

*Minutes*  
*Williamsburg Board of Selectmen*  
*April 9, 2020*

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, April 9, 2020, by conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Denise Banister, William Sayre and David Mathers

Also present: Dan Banister (Highway Superintendent), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Bonnie Roberge (Town Collector), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Town Collector – Town Collector Bonnie Roberge reported on tax collection in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Legislation would allow the May 1 due date for real estate taxes to be extended to June 1, but she does not recommend it. Water/sewer bills will be due June 1 rather than May 1, and motor vehicle excise taxes were due in March before the pandemic struck. She added that she is working from home, has a printer and fax, and it is working well. The Board thanked Bonnie for her clear, thoughtful presentation. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) that the Select Board, in accordance with Sections 10 and 11 of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, authorize the Treasurer/Collector to waive the interest and any other penalties for late payment of any excise tax or water use bill with a due date after March 10, 2020, when payment is made after its respective due date but before June 30, 2020. **So voted** (3-0). The Board said that they also did not want any interest or fees to be charged on real estate taxes until June 30, 2020, and they and the Collector agreed that waiving interest and fees should be done even-handedly, not on a case-by-case basis.

2. Highway –

Personnel – Highway Superintendent Dan Banister reported that a Highway crew member has resigned, with her last date no later than May 1. He has received a dozen applications in response to an ad, and two are very well qualified. He, Town Administrator Charlene Nardi, and Selectman Dave Mathers will do telephone interviews next week. References will be checked.

Roadside trash pickup – Highway Superintendent Dan Banister reported that people who are out walking are picking up trash and putting it on the side of the roads. He would like to hand out a special color trash bag for the trash and the Highway Department will pick it up. Board members thought it was a good idea and suggested yellow bags as standard.

Horse Mountain – Dan Banister asked who would pay for the gravel for the new hiking path at Cole Road that the Highway Department will be putting down; he estimates the cost to be under \$500. Charlene Nardi responded that the money will come from the Horse Mountain fund, which still has money in it.

3. Personnel – Resignation – Highway – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to accept Jennifer Westlake's resignation from Highway, Water/Sewer, Route 9 Flag Project, and the Field Driver team, with great thanks for all she did for the department and with regret that she is leaving, effective May 1, 2020. **So voted** (3-0).

4. Elections – Annual Town Election Warrant – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to authorize the Board to sign the warrant for the Annual Town Election for May 4, 2020. **So voted** (3-0). The Board still has the option of postponing the election, but the Town Clerk hopes to have a high turnout by mail-in votes. There are no contests on the ballot this year.

5. Personnel – Town Administrator’s contract – **Motion** was made and seconded to sign the employment contract between the Town of Williamsburg and the Town Administrator, term beginning July 1, 2020, a 36-month contract to expire June 30, 2023. **So voted** (3-0). Town Administrator Charlene Nardi will ask Town Counsel whether the phrase “subject to Town Meeting approval” should be added to future contracts of this type, and what would happen if there were a revenue disaster and the Town could not pay according to a contract.

6. Emergency spending – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the Department of Local Services of the Department of Revenue recommends creating a Special Revenue Account for paying all reimbursable expenses related to COVID-19, so that the expenses are easy to track. The Department of Revenue Director of Accounts will need to give permission for deficit spending of unappropriated funds. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to authorize the establishment of a Special Revenue Fund for charging expenses and accepting reimbursement for expenses under the COVID-19 crisis, and to authorize the Chair and the Town Administrator to draft and send a letter to the Director of Accounts for deficit spending under the COVID-19 crisis. **So voted** (3-0).

7. Budgets –

Finance Committee – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the Finance Committee is asking all boards to reduce their budgets by 3%. She has received responses with suggested cuts from Highway and the Treasurer, and there may be some savings in utilities from closed buildings, including the schools. She has made about \$10,000 in cuts in the Select Board budget, including Office Internet, Copier Maintenance, Vehicle Fuel, and Street Lighting, but did not reach the 3% goal. Computer services has had to be increased. The Board was reluctant to cut Building Repair but agreed to flag it for a second look if necessary. Some things cannot be cut, such as Ambulance service, Inspection services, Debt service. Most of the Select Board items are necessary to keep the town running. The Select Board will plan to meet with the Finance Committee at the next Finance meeting on April 15.

Police Chief’s salary – The Board’s proposal has been presented to the Police Chief but there has not yet been a meeting. As this is a difficult budget time, the meeting with the Chief will wait until the Board’s meeting with Finance Committee.

Summer mowing price increase – The summer mowing contractor has respectfully requested a price increase, as his prices have been the same for many years, while acknowledging that this may be a bad time. Charlene will collect some figures for the next meeting.

8. Capital item requests – Board members discussed the capital items requested. Computers – The Comcast Tech Fund is approximately the same amount as the cost of the computers (\$19,000 and \$18,000) so it is basically a wash. The Board recommended going forward. Fire truck – The Board would like to support this in the future but not this year. Police Chief’s vehicle – Dave Mathers reported that this can be postponed, as the car has only 54,000 miles, is 6-7 years old,

and is in good shape. Highway pickup – The 2001 pickup is in very rough shape and Dave Mathers recommended replacing it even though it is not on the capital plan. Highway generator – Dave Mathers recommended asking Winston Bancroft to look at it and give his opinion as to what is actually needed. The current generator is in decent shape, though it's a pain to move it and plug it in. Charlene will follow up with Winston Bancroft. Highway garage doors – Dave Mathers reported that it does not make sense to replace sections piecemeal. He would recommend doing the whole thing. Board members agreed with these recommendations.

9. Deep cleaning – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi asked about deep cleaning: (1) when would it get done – only if there is an illness or in any case before everyone goes back to work; and (2) who would do it, e.g., FRCOG, Cintas, or the town to do it on its own. Board members would like to know the cost and what the need is. It was noted that the virus does not last long on surfaces. MEMA funding might pay for cleaning. Charlene will check into what is reimbursable and will look into a cost estimate from FRCOG. It was noted that the contract with the tenants at the James Building provides that they are responsible for cleaning there.

10. Conservation Commission draft bylaw – Board members had concerns about the proposed bylaw and in any case felt that this is not the right time to focus on it. The Board does not plan to put in on the Town Meeting warrant for this year. The Conservation Commission can bring it back; however, Board members had questions and concerns and suggested that a public hearing would be appropriate before it was considered for a Town Meeting article.

11. Town Administrator's report –

Representative Blais – Communities shared their concerns during this conference call.

Legislation – Things are happening at the state level offering possibilities for towns, such as changing tax due dates and waiving interest and fees.

Town staffing update – Staff members are working from home. Staffing levels remain constant in the various departments. There was concern about what would happen if the town lost personnel.

Depot Road culvert – The estimate from engineering firm VHB is that the cost of replacing the culvert is \$1,000,000, and the MassWorks grant is only for \$350,000. The estimate was felt to be very high but the firm is very knowledgeable. The town will meet with VHB and Jim Hyslip, decide whether to find another engineering firm, and decide whether to move forward with the grant.

Documents for meetings – Board members appreciated having documents available in Dropbox.

RFQ for architect – Selectmen Dave Mathers and William Sayre met with Rob Todisco of P3 and were satisfied with the wording that Rob suggested on the square footage. The OPM Steering Committee sent out the RFQ. There has been a lot of interest. Responses are due April 29.

Highway Superintendent comp time – Dave Mathers and William Sayre will meet to discuss how the new Superintendent will be compensated for extra time spent plowing.

School budget possible savings – The Hampshire Regional School District Business Director is working on a letter about what savings there may be from the schools being closed.

12. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to approve the minutes of March 26, 2020, as written. **So voted** (3-0).

13. HCDC Housing Rehab – The Housing Rehab Program Manager at Hilltown CDC requested a letter of support for its Housing Preservation Grant application to the USDA Rural Development. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to write a letter in support of the HCDC Housing Rehab Program. **So voted** (3-0).

Adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Approved:

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Clerk