

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
April 20, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Melinda McCall (secretary), Steve Smith (Planning Board);

Mill River Greenway and MVP: Gaby Immerman, Paul Wetzel

Fire Department: Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Ken Taylor (administration)

1. Members of the public – none

2. Mill River Greenway – MVP Action Grant

Four community members under the auspices of the Greenway Committee (Gaby Immerman, Paul Wetzel, Sally Loomis, and Courteny Morehouse) are putting together a grant proposal from the MVP program to create a watershed management plan that will improve the town's flooding resilience in the future. A watershed management plan was an important need identified by the MVP plan. Gaby Immerman and Paul Wetzel brought this information to the Select Board with a request that the board be prepared to review and sign the grant proposal as soon as it is finished. The proposal is due May 4, the date of the next Select Board meeting. They shared an Action Grant Summary that lays out the partners in the project, as well as the benefits for the town. A project narrative, 80% completed, and a table of partners and their responsibilities were also shared. The Select Board will have time to review the final draft before the next meeting. A letter of support will be drafted by the group for the Board to sign.

The grant request is for \$520,000 (tentative) with 10% matching funds from the town of \$52,000. \$30,000 of these matching funds are already covered, and the rest will come from services in lieu of payment from PVPC, Hilltown Land Trust, the Town Administrator, and the volunteers.

The plan would identify where the upstream flow into the river can be reduced by improving absorption through better forest management, and opportunities to strengthen flood mitigation infrastructure along the Route 9/Mill River corridor. This work ties in with the comprehensive management plan that the Planning Board is working on. The group is in communication with Northampton, but not directly working with that city. They are also communicating with Highway Superintendent Dan Banister. The hope is to have the important information available and ready to use for the Route 9 rebuild. DOT/VHB engineers are already analyzing the mainstem Mill River Corridor in the context of the scheduled Route 9/Greenway rebuild slated for around 5 years from now. This grant would study the upstream tributaries, and entail outreach to abutting upstream towns.

Board members agreed to put this issue on the agenda for May 4.

3. Planning Board Comprehensive Plan update

Steve Smith reported that the Planning Board received District Local Technical Assistance funding from PVPC. The initial scope of the work was estimated at \$20,000, but the grant only funded \$10,000. He shared a table titled Visioning for Comprehensive Plan that laid out the activities and their costs, those that were funded (Community survey, creation of data sets and maps for presentations and report, two public meetings, three focus groups, a draft vision statement) and those that were not (mailing paper surveys, additional data collection and maps, incentive for attending meetings, three additional focus groups, and a written narrative). Mr. Smith asked for help from the Select Board so that the information about the development process will be ready for Town Meeting in June. A draft letter of support will be ready to be signed. The plan should take 1½ to 2 years to complete, with a total cost of \$100,000 to \$150,000, grant funded. Ms. Banister suggested using Senior Tax work off hours for data entry. Mr. Sayre suggested using \$15,000 of ARPA funds to fully fund the visioning plan. This was agreed upon.

4. Fire Chief regular report

- Chief Jason Connell reported that April has been a busy month with 191 calls, including 68 incidents.
- The Fire Department would like to use Station House 1 for storage for about a year after moving to the new Safety Complex. The Haydenville station can be closed up quickly.
- The DCR has a truck available for free that would possibly be suitable for a dedicated brush fire truck. Currently a pick-up truck is being used but is sometimes needed for other purposes and is not meant to be used off-road. Chief Connell could get the truck, as scheduled for later that day, then Mr. Sayre would meet Chief Connell at the station to see what the brush fire equipment entails before agreeing to having the town pay the insurance and registration.

5. FY 24 Budget update

The Finance Committee is meeting that evening and is close to making a recommendation for an operating budget. They would like to meet with the Select Board.

- Some money has been saved on Smith Vocational costs. The town overestimates the number of students who will attend, based on application rate. There are also high estimates on Special Ed fees.
- Fire Chief pay raise may be on the agenda. There could be a joint meeting if there are disagreements.
- Debt exclusion is about \$600,000, resulting from the Public Safety Complex construction and the Dunphy School repairs.
- The town is waiting for a free cash certification and will want a 10% cash reserve. How much to apply to reducing tax rates vs. adding to the stabilization fund will need to be decided.

- Select Board needs to be prepared to discuss pay increases over and above cost of living. A 5% pay raise would cost about \$50,000. Usually the Finance Committee makes recommendations based on what the budget can support. The Board will go over the budget items at their May 4th meeting, then plan a joint meeting with Finance to hash out differences.

6. Solect Energy purchase and installation agreement – possible vote to sign

Town Counsel David Doneski submitted comments on the legal contracts presented for the solar p.v. system for the Public Safety Complex. The town will send the contracts back to Solect Energy for changes, which then will go to the Select Board for signing. The p.v. design is being worked while the contract is negotiated. Signing the agreement will be added to the May 4 agenda, unless it is needed earlier.

7. Intermunicipal Agreement for wastewater received from Williamsburg – possible vote to sign

The Water/Sewer Commission has recommended signing the agreement now because rates will be going up soon now that Coca-Cola has decided to leave Northampton. Weston and Sampson tested the wastewater flow using the Northampton methodology. Recent testing is good, showing flow below the limit. The draft contract is for wastewater collection based on 17% of operating costs. If the wastewater facility upgrades, Williamsburg will have to share the costs. Both Water/Sewer and the City of Northampton can go door to door to talk to users who dispose of a lot of waste.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Intermunicipal Agreement for wastewater pending the acceptable completion of the document. **So Voted** (2-0).

8. Annual Town Meeting – discussion

- The biggest issue is the operating budget.
- There are no anticipated code changes from the Planning Board.
- A proposal for creating a stand-alone fund for opioid-related issues will be voted on.
- There is a request for committing some funds for the preservation of farm land on Mountain Street. A warrant is being drafted and will be ready for the May 4 Select Board meeting.
- A special Select Board Meeting may need to be scheduled for May 25 to sign the Town Meeting warrant at least 7 days before Town Meeting.

9. Town Administrator's report –

- a) Public Safety Complex: things are going well. There have been a few glitches, but they've all been addressed. P.V. powered batteries will not be tied into the emergency back-up system due to cost.

- b) A Request for Proposal went out for IT support for the town. Proposals are due on the 26th. Mr. Caccamo and Dave Martin from the Tech Committee will review the submittals. There will be reference checks and optional interviews.
- c) Vacation notification, FY23. Mr. Caccamo is taking 5 or 6 days off, but is not sure when yet.

10. Correspondence – A letter was received from Nan Fleming advocating keeping land next to the Safety Complex open for recreation.

11. Minutes – none were at hand.

12. Other business: Mr. Sayre would like to get started on a design for the pocket park in front of the Safety Complex by creating a charge for a potential committee or working group to design it.

13. Warrant – Chair Denise Banister will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP23-22 for \$122,963.08 and expense warrant W23-22 for \$629,304.32, effective 4/26/23.

14. Adjourn – A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 12:00. **So Voted** (2-0).

Documents used

Agenda and notes

MVP grant draft narrative

Comprehensive plan visioning

FY24 budget, capital plan and supporting documents

Solsect Energy agreement

Intermunicipal Agreement for Wastewater

Letter about land next to Public Safety Complex

Approved:

Clerk