

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
October 5, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, October 5, 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: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Lois Cross, Jim Moran (South Main Street), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Denise Wickland (Police Chief)

Mill River Greenway: John Connolly, Nick Dines, Gaby Immerman,

1. Members of the public – resident concern – time of Town Meeting – Resident Lois Cross said that holding Town Meeting at night makes it hard for some people to come, such as older people and people with children, and proposed moving the meeting to a Saturday afternoon or some other afternoon. This issue arose at Town Meeting a year ago and after discussion the voters did not approve the change. Suggestions were to bring a petition, to put the question forward in a way such that people who can't get to Town Meeting can vote on it, and for the board to think about it.

2. Mill River Greenway – Complete Streets – The application has been submitted for construction of the switchback portion of the project. The maximum grant is \$500,000 and the expected cost is \$650,000, with the balance to be requested from MassTrails.

South Main Street – MassDOT Bridge Street project and South Main Street Connector –

MassDOT is designing and funding the Bridge Street Project, including the two bridges and the portion of South Main Street between them, and the town is responsible for the South Main Street Connector, between there and the switchback and rail trail. MassDOT presented its 25% plan for the Bridge Street Project last month. South Main Street residents and businesses sent a petition with their concerns. They would like the street to stay as it is, with cars and bicycles sharing the street and pedestrians having the sidewalk, rather than cars in the road and bicycles moving to the sidewalk with pedestrians. MassDOT is expected back in November. Greenway Committee members emphasized that they want to do what the town wants.

Community Meeting October 19 – The town will host a community meeting to discuss the plans for both sections of South Main Street and the concerns. It should include distinguishing between what is fixed and what is flexible. A facilitator may be brought in. There was some confusion about the cost, whether \$600 or \$1200-1500.

Mill River Flood of 1874 – John Connolly, Williamsburg resident and member of the Mill River Greenway Committee, proposed a commemoration for the 150th anniversary of the Mill River Flood next year, a pivotal event in the history of the town. There is an ad hoc working group convened by Historic Northampton. Some ideas include planting 139 trees at places along the river to honor the 139 people who died in the flood, a service at the Williamsburg Congregational Church, hanging five-foot tall banners along the route of the flood to provide information, a hike to the site of the dam, a re-enactment of the ride to warn townspeople, and reminding people of the powers of nature. The group includes members of the Greenway Committee, Historical Commission, Smith College faculty, and Historic Northampton. He noted that Elizabeth Sharpe, co-director of Historic Northampton, wrote a gripping book about the

history of the flood. The actual date of the flood was May 16, so they are proposing events for Saturday, May 18, 2024.

3. Police – Police Chief Denise Wickland made her regular report. She reviewed the statistics. In 2022 there were 1180 total calls and in 2023 there were 2076, almost double. The burden falls on the three full-time staff. They have speed data but it's not really reliable since they get multiple readings for the same car; they have asked to reprogram the system. On Hyde Hill Road, most cars are going between 33 and 38 in a 30 mph zone. Cars appear to be going faster when the observer is sitting still by the side of the road. She doesn't feel they need to decrease the speed limit. They have updated their pursuit policy and put spike strips back in. The new cruiser is being outfitted and should arrive in the coming months. She asked if there is a designated infection control officer for handling things when an officer is exposed to infection during a call. They are thinking about the department's move to the public safety complex. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo said that the temporary occupancy permit is expected in mid to late October. A preliminary open house for the public was proposed for November 11, with a more formal opening in the spring.

4. Fire – Fire Chief Jason Connell made his regular report. They have been extremely busy. Average call volume which had been 33 a month has risen to 57 a month. The trainings have gone well and he said the department has a great core group of firefighters. Out of 513 calls, 232 were sick person calls and 281 were fire based, consistently around 50-55%. They are being requested more for mutual aid and have gone out of town 41 times and asked for assistance 3 times. The budget has taken a big hit, because of a couple of breakdowns early in the fiscal year, and they are acting in conservation mode. Members are excited about the new public safety complex. The gear washer and drier have been brought over from the highway garage and the new fill station has been installed. It will take time to clean out the old stations, weed through everything and see what needs to be brought over. The new command vehicle is all set at the town's end and will probably come in the spring. They haven't heard about the new rescue truck. Engine 2 has had some power issues that have been repaired. Engine 4 had a bad thermostat and failed a pump test but it is operational. Radios through ARPA funds have arrived. The new building is lacking in storage space and they are looking into buying a cabinet for custodial supplies and medical supplies but he wants to get into the building and see what is needed. There was a question about where the Emergency Operations Center will be. Emergency Manager Denise Banister thinks that a lot of Emergency Management materials will continue to live at her house. Some storage space will be saved because the fire department won't need to buy three of everything for the three trucks. The Board thanked him for his great report and for all the work he has done.

5. Green Communities program grant application – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo explained that the plan is to apply for a Green Communities grant for the Meekins Library. B2Q recently conducted an energy study and the report is expected shortly and will form the basis for the application. The application is expected to focus on decarbonization and may be for as much as a half million dollars, but may be reduced to just replacing the mini-splits, depending of what the report says. The application is due October 20. There is a town match. **Motion** was made and seconded (D/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the Certification of Application for the Green Communities grant. **So voted** (2-0).

6. Public Safety Complex – purchase order for Conklin furniture – Procurement was done by the architect in consultation with the two chiefs. Conklin Office Furniture was the cheapest, and

the architect has worked with them before. A deposit of 50% will be paid in this warrant cycle. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign purchase order #10052023-PSC in the amount of \$24,895.38. **So voted** (2-0).

7. MassDEP Recycling Dividends program – The town has been awarded \$4200 under the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the contract accepting the grant funds from the MassDEP Recycling Dividends program in the amount of \$4200. **So voted** (2-0).

8. Meekins gutter project – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that gutters are needed at the Meekins Library to divert water off the flat roofs that has caused some minor damage. Larochelle Construction Inc. of Hadley submitted the low bid, \$20,350, and they seem fully capable. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the contract with Larochelle Construction Inc. for a rain gutter system at the Meekins Library, in the amount of \$20,350. **So voted** (2-0).

9. MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that replacing the PVTA bus shelters has been the only viable idea for the MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces grant program. The proposed design is nicer than the existing shelters and includes solar lighting to increase illumination in twilight hours. The Board was interested in applying but would like to see other design options. Application is due October 30.

10. Town Administrator's report – Public Safety Complex – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the invoice from Forish Construction for work through September. One more invoice is expected. The remaining balance is \$185,000.

FY22 audit – Nick Caccamo presented the auditor's management letter and suggested inviting the accountant and treasurer to come to meetings to talk about the findings. These probably relate to old systems; the FY23 audit won't review the same procedures.

Time off – Nick Caccamo mentioned upcoming time off.

11. Warrant – Chair William Sayre will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP24-08 for \$127,448.62 and expense warrant W24-08 for \$623,657, payable 10/11/23.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

South Main Street residents' petition

Community meeting facilitation proposal

Reports of Police Chief and Fire Chief

Green Communities grant application certification

Conklin Furniture purchase order

MassDEP Recycling Dividends grant contract

Larochelle Construction contract for Meekins gutters

Bus Shelter sample designs

Audit report

Adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk