

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
November 8, 2018

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, November 8, 2018, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and noted that the meeting was being recorded by the Country Journal reporter.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also present: Kim Boas (Energy), John Hoogstraten (Building Supervisor), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Leslie Smith (Highland Ambulance), Bill Turner (Highway Superintendent), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Assessors: Glen Everett, Robin Everett

1. Building Supervisor – Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten gave his regular report.

Old Town Hall – The recent big project was the Old Town Hall cupola. He is pleased with the way it looks, after contending with hornets and 95 degree weather. The building exterior needs to be kept up to keep water out, especially the window sills, since they are horizontal and soak up water. Rough estimate on painting the whole building is \$50,000 and includes dealing with lead paint. If it is to be painted before the anniversary celebration in 2021, the process should start now. The windows also need reglazing, so the ballpark estimate should be \$60,000. Although the wood has deteriorated, the basic structure is fine. Another issue is that there is no heat in the building. It was noted that whether the town keeps the building is a separate issue.

Anne T. Dunphy School – He reported that the valleys on the roof have been replaced with metal and the leaks have stopped. The roofer saw some other issues and will come back. John Hoogstraten has noticed that the new trim and siding were poorly installed in some areas. Suggestions included checking the specifications, making a claim, and considering a lawsuit. Charlene will follow up with architect Scot Woodin for specifications.

Helen E. James – At the James Building the lower roof at the back has been repaired and resealed and the leak has stopped. The upper roof drains down onto the lower roof and the lower roof backs up seriously in heavy rain. Roof drains need constant cleaning; he goes once a week. There are new sump pumps in the basement, thanks to the Fire and Highway Departments. The alarm did not alert to flooding in the basement, because the water did not rise to the alarm height. A gravity drain was suggested. As long as the pumps work, flooding should not be an issue. He checks it frequently. The basement has been cleaned, so the pumps are pumping cleaner water. The most critical issue is the roof, and the town should get a professional opinion and be prepared to pay for it. The roofer said this roof is worn out. The rest of the building is slowly and steadily deteriorating. The interior is in relatively good shape. Adding a couple of temperature sensors to the alarm system was suggested; Charlene will follow up. It was noted that the building is occupied all the time by the Commons Co-Working Group.

Meekins Library – Rather than wait for the mason, John Hoogstraten did the caulking himself. He noted that, just as at the Dunphy School, the recent addition has a lot of things starting to go wrong, as a result of poor workmanship, due to procurement procedures and low bidders. He will make a list of what needs to be done.

Haydenville Library – He replaced some window panes, at the insurance company’s request.

Town Offices – An ongoing issue is the icing of the roof above the elevator.

Fire Station, Williamsburg – There was rot on the exterior wall by the propane tanks – water splashes from the tanks onto the horizontal siding; he had to do a fairly extensive reconstruction of the wall.

Police Department – He installed a new screen door this summer, stored in the basement in the winter.

Thanks – The Board thanked him for the excellent and thorough job he is doing and for keeping them informed.

2. Highway – Highway Superintendent Bill Turner made his regular report. He said the highway crew is doing a fantastic job, they are a pleasure to work with, they get a lot done, and they have come a long way. They are wrapping up the water main project on Fort Hill Road and getting the rest of the roads patched up for winter. He reported that the 2011 Ford 550 truck is in the body shop with rot that was worse than expected; when it loads up with salt, the salt spills over onto the body in addition to the salt from the road; better maintenance is needed. The new excavator is excellent. The sample policies and procedures were received after the recent voluntary safety audit; he noted that the department is doing the right things, the deficiency is just in not having written policies. Board members asked about several items including the light by the gas pumps and the water main on South Street, and thanked him for installing the flashing pedestrian beacon in the center of Williamsburg.

3. Highland Ambulance – Representative Leslie Smith distributed income, expense and assessment information and reported that things are going well. Ambulance fee income is ahead of budget, payroll is on budget. The new building is working out well. They are looking at getting a new ambulance next year. The \$250,000 cost will come from an earmarked donation of \$150,000, assessments from the towns for \$25,000 (Williamsburg \$8000) each of two years, and future fundraising to cover the remaining \$50,000. It was noted that the town has three budget lines for Highland Ambulance – the operating budget, the building assessment, and the vehicle assessment. The town’s share of the expenses increased from 31% to 32% of the total, because of fluctuations in population. The increases in assessments for the next five years are expected to be small; there will be some increase because they are trying to pay staff more competitively. She reported that they serve the Swift River treatment center in Cummington, which has a higher demand for ambulance services, and they are negotiating for appropriate compensation. They are exploring the possibility of offering mobile integrated health care, i.e., paramedic visits to people in their homes. The Board thanked her for keeping them well informed.

4. Energy Committee –

Solar projects/update on META grant – Kim Boas, Chair of the Energy Committee, reported on the potential solar projects on town-owned properties, South Street Water Department land and the Transfer Station capped wood waste landfill. The META grant was used to write the Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Only one bid was received, for the South Street site. They would like to close the current RFP, notify the one respondent that the town will not proceed, and develop a new RFP for the Transfer Station site. When the people who attended the pre-bid conference explained why they did not respond, most said that they thought there would be larger

firms bidding but they might be interested if larger firms were not responding. He pointed out that there would be no cost to the town for a solar project and the town would benefit from Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) as well as from the lease of \$15-20,000. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to allow the Energy Committee to close the RFP and put out a new RFP. **So voted** (3-0).

LED lights – He expressed some frustration with the process; personnel have kept changing and communication is less than ideal. The lights are expected in the Town Offices on November 12 and the streetlights on November 22.

5. Tax classification – public hearing – The hearing opened at 7:17 p.m.; the chair read the published ad for the hearing to determine whether all classes of property would be taxed at the same rates. Assessor Glen Everett reported that the Assessors recommend a single tax rate. A shift of the tax rate would be a burden for commercial/industrial property and the savings to residential property would be minor; chapter land would also be taxed at a higher rate. The current rate is \$20.18; they don't know the new rate yet. Selectman Denise Banister disclosed that she is chair of the Board of Assessors. The hearing ended at 7:22 p.m. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to set a single tax rate for all classifications for FY19. **So voted** (3-0). In response to a question, the Assessors explained that they go out to assess properties on a nine-year cycle; when there is a building permit the property is evaluated sooner. If the state says that many properties are not assessed properly, the town does a complete revaluation, and they put aside \$5000 a year to pay for it. The GIS mapping has been postponed until the new CAMA software update is complete. The Board thanked the Assessors for their hard work.

6. Resignation – The resignation of Aubrey Luszccki was reported at the October 11 meeting. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to accept the resignation of Aubrey Luszccki, effective October 31. **So voted** (3-0).

7. Town Collector's petty cash – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the Collector's petty cash is only \$100 and when people want to pay their taxes with big bills, there isn't enough to make change. Collector Bonnie Roberge suggested increasing it to \$250 and taking the extra \$150 from her FY19 expense line. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to increase the petty cash line for the Town Collector from \$100 to \$250, effective immediately. **So voted** (3-0). The cash is kept in a vault.

8. Meeting schedule and holiday observances – Dates for 2019 were reviewed and approved.

9. Senior and Veterans' Volunteer Tax Relief Program – The Administrative Assistant made the year-end report. The ten seniors and one veteran together earned \$13,500, and worked primarily at the Library and Senior Center. Half of the people earned the maximum of \$1500, and most earned over \$1000. Many additional hours were donated. The total earned this year was similar to last year, even though two slots were added to the Senior program. The large increase from the year before was because the amount that could be earned increased from \$1000 to \$1500 and because more people were active in the program. The Board commented that the town benefits from the good labor and the people get the tax benefit. They thanked her for the excellent report.

10. Town Administrator's report –

CDBG grant – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that Hilltown CDC originally planned to put in a grant just for Williamsburg and Westhampton, two towns that have not been included in recent CDBG grants because of their low scores. The grant would allow low to moderate income homeowners to apply for funds to upgrade their homes, as well as providing social service programs. Then after attending a CDBG grant meeting, HCDC felt that the application would not be competitive, but they would try to include some of the social services in the annual grant. The latest word is that they would like the town to participate in the next grant even though it brings down the score.

DLTA funding – The Open Space Committee plans to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan and would like to use DLTA funding. Charlene will send a letter to Tim Brennan of PVPC requesting funding.

Helen E. James lighting – The tenants have requested more lighting for the parking areas because a number of them work at night. The current fixture has been repaired. The Board recommended an additional floodlight, to be paid from the Buildings and Grounds budget line, and installed so that it doesn't shine at the traffic on Route 9.

Shredding Day – It is scheduled for November 17, 9-11 a.m., at the Highway Garage, sponsored by the Emergency Management Director and Valley Green Shredding, at no cost to the town. Denise Banister, Jennifer Westlake, Nick Zimmerman and Charlene Nardi will be there and Highway Department will help with boxes.

Meetings to plan – Charlene described the schedule for department head evaluations. There is also a proposed meeting with school administrators, Finance Committee co-chairs and Senior Center Director to prepare for a meeting with Senator Hinds. Topics should include infrastructure (culverts, public safety complex), school budget issues, aging in place and transportation needs. Board members preferred to meet with the Senior Center Director separately. The proposed date for school and Finance is November 28 at 4:30.

FEMA study of watershed – She reported that FEMA will be doing a study of the flood plan to update flood hazard data; Conservation Commission is taking the lead. Charlene has taken steps to be sure the Route 9 corridor will be included. She plans to send out a call to affected people.

Incident in Whately – People claiming to be from the town of Whately doing water testing approached a homeowner asking to come in. The police were informed and the town put out a town-wide warning about the scam. Charlene has put out a similar town-wide call to Williamsburg reminding people that any such project would be done by the Highway Department in Highway Department uniforms and town vehicles.

Town Flag – The presentation of the flag at the Hall of Flags in Boston was a wonderful occasion. Smaller flags were ordered for residents, with several extra. The one at Town Offices will be hung inside at the stairs or outside. The library has two, one for the archives. The Dunphy School has one at the archway.

Evaluations – Town Administrator's evaluation has been completed. Feedback on the general evaluation process include separating the self-evaluation from the evaluation by the supervisor, providing the supervisor's evaluation to the employee ahead before the discussion, and adding narrative notes. Board members concurred and these suggestions will be incorporated.

Masons' Chili Fest – The event on October 27 was cancelled; it may be rescheduled.

Police Department openings – An ad has been published and interviews have been held. Officer Jason Graham just resigned, with last day November 5.

Anne T. Dunphy freezer on generator – It will cost an estimated \$4000 to connect the school freezer to the generator. While the freezer should be OK for a while in a power outage, if the temperature goes above a certain level everything must be thrown out, and the school is designated as an emergency shelter. This should have been done at the time of the school renovation, so money will come from the leftover construction money.

Old Town Hall – Suggestions were made to look into historical preservation money, to ask the Historical Society to make a proposal, and to let people know the Board is looking for recommendations for the building. People also commented that Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten is a gem and are concerned he may burn out.

Helen E. James Building – The OPM Steering Committee is waiting for responses to the land RFP. They are expected to update the Board with current status and next steps in December.

Personnel – A department head will be out several days a week over the next month.

Storage of stage props – The Williamsburg Players had asked if they could store props and stage sets at the Town Offices. Charlene recommended not doing so, because of the lack of unused space, the basement's vulnerability to water, liability for the items, and setting a precedent for other groups. The Board affirmed her decision.

Mural at Town Offices – The painter recommends taking an old photograph or painting, printing it onto vinyl and installing it on the wall in the empty upstairs hallway. Cost would be about \$500. It might be worth considering if the town offices stay in the building.

Eversource purchase update – Eversource will bring the ANR (subdivision of land) to the Planning Board; it is not scheduled yet.

Side room off copier room – The small room had been suggested for private meetings but that is not optimal. Since the accountant has asked to move somewhere quieter, that room might be a possibility.

Capital plan – Capital Planning Committee has not met because Finance Committee hasn't met to appoint members to it.

MIIA Loss Control grants – She has submitted four requests, two for the Police Department – a camera for the vault and scanner/printers for the cruisers – and two for the Senior Center – skids for the stairs and an automatic door opener.

Veterans' Day – She will get in touch with the Veterans' Agent about plans.

Weeds on Route 9 – It was noted that the weeds on the hill side of the road by the Snack Bar are a hazard to bicyclists. MassDOT is responsible and has not responded. Charlene will follow up.

Mill River Greenway and Eversource land, continued – Charlene will talk with Town Counsel.

11. Correspondence – Included the FEMA flood plain letter and two notices from the Department of Environmental Protection about spills.

12. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of October 11 as presented. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of October 22 as written. **So voted** (3-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of October 31 as written. **So voted** (3-0).

13. Warrant – Approved and signed the warrants: payroll warrant WP19-11 for \$123,156.17 and expense warrant W19-11 for \$104,928.21, payable 11/14/18.

14. Miscellaneous –

Elevator – The state has a new elevator inspector and there is a new Baystate Elevator technician. Town Offices elevator was inspected in October; the James Building certificate expires in February. Concern was expressed that the James elevator might not pass this year.

Forecasting spreadsheet – Under the Community Compact grant for the town, the Department of Revenue Division of Local Services (DLS) reviewed the spreadsheet that the town had developed for forecasting what would happen to the tax rate under various scenarios; they developed a whole new spreadsheet including revenue, not just expenses; it will be presented at the next Small Town Administrators’ meeting. Charlene felt it would be useful; it would have to be coordinated with the finance team.

Next meeting – There is no meeting at the regular time on November 22. Issues can be brought to the special meeting on November 28.

Tax rate – There is concern about getting free cash certified and the tax rate set. Charlene will get in touch with FRCOG.

LED streetlights – There is no contract yet with the installer. Charlene will keep following up.

Staff meeting – Meetings have changed to meeting monthly. Recent topics included office space, security and doorbell. Charlene will look into getting a buzzer and intercom.

Holidays – Monday November 12 is the Veterans’ Day holiday observance, and since the day after Thanksgiving is a Friday, most people in the Town Offices are taking the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Building Supervisor’s report on James Building and Old Town Hall cupola

Highland Ambulance income and expense statement, assessments

Tax rate hearing information

Resignation letter from Audrey Luszczki

Meeting and holiday schedules

Senior and Veterans’ Volunteer Tax Relief Program report

Minutes

Warrant and expense report

Adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk