

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
January 31, 2019

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, January 31, 2019, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:07 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: Robert Barker (Planning), Jason Connell (Fire), Heidi Johnson, Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Peter Spotts (reporter, Country Journal), Daryl Springman (Fire), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Community Development Advisory Committee: Nick Dines, Fred Goodhue, Sally Loomis, Eric Weber

1. Property tax mailing issue – Resident Heidi Johnson presented a concern about the mailing of property tax bills. If the bill is folded on the perforations, it does not show properly through the envelope window. Board members experimented with folding a sample bill and found that if it is folded 1/4 or 3/16 of an inch off the perforation, it fits the envelope. They agreed that there is a problem. Suggestions included folding differently, or using address stickers instead of window envelopes. It was also noted that tax payments are due whether or not taxpayers receive the bills; publicizing of this could be done on Facebook, on the town website, on the town information signs, and by robocall. Town Administrator Charlene Nardi will follow up with Town Collector Bonnie Roberge.

2. Historical Society and Old Town Hall – The Board asked Eric Weber of the Historical Society for thoughts about Old Town Hall and about Massachusetts Historical Commission grants. Eric said the Historical Society would like to get out of the Old Town Hall and into another place, with heat and air conditioning, because it would be better for the collections. Failing that, they would like to continue to be in the building. It would also be nice to have a coat of paint for the 250th anniversary. They have some money, but they will need money if they ever have to move. They would be willing to contribute the \$700 they received from the Williamsburg Players and maybe a little more, but that wouldn't go far toward a coat of paint, estimated at \$60-70,000. He also cautioned against funding with state preservation money because it comes with major easement restrictions. For instance, the library renovation cost tens of thousands more because of historic restrictions. Board members noted that the plans for the Helen E. James School are still unknown, because those plans depend on the Public Safety Complex, but it is not a promising place for the Historical Society because there are other potential uses for that space. The town would like to find a way to keep Old Town Hall. It was suggested that Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten be asked to come up with estimates for paint and heat, whatever is needed to make it habitable. Discussion included that Old Town Hall is considered a valuable building in the Historic District, that the historic preservation grant is a 50-50 matching grant and triggers a preservation restriction in perpetuity, that the grants are for only \$75,000 maximum, and that work above a certain threshold would trigger the need to bring the whole building up to code. Board members thought more research was needed.

3. Planning Board – Short-Term Rental Bylaws – Planning Board chair Robert Barker updated the Select Board on Short-Term Rentals and distributed drafts of the proposed changes to the bylaws. Planning Board has consulted Town Counsel and they are close to a final wording. They are planning a public hearing on February 25; at least one Select Board member plans to attend. Two unresolved issues are taxation and enforcement. Robert Barker reported that according to state law, if a unit is rented less than 14 days a year, or if it is three bedrooms or less, it is not subject to state excise tax, so he would expect very little tax to be involved. Local tax up to 6% can be added; they recommend doing nothing on the local tax at this point. Rental units have to register with the state starting in July so the Planning Board will know then who has units in the town. As for enforcement of rules on short-term rentals, one possibility is non-criminal disposition; Town Administrator Charlene Nardi will check whether the town has in the past adopted non-criminal disposition generally for the town or just for specific issues.

4. Community Development Advisory Board (CDAC) – Members of CDAC presented a proposed framework for evaluating town projects – issues to consider when developing a town project, with a broad view of public interests. They would like to send the framework, with a cover letter from CDAC and the Select Board, to selected boards asking for feedback. They pointed out that the scoring doesn't matter, the form is rather to encourage consideration of more variables than people might normally think of. Board members felt that the framework provided very good food for thought. A letter and a copy of the framework will be sent to Capital Planning, Planning Board and the Senior Center. The committee is also available to go to board meetings to talk about these ideas. The Board thanked the committee for their great work.

5. Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Connell and Deputy Chief Daryl Springman gave the department's regular report. There were 363 incidents in calendar 2018, compared to 359 in 2017; 53% were medical calls. Potential losses of property to fire were over \$1 million but because of the work of the Fire Department actual losses were only \$25,000. They are encouraging smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; 17% of the ones they test have failed. They are trying to educate people to test them every month. A recent notable incident was a Goshen structure fire; Williamsburg personnel were heavily involved, and the department has a good working relationship with Goshen and Chesterfield. Sewer and heating issues at Fire Station #1 (Williamsburg) have been resolved. Engine 3 needs work; they are hoping to get a grant for replacement. They hope to refurbish Engine 4 rather than replacing it. They have applied for a grant for their air pack fill station. They are already \$1600 over budget and are not purchasing some equipment in order to reduce expenses. For example, one portable radio was damaged and needs to be replaced; they will shop around and look into replacing it later. Board members applauded their adhering to their budget and at the same time expressed concern for the safety of the firefighters. The department will be looking to increase the budget by around \$3000. Concerning physicals, they have learned that physicals will be required for new members but not for current members. They would like to start using a waiver form. Senior Firefighters Bob Lapointe (formerly Captain) and Al Everett, having reached age 65, don't do carry work but their knowledge and expertise is valuable. Dan Banister has been promoted to Captain, and Bart Casey to Lieutenant. The Police and Fire departments are sponsoring a 5K run to raise money for defibrillators, April 14 in Williamsburg center starting at the Dunphy School. It was noted that

Highland Ambulance said that if it weren't for the response of local fire departments, Highland would have a harder time. There was a question about widening the door of Fire Station #2 (Haydenville) to accommodate Engine 1; Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten will be asked to look at it. Board members thanked Chief Connell and Deputy Chief Springman and said they were doing a great job.

6. Election – Town Caucus Call – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to sign the Town Caucus Call for Tuesday, March 5, at 6 p.m.

7. Age-friendly communities – COA – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the letter from the Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging to the AARP state director in support of age-friendly communities. **So voted** (3-0).

8. Chapter 90 reimbursement – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to sign the Chapter 90 Reimbursement Request for part of the 2017 paving of High Street, in the amount of \$961.76.

9. Hampshire Regional union negotiation – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that negotiations were in process and are currently on hold. Dave Mathers will attend the February 4 meeting to choose someone to attend the negotiations to represent the towns. The Board agreed to nominate Charles Dudek.

10. Street light request – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reminded the Board that a resident on North Kellogg Road would like a street light on the pole by his property and had asked about the process. The proposals from last meeting were for the resident to write to the Select Board, have Highway and Energy weigh in, have the resident include that he is willing to pay for the light, hold a hearing for the abutters, and have the resident write to National Grid requesting the light. Discussion included that the pole is a service pole not a full height pole and there was never a light on it, that it is unclear where the street ends and driveway begins, that the Highway Superintendent would be consulted but that the Energy Committee probably isn't relevant to the issue, that the town won't pay for a light, and that lights are normally only at intersections and congested areas, for safety. The town will wait for the letter from the resident, ask Highway Superintendent Bill Turner to weigh in, and consult the relevant person at National Grid.

11. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi explained that the Board had previously decided not to pursue this grant on mitigation for climate change, but that Mill River Greenway would like the Board to reconsider. Gaby Immerman and Nick Dines, along with Dillon Sussman from Dodson & Flinker, will be invited to a future meeting.

12. Highway capital planning items – Ashfield Road guardrails – Board members confirmed that these will not be done. Depot Road culvert – Among the options are applying for a MassWorks grant (formerly STRAP grant), using Chapter 90 funds, or asking Town Meeting for money, Board members approved going for the MassWorks grant but not using Chapter 90 or Town Meeting money. It was noted the Depot Road is in bad shape and also that the town has not had a MassWorks grant in a while.

13. Town Collector's salary – The Collector had requested folding her fees into her salary, which would increase her pension. Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented a spreadsheet of the Collector's salary and fees over the past five years. The average of the fees is \$12,975, and if this is added to the base salary, the total is \$44,628.70. Assuming a 30-hour work week (as stated in the town bylaw), this comes to \$28.61 per hour. If she is to receive the fees as part of her salary, Board members would like her to work 30 hours a week in the office, rather than the current 26 hours, and to include evening hours. Charlene and Dave Mathers will talk with the Collector.

14. Town Administrator's report –

Police officer legislation – Police Chief Wickland would like Town Meeting to request legislation that would allow an officer to continue as a reserve special officer after turning 65. Charlene will start the process with the local state legislators.

Boston Post cane – Charlene reported that the new oldest resident would like a presentation at an event with her family. Instead of engraving on the small replica cane, it was decided to look into making a base for the cane with a plaque on it. The presentation would include a certificate and a history of the cane.

Treasurer position – Charlene presented a draft job description and is continuing to research other towns. The change in position from elected to appointed takes place July 1.

Excel training – Charlene and Senior Center Director Jennifer Hoffman are planning to take HCDC training on Excel February 11.

Senior Center, Alzheimers – Senior Center Director Jennifer Hoffman has been active with the issue of Alzheimers, including going for training, planning a forum, and possibly coordinating a walk to raise awareness.

Election kudos – It was mentioned by a resident that during the 2018 election, the voting machine went down and Town Clerk Brenda Lessard handled everything very professionally and under pressure. The Board agreed and will write her a letter of appreciation.

Finance – As budget season approaches, Finance Committee would like to determine the cost of Highway employees working on water/sewer projects, and address the question of whether the Transfer Station earns enough revenue to support itself.

Senior Center conduct policy and guidelines – Senior Center has developed a policy and list of guidelines, in consultation with Town Counsel, to deal with behavior at the Senior Center.

Sump pumps and storm water system – Based on Town Counsel's recommendation, Highway Superintendent Bill Turner has decided not to offer residents a connection to the storm water system for their basement sump pumps. He will encourage people to do dry wells. The Highway crew will be inspecting every house on water/sewer lines and plan to discuss the issue with residents.

Town office entry – A sanding truck backed into the overhang at the Town Office rear entrance. Building Supervisor John Hoogstraten will look at it.

Free cash – Free cash numbers have been submitted for certification.

Receivership – The Board of Health and District Attorney are addressing the receivership of the house on Dewey Circle.

Camera in building doorway – A camera was offered to the town which would adhere to the building and show the parking lot. Board members were not comfortable with this and the offer will be declined.

15. Eversource abutters – The meeting with the abutters will be proposed for February 19 at noon.

16. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/WS) to approve the minutes of January 17 as written. **So voted** (3-0).

17. Warrant – Approved and signed the warrants: payroll warrant WP19-17 for \$108,602.73 and expense warrant W19-17 for \$126,626.86, payable 2/6/19.

18. Miscellaneous – It was noted that the Library Director Katie Krol is resigning.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Sample tax bill and mailing envelope

CDAC draft letter to some boards, with draft project evaluation framework

Fire department report

Town Caucus Call

Letter from Northern Hilltowns Consortium of Councils on Aging on age-friendly communities

Chapter 90 reimbursement request

Town collector salary and fees, Williamsburg and other towns

Minutes

Warrant and expense report

Adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk