

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
January 26, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, January 26, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Ken Taylor (Fire Department) Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Denise Wickland (Police Chief)

1. Fire Chief – Fire Chief Jason Connell gave his regular report. Calendar year 2022 was another record-breaking year with 423 calls. Fifty-five percent were medical emergencies. There were 24 fires. The department responded with mutual aid 62 times and received mutual aid 9 times. The department received over \$100,000 in grants. The firefighters respond in all hours and in all weather. There will be a full department meeting soon, to focus both on training and on ways to move forward. Engine 3 was sold at auction for \$8600. The new truck is expected in the fall or early winter. They will be looking for a new command vehicle to replace the 2012 vehicle. On the capital plan the vehicles were originally spread out but are now bunched up. The department will be losing several key members in the next year or so and is feeling the lack of new members. Apparatus is having yearly service. They are doing well with maintaining equipment and gear. All-band radios have been ordered for vehicles and portable radios have been ordered for individuals. He believes a full-time chief is needed, whether it is him or not, and he hopes to discuss it with the Selectmen, either at a meeting or individually. (He would love to be chief but it would depend on the compensation.) Time is short and demands on him are high, especially tasks relating to the new public safety complex. The Labor budget line is being used up and will be gone by the fourth quarter, which is the time for a lot of training. The Board asked him to propose a realistic budget figure. For the full-time chief, he sees it as starting in January 2024. The Board proposed discussing it at the Feb 23 meeting, and meanwhile getting salary information for other area towns.

2. Police –

Staffing – Police Chief Denise Wickland reported that she conducted interviews last week and may have an officer candidate to propose soon. She discussed a recent incident in Chesterfield where no one from Chesterfield responded but Williamsburg did. State police are supposed to fill in, but they are stretched thin. A suggestion was made to have a roving regional officer, but she didn't see how that could work.

Personnel and pay rates – Chief Wickland made two proposals. One was to raise the rate for a part-time police officer, currently \$22.91 per hour, to be the same as the Highway general labor rate of \$25.07, and to raise the full-time officer from \$24.73 to \$26.29. The second was to have a civilian administrative assistant/secretary, for 12-15 hours per week. The department had had a civilian for a while; when the post was vacant it was filled by a police officer, who is now doing paperwork all the time instead of doing patrols. Chief Wickland proposed going back to a civilian administrative assistant. Research shows that in western Massachusetts the average rate

is between \$17.86 and \$19 per hour, and she proposed \$17.86. She does not need extra money in the budget. She will plan to use the old job description, tweaking it to put stronger emphasis on confidentiality. Board members agreed to both proposals. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to raise the rate for a part-time police officer with two or more years' experience to \$25.07 per hour, effective January 22. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to raise the rate for a full-time police officer to \$26.29 per hour, effective January 22. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to revert the part-time secretary/administrative assistant back to a civilian position, at a pay rate of \$17.86 per hour, effective today. **So voted** (2-0).

3. Licenses – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the live entertainment permit for American Legion Post 236 for a D.J. from 5 to 10 p.m. on Saturdays February 4 and March 11. **So voted** (2-0).

4. Appointments – resignation – Cultural Council – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to accept the resignation of Zevey Steinitz from the Cultural Council, with our gratitude, effective immediately. **So voted** (2-0).

5. Budget – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the budget letter from the Select Board and Finance will go out tomorrow. Review of requests will be from March 1 to April 14, wrapping up by April 28. Total budget for FY23 was \$8,573,419. The budget can be more than the levy limit because of state aid and other amounts coming into the town. Salary increases – Cost-of-living increases are decided by Finance Committee near the end of the budget process. The wage study has been sent to departments, and departments can request additional increases if they feel their people are underpaid; these will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Discussion of stipends included a suggestion to ask Finance Committee to review all stipends, and a question whether cost-of-living increases are even appropriate when stipends are more a token and not a livable wage. Some departments are under the review of the Select Board and some under the Finance Committee. The two will plan joint meetings.

6. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that an expression of interest for FY24-25 has been submitted for a Mill River watershed plan. The watershed is regional, but a town can submit its own application. MVP will fund multiple projects.

7. MassDOT Reducing Rural Roadway Departures (FoRRRwD) – The final technical memo on the program from Fuss & O'Neil was presented. Site visits had been made to North Farms Road, Mountain Street, Ashfield Road, and South Street. The report has been sent to the Highway Superintendent. MassDOT will be purchasing signage, mostly signaling curves. There were some questions about speed limits and coordination with currently posted or registered speed limits.

8. PVPC – Direct Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the Planning Board is interested in applying for the town's annual DLTA funding, for the visioning part of creating a comprehensive master plan.

9. ARPA funding – Pavement Management Study – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that many towns do pavement management studies through their local planning agencies, others go through private companies. The cost is probably \$10,000 to \$20,000 or \$30,000. Highway Superintendent Dan Banister will be asked for what he wants. The Board was not ready to authorize spending ARPA money and will consider this at the next meeting when there is more information.

10. Town Office improvements –

Windows – Board members discussed whether to restore the windows or replace them. Town Meeting funded the project for \$50,000. Pisgah, which is also doing Whately's Congregational Church, gave an estimate of \$53,652 for restoring 20 windows in the town office building. The estimate from Abide for replacement is \$31,800, as of a year ago; the amount will presumably be larger now. Discussion included: that the cost of replacement is significantly lower; that replaced windows may not need to be repainted but restored windows must be repainted; that the current storm windows are not operating well and would need to be replaced if the windows are restored; that new windows would have double panes and would not need storm windows; that replacement windows would look different because of the difference in size; that replacement windows don't last well; that issues are both functionality and appearance; that the building has changed a lot since its original construction, according to pictures; that both options will look nice; that with the cheaper option, some additional windows could be done for the amount appropriated. Summary: The replacement option is cheaper and the restoration option lasts better. One Selectman would prefer restoration; one would prefer replacement, because of the cost. The third Selectman would probably prefer replacement, the cheaper option. William Sayre, who would prefer restoration, will yield to the preference of the chair, but asked that the minutes reflect that he didn't agree with the decision. Chair Denise Banister chose replacement.

Fencing – Pricing has been requested but not yet received. Cost for a different style of fence (split rail) is \$14,000, so it's fair to estimate \$10,000-20,000 for what the town wants (black chain-link). Nick will get three bids for a black chain-link fence and go with the lowest bidder.

Painting – All contractors ask for a report on lead, and Nick expects to get one next week for the Town Office building, the Haydenville Library, and Old Town Hall.

Other – Emergency lighting is now working and the electrical box will be replaced. Gutters are failing and should be replaced.

11. Town Administrator's report –

Public safety complex – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the work is moving along quickly, with no problems.

Winter travel policy – Whether to come in during bad weather is an employee's personal decision based on safety.

Vacation request – Nick mentioned days that he would like to take as vacation days.

12. Miscellaneous –

Review of department heads – The Board looked at who would be reviewing which department heads, and who would be liaison for each department, adjusting as needed.

Survey – The boundary of the lot with the public safety complex has been marked with wooden stakes and pink flags. Nothing has been received in writing. Nick Caccamo will follow up.

13. Annual report dedication – The Board decided on the annual report dedication.

14. Correspondence – A resident had asked that minutes include names of people in the description of discussion. The Attorney General’s office says that names are not required, and the Board preferred that they continue to be omitted, except when noted. Other correspondence included bridge inspection information and notification that the town’s cannabis bylaws might need to be updated in light of changes to the state’s regulations.

15. Minutes –

East Main Street, mentioned in the June 2 minutes as an area of concern, has been discussed with the Highway Superintendent. The next step is a civil engineering assessment.

Motion was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of May 24, June 2, June 6 before Annual Town Meeting, June 16, and January 12, as presented. **So voted** (2-0).

16. Warrant – Chair Denise Banister will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP23-16 for \$130,767.93 and expense warrant W23-16 for \$412,776.59, effective 2/1/23.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Fire Chief’s report

Police Chief’s proposal

Wage reports

Live entertainment license

Resignation letter

Budget letter and information

MVP expression of interest

MassDot and FoRRRwD memorandum and materials

DLTA application

Window estimates

Department head review and liaison list

Resident request about names in minutes

Bridge inspection

Attorney General’s letter about cannabis bylaws

Minutes

Warrant

Adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk