as required by the specifications provided to the town by DRA. He noted the rust on the existing nail heads, indicating that they were interior grade nails. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the quote from Eric Payne Construction to repair the Anne T. Dunphy School trim, not to exceed the amount of \$8200 and to be according to the specs provided by the town. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye).

6. Highway personnel – pay increase – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that Highway Superintendent Dan Banister recommended that Mark Loven, who has completed his six-month probationary period and is doing an excellent job, be increased from \$21.45 per hour to \$22.45, putting him just a dollar off other crew members. Board members commented that he is well deserving of the increase. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to increase the pay of Mark Loven to \$22.45 per hour. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye).

7. Town Administrator’s report –

COVID-19 cases, prevention, and violations – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that there are currently no COVID-19 cases in town. There are concerns from some residents that some business employees are not wearing masks and some businesses are over their capacity. The Board of Health will send out new messages and make visits to businesses. If businesses are not complying, the Board of Health can impose a fine. The Board of Selectmen can support the Board of Health by considering businesses’ licenses, such as liquor licenses, which are coming up for renewal, and live entertainment permits. Discussion included the need for an investigation rather than taking a complainant’s word; clarifying the process, which may include a public hearing; inviting renewing licensees to attend the Select Board meeting; and sending a letter to businesses.

Storm damage – Charlene reported that in the wind, branches from a tree half on town property hit two cars on town property, one of which belonged to a town employee. The town’s insurance does not cover cars damage by trees – or potholes – unless the town has warning of the danger.

National Grid – Charlene reported on a meeting with the town’s National Grid representative and the challenges the town had in calling in about the storm. The Fire Chief especially was concerned that roads were blocked and he couldn’t get through on the phone to make reports to National Grid. The representative said that some communities were asking for the Level 1, life-and-death, level of response for every situation, and National Grid will educate them to use a more appropriate level. There is also contact information available to the town that is different from what is used by the general public. Because Williamsburg never complains, the town was taken very seriously, once it got through, and the town’s concerns about moving trees and wires off the road were given immediate attention,.

Evaluations – Charlene has sent the Board her evaluations of the department heads and the department heads’ own self-evaluations. All staff are invited to evaluate as well. Board members have their assignments for evaluations; generally last year’s liaison will do the review. When a Board member has written up an evaluation, Charlene will schedule a time for them to meet with the department head.

Liquor license fees – Charlene reported that there have been recent articles in the Gazette about towns reducing their license fees or not, due to COVID-19. It was noted that Williamsburg’s fees are already lower than most. The Board did not want to reduce fees across the board but would invite individual businesses with concerns to get in touch.

Food pantry – Some residents have been running a community food pantry outdoors and are looking for indoor space. The Helen E. James Building front entry was suggested, keeping access to the floors locked. It was pointed out that the front entry is a second exit under the fire code and cannot be blocked with bins. Other suggestions were churches, businesses, town libraries, and a trailer. Charlene will pass along the suggestions.

James broken window, stolen signs – A broken window was discovered at the Helen E. James Building, as well as political lawn signs that had been stolen. The window has been fixed temporarily.

Building Supervisor – Building Supervisor Dan Hathaway is finishing up some tasks and then will leave. Some names for a new Building Supervisor were suggested.

Town Offices closed – Some people are coming into the Town Offices, since the door is open for early voting. Caution tape will be put up to indicate that offices beyond the voting area are off limits.

Highway equipment repair – There have been problems with the Excavator, which have been repaired. Mark Loven and Bryan Osetek rebuilt the cylinder.

Staffing under COVID – Charlene reported that all is well with the Police and Highway. She will ask about the school. The Senior Center staff work remotely and come in on different days. After early voting is over, they will use the meal site. In the past, double meals were sent out before a storm. There are volunteers doing curbside visits, and there was a lot of response to a recent Country Journal article.

Meekins Library Corporation tax exempt status – The Meekins Library Corporation can lose its tax exempt status if tax returns are not filed. The Meekins Library Corporation Trust and the Trust Fund & Cemetery Commission are in conversation to make sure this is being taken care of.

Police Station air quality – The air filtration system at the Police Station has been cleaned but it does not work – it doesn't turn on. Jamrog has advised that an air ventilation system is needed rather than an air filtration system, to address the symptoms experienced by the people in the Police Department and to address COVID-19. It was noted that the Police Chief never felt that the air filtration system was effective. Charlene will look into options and will plan to apply for funds through the CARES Act grant to install air ventilation units in town buildings.

8. Water/Sewer bill – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi has spoken with Sewer Commission Chairman Eric Cerreta regarding the very high FY20 sewer invoice from the City of Northampton. A special town meeting will be needed to cover the costs of the FY20 invoice. The Commission is still working on finalizing the agreement with the City of Northampton and would like to discuss aspects of it with Town Counsel. The Board would like to meet with the Commission to learn more about the Water and Sewer Enterprise budget and how it is set annually.

9. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of October 8, 2020. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye).

10. Warrant – Selectmen Dave Mathers will review and sign the warrant.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

License application

Tax program applications

Resignation letter

Minutes

Adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk