

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
May 4, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, May 4, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister and William Sayre

Absent: David Mathers

Also present: Dan Banister (Highway Superintendent), Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Zach Holt (Power Options), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Annual report dedication: Mary Bisbee, Evelyn Beals, Amy Bisbee, Angelia Bisbee, Carol Demerski, Margie Dunphy, Maureen Krok, Carol Sanderson, Paul Sanderson

1. Annual Town Report dedication – The 2022 Town Report was dedicated to Roger Bisbee, longtime town resident and dedicated public servant. The chair read the dedication. Mary Bisbee and others shared memories of him. The Mass. Highway Association wants to plant a tree in his honor.

2. Highway – Dan Banister, Highway Superintendent, gave his regular report. There was a big storm March 14-15 and they plowed for 16 hours straight. Some areas had close to 30 inches. They got the roads open and safe, and cleaned up the many fallen or broken trees. They rented a chipper for a month to help. Truck 5, the 2011 F550, has had a lot of problems, requiring nearly \$15,000 in repairs this year. The loader is at the dealer, waiting for the broken axle to be fixed. The dealer expects the Superintendent's truck any day. Street sweeping has begun but the sweeper broke down and is awaiting repair. WRAP money was used to repair broken guardrails on Ashfield Road and to install a new guardrail on East Main Street. Adams Road is scheduled to get the top coat of blacktop in mid-May. The crew worked with Northern Tree to remove or prune 20 trees for two days last week. Filling of potholes with hot patch has been started. The new employee is working out well. Selectman William Sayre visited the shop and reviewed the fleet. In terms of budget, the fuel budget is way overspent. The equipment repair budget has been used a lot, and they are using some of the road maintenance budget for equipment repair. The school flashing signs are waiting for permits from MassDOT. Water was turned on at the ballfield.

3. Electricity – Municipal Aggregation – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo introduced the topic. The town's municipal aggregation program for residents typically has lower rates than National Grid. The contract with Colonial Power, the consultant that the town worked with in the past, has expired. Power Options, which is involved in the solar design for the Public Safety Complex, has an aggregation program for municipal accounts.

Power Options – Zach Holt of Power Options introduced his company. They are a non-profit that helps other non-profits, and they manage a large energy consortium, which results in negotiating power and competitive rates. They are based in Boston and are now expanding to Western Mass. They can offer a rate for municipal accounts that is lower than residential rates. For the 19 or so town accounts, they can offer a rate under 13 cents per kwh, for 18 or 30 months, as compared to

the 19 cents overall that the town has been paying through the residents' aggregation program (13 cents in the spring and 32 cents in the winter). Energy from all-renewable sources costs slightly more, 0.3 cents or about \$100 a month total. The program is open only to municipalities, not to residents. He recommended the 30 month term. The price is for electricity supply only, not for distribution; multiply by two to get the total including distribution charges. If rates go down they can blend and extend, for a lower rate. Nick Caccamo recommended going with the Power Options program, adding that Zach Holt has been a good partner and has been very available. Board members decided on Power Options fixed rate for 31 months, with the renewable sources.

Motion was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign a 31-month electricity supply agreement for municipal accounts, 100% green, with Power Options. **So voted** (2-0).

Motion was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the membership agreement with Power Options.

Colonial Power contract – Nick Caccamo presented the consultant agreement with Colonial Power for managing the town's municipal aggregation program, the same as the previous agreement. There are other people who do similar work and could offer additional services, and the Energy Committee was not completely pleased with Colonial Power and the way the price increases played out a year ago, but they have not made a recommendation. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the Board to sign the consultant agreement with Colonial Power for management of the town's municipal aggregation program and energy-related services, for a term of three years. **So voted** (2-0).

Aggregation – The next question was the aggregation supply agreement through Colonial Power. They recommend at least 24 months. Last time the Board chose the fully green product. The pricing will be refreshed today. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the agreement with Colonial Power for retail supply through purchase of national wind RECS for a period of 24 months. **So voted** (2-0).

4. MVP Action Grant – MVP Action Grant, prepared by the Mill River Greenway Committee and discussed at the last Select Board meeting, was presented, for potentially \$700,000, with a 10% in-kind match. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the Town Administrator to submit the FY24 MVP Action Grant. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the board to sign the letter of support for the FY24 MVP grant. **So voted** (2-0).

5. Appointments – Resignations – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to accept the resignation of Paul Kennedy from the Regional School Committee, Water/Sewer Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Open Space Committee, with regret and thanks for his service. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to appoint Amy Bisbee as full member of the Zoning Board of Appeals through June 30, 2024. **So voted** (2-0).

6. Solect Energy – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the agreement for purchase and installation of a solar energy system at the Public Safety Complex, as revised by Town Counsel. Solect and Power Options usually deal with power purchase agreements, so this is an unusual agreement. The town is farther along in the process than other interested entities but caution is recommended. Power Options has been a good partner through this. The agreement may be brought forward for approval at the next meeting.

7. IT Consulting RFP – Four proposals for IT consulting were received, from Northeast IT Systems, Inc., Retrofit Technologies, Paragus Strategic IT, and Suzor IT. Dave Martin of the Technology Committee and Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reviewed them. The process was to do a comparative evaluation and then to look at the price proposals. The highest scores were for Northeast IT and Retrofit, but they are not affordable with the town’s budget of \$45,000 annually for IT services. Paragus and Suzor are both affordable and both had the same score. The plan is to do interviews, as well as checking references. In the town’s experience with Paragus, some things have gone really well and some things have room for improvement. Nick Caccamo plans to bring a recommendation to the next meeting.

8. FY24 budget – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the current version of the FY24 budget. Smith Vocational School, at \$531,000, has gone down \$69,000. The Board went through the budget line by line, evaluating and discussing each one. They supported the requested pay increases and were concerned that town employees are underpaid. There was discussion about the role of the UMass Wage Study, and mention of step increases. They supported the change to full-time Fire Chief. They would like to have a forum on the budget so that residents can be fully informed before Town Meeting. Free cash has been certified at \$1.2 million. There was discussion about using it to offset the tax rate, putting some in stabilization, paying off some Public Safety Complex debt, and funding capital requests.

9. Annual Town Meeting warrant –

Articles and capital requests – They reviewed the requests for FY24, including cemetery work, vehicles for Fire, Highway, and Police, Haydenville Library repairs, and hybrid meeting capacity, and they considered moving up the FY25 request for Meekins Library mini-splits as time-sensitive.

Citizens’ petition – A citizens’ petition asked that the town formally adopt the Land Acknowledgment Statement that appeared in the 250th Anniversary brochure. This would become part of the bylaws and would be posted on the website.

Agricultural preservation restriction, 96 Mountain Street – The Department of Agricultural Resources has asked for \$20,500 for a 5% contribution for the purchase of land on Mountain Street.

10. Town Administrator’s report -

Vacation – Nick Caccamo requested vacation days in May.

11. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of March 23, March 23 executive session, and April 6 as presented. After some discussion and clarification, **motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to approve the minutes of April 20 as amended. **So voted** (2-0).

12. Warrant – Chair Denise Banister will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP23-23 for \$143,383.45 and expense warrant W23-23 for \$445,452.99, effective 5/10/23.

Documents used

Annual Town Report Dedication

MVP Action Grant application

Highway Superintendent report

Power Options information

Colonial Power agreement

Colonial Power aggregation information

Resignation letter

Letter of interest

Solect Energy purchase and installation agreement

IT consulting proposals

FY24 budget

Annual Town Meeting warrant items

Minutes

Adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk