

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
January 13, 2022

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, January 13, 2022, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jonathan Flagg (Building Inspector), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Reporters: Shaw Israel Izikson (Country Journal), Bera Dunau (Gazette)

1. Building Inspector – Building Inspector Jonathan Flagg made his regular report. The department changed over to a new software system and it took several weeks to work out the bugs. Because of the change there are two permit reports for this year, for before and after the changeover. The number of permits have gone down a little because of the pandemic, because people can't get the materials and labor. Construction is continuing but going more slowly, and most is renovation rather than new construction. There have been a lot of inquiries about the land at 5 Petticoat Lane behind the school, but there isn't enough frontage. Zoning issues are being handled by former Building Inspector Louis Hasbrouck. Board members asked them to continue looking into the sign on Mountain Street and determining whose property it is on. It may be on Northampton Water Department property. Highway Superintendent Dan Banister may have records.
2. Town Caucus – The Town Clerk proposed some possible dates for the annual Town Caucus. The Board decided on Saturday, March 5, at the Highway Garage. The time will be 11 a.m. or as decided in consultation with the Town Clerk.
3. Covid procedures for town buildings – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that one employee is working remotely; everyone else is coming in. Work is continuing and people have settled into routines and work is being completed. People are being cautious and there are no reports of recent positive tests. Not a lot of people are coming through the office, except for Senior Center programming, such as people coming in to see the foot doctor. The Board would leave quarantine and testing arrangements to Nick and the employees to work out. There is a high level of trust in the honesty of employees. If someone should test positive, they would notify Nick. It was suggested that surfaces should also be wiped down. Nick felt that the town could do a better job opening windows and getting fresh air. Nick will report to the board on any outbreak or labor shortage and not wait for the next meeting.
4. Building Supervisor description – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented a proposed draft job description, to be used for posting the job opening. It includes performing minor skilled maintenance, scheduling with contractors, responding to emergencies, and making a capital improvement plan. The stipend is currently \$9,734; he asked if that should be increased. It is a part-time job but the hours will not be specified. The job functions on its own with no oversight. Applicants will be asked for their background and experience. Nick noted that the interim system is working well, with department heads being aware of their buildings' needs and knowing the people to call. He noted that there are companies that do evaluation of buildings' needs; for example, one company quoted \$6,500 to evaluate the Town Office Building.

5. Foothills office space agreement – The Foothills Health District expanded into the two offices off the auditorium near the beginning of the pandemic. They have been paying \$19.99 per month for each phone line, \$15 per month for each email address, and one hour of IT service. They have not been paying rent, as it was felt to be an advantage to the town to have them here. The new agreement includes an additional \$200 per month, representing 10% of utilities, heat, internet, and custodial work. Board members felt that the amount was fair, noting that they would have to pay more somewhere else. The bathroom, which is only accessible through their office, is an issue, since the office is locked when they aren't there. Nick will talk with them about putting up a partition to allow access to the bathroom and leaving the door to that office unlocked. He will also check with the Fire Chief.

6. Sidewalk construction – Since there is money in the budget for sidewalk construction, both from last year and from this year, Town Administrator Nick Caccamo asked where the Board would like to focus the money. The custom has been to do one sidewalk in Williamsburg one year, and one in Haydenville the next year, and it is now Haydenville's turn. The Board felt that High Street was a priority and asked Nick to talk with Highway Superintendent Dan Banister about what it would require.

7. Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority – House Bill 3821, proposed by Rep. Natalie Blais and creating a Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority, on the model of the Mass. School Building Authority, would provide grants to municipalities of up to \$1 million. Testimony is being solicited. Selectman William Sayre and Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will plan together and one of them will make the presentation. It was noted that the bill may be too late to help Williamsburg, unless it is retroactive, but may be available for additional work.

8. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the U.S. Treasury Department has issued new guidance about the use of ARPA funds, specifically that revenue replacement has been expanded to allow communities like Williamsburg, with little or no local taxes, meals tax, or airport fees, to spend up to a certain amount in the revenue replacement category. This new flexibility means that the town could spend the remaining \$600,000 for things like infrastructure and equipment. He has some ideas about how to elicit ideas from the community but first the public safety complex should be considered, as it has been trimmed way back and this money could be used to fill in some gaps. He will stay aware of the project and funding timelines and keep monitoring the situation.

9. Licenses – Sunday entertainment – Yellow Barn – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the request for the annual state Sunday entertainment license for the Yellow Barn. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).

10. Heating oil purchasing – The Administrative Assistant presented the documents for the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborate, the bidding and purchasing agent for the town's heating oil. Because the Helen E. James Building will no longer be needing heat, the town's order is being reduced from 11,000 gallons for the year to 5,500 gallons. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the Buy Order and related documents to purchase 5,500 gallons of heating oil starting October 2022. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye). It was noted that the price of heating oil is currently high and that the town is giving LPVEC authority to watch the prices and decide the right time to purchase.

11. Personnel review process – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo asked about further steps in the review process, such as a memo about themes that came up in meetings with department heads, for further discussion, or a report from the notes of each interview. In the past the reviews have just been filed in the individual's personnel file. He will write something and send it to the Board. He noted that everything was good and there were no glaring issues in those conversations. He hopes to simplify the review process for next year.

12. Hybrid meetings – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the recent changes to the state Open Meeting Law are popular and may be made permanent. He asked if the Board wanted to invest in equipment for hybrid meetings. It was noted that this could be useful for remote access for professionals or the public and that it would be a possible use of ARPA money. Nick reported that the price range seems to be \$500 to \$3000. Other local small towns are using the Owl camera, which sits in the middle of the table and is reasonable in cost, about \$1000. Board members commented that if the town goes ahead, it should do it right and not buy junk, that Paragus tends to be good quality but expensive, and that anything bought now will be obsolete in five years. They asked Nick to look into this further.

13. Elected officials – The Town Clerk had brought to the Board's attention the fact that several officials were not running for re-election, including the Moderator and two members of the Local School Committee. The Regional School Committee also has a vacancy. The Board will publicize the vacancies, on the town signs, the town newsletter, and the town Facebook page. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will talk with the Town Clerk about reaching out to people directly. Training appears to be available for Moderator, including a class, a handbook, and access to former Moderators.

14. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program (tax workoff) – The Administrative Assistant reported that someone who currently volunteers in the Can and Bottle Shed at the Transfer Station had asked if those hours could be used toward the tax workoff program. (The person has since said that they won't have time for the program, so the question is moot.) It had been pointed out that the person is volunteering anyway and the town would not gain anything. On the other hand, some of the library volunteers are in the same situation, and they would volunteer whether it counted toward the program or not. Comments included that this would be an appropriate task, that the department should have control over who works there, and that the money from bottles and cans goes to the town gardens, especially the Angel Park garden, and that while it benefits the town it is not a town function. The town would not be paying for the work if it were not done by volunteers, in contrast to the library, where if the volunteers didn't do the work, staff would be paid to do it.

15. Town Administrator's report – Covid – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that there are 18 active cases in town and the number has steadily gone up. There is a mask mandate for businesses, and the Board of Health delivered literature and signage to businesses. It was noted that the numbers may not be accurate because in-home testing may not be included.

Depot Road culvert – Nick reported that the actual culvert was put in place this week with a large crane. The culvert consists of 5 or 6 concrete arches, pieced together like Legos. Maxymillian will continue to work through January pouring concrete for the wingwalls and plan for paving in the spring. The weather has been mild and everything is close to on budget. He added that Maxmillian has been a great contractor to work with, and that Hill Engineers has been really good. Dan Banister goes almost daily, and communication is strong with all parties.

Highway garage door project – Raynor Doors was the only bidder. They are awaiting the manufacturing and expecting everything to wrap up by the end of the month. The doors will be better than what is there, conserving heat.

Computer server – The server is expected this month and the changeover will be scheduled for a Friday to minimize disruption. The expected lifespan is 5-6 years. The projected cost shortfall will be covered by movement of funds.

Anne T. Dunphy School HVAC units – The units have been installed. Jason of Jamrog worked with the contractor, did a verbal assessment, and is happy with it. The total cost was \$176,495, paid through three sources: school department \$15,000, ARPA funds \$105,000, and \$56,495 from special town meeting appropriation from Stabilization. There will be \$25,000 left over from the special town meeting appropriation, which will revert to free cash at the end of the year.

FY23 budget – Budget information will be sent out next week and department heads will be asked to submit their budgets within three to four weeks. It was noted that the departments under the Board of Selectmen submit their budgets to the Board, where they are reviewed and then passed along to Finance Committee; other departments submit directly to Finance.

250th Anniversary Committee – The Committee is making good progress, there is some change in leadership, and they expect more movement over the next few months.

Animal Control Officer – It was noted that a new Animal Control Officer is also needed and the position needs to be advertised.

Libraries – Dan Bonham has agreed to give an informal assessment of the Meekins Library roof drainage issues. Nick has also met with Library Director Bev Bullock and former Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten to evaluate the Haydenville Library. No immediate repairs are needed there. There was some conversation about removal of lead paint, volunteers to do painting, and roof work and foundation work. There is also the question about whether the library will continue as a library.

16. Annual report dedication – Board members will give some thought to the dedication and discuss it at the next meeting.

17. Correspondence – The Highland Ambulance annual meeting will be February 7 on zoom; RVSP to Mike Rock.

18. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of December 2, December 16, and December 28. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).

19. Warrant – Selectman Dave Mathers will review and sign the warrant.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Building Supervisor description

Sunday entertainment application

Heating oil purchase documents

Minutes

Adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk