

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
June 18, 2020

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, June 18, 2020, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Denise Banister, William Sayre and David Mathers

Also present: Brenda Lessard (Town Clerk and OPM Steering Committee), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Paul Rudof (Moderator), Daryl Springman (Deputy Police Chief), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

For Chapter 61 item: Adam Christie, Paul Fenn, Daniel Kinsey

OPM Steering Committee: Jim Ayres, Kim Boas, Jean O'Neil, Rob Todisco (P3)

1. Chapter 61A – removal/conversion – 5 Hatfield Street – The chair noted that Penelope Johnson of 5 Hatfield Street had applied to remove 24.75 acres from Chapter 61A for a lease for a solar project. Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that all town boards and the abutting landowners had been notified about the proposed Chapter 61A conversion. The Planning Board said they had no objections, and an abutter asked questions and had no objections. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) that the town not exercise its right of first refusal on the acreage on the Johnson property at 5 Hatfield Street. **So voted** (3-0). Charlene will follow up with the applicant. Later in the meeting two residents, who had received letters as abutters, asked about it and expressed concerns, especially about cutting down trees and overdevelopment of the agricultural land in town. The Board explained that the only question before the Selectmen was whether the town wished to buy the land. The Zoning Board of Appeals had held a public hearing last summer before it issued a Special Permit for the project, and that would have been the time to raise concerns and objections. One Board member expressed sympathy with the concern about overdevelopment and suggested that the Planning Board might want to look at the question of solar installations town-wide.

2. Quorum – The Board met with the Town Moderator about a possible reduction in the quorum required for Town Meeting as allowed under recent legislation relating to the COVID-19 emergency. There was concern that publicizing a reduced quorum might lead to a lack of turnout, but it was pointed out that passing the budget is really crucial. Other discussion focused on safety issues such as the microphone and the paper handouts. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to reduce the quorum for Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting on June 29 to 25. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye, DB aye). Town Clerk Brenda Lessard will notify the Attorney General's office.

3. Fire Department – Deputy Chief Daryl Springman gave the department's regular report. There have been 176 incidents so far this year, half medical and half fire-related, about the same as usual. Hose testing was just completed, and some failed, which is normal; hoses will be replaced as necessary in July. Engine testing is coming soon. There is concern about Engine 2, they are still trying to figure out the problem. Engine 3, a smaller truck for medical calls, needed a new exhaust system after the old one fell off. Inspections are happening now and the

department is playing catch-up; numbers are average. Staffing is 7-8 active members; they are trying to do recruitment but there is not a lot of interest. They are mourning the loss of Firefighter John Pope, who passed away recently. They have started drilling again in person. They have had radio problems for years. They borrowed a repeater but it is not available long-term. They have been talking about getting their own repeater, at a cost of \$25-30,000. In terms of capital planning, they are going for refurbishment of Engine 4 but are concerned that they may have to replace it rather than refurbish it if the schedule is pushed too far off. Board members would like to see something written up about it. The department has developed a new master plan to use smaller more versatile trucks that would suit the town better and cost the town less money.

4. Speeding on Kingsley Avenue – There has been a lot of conversation on Facebook about speeding on Kingsley Avenue. Board discussion included speed bumps, police presence, recording speeds unobtrusively, a sign that flashes the speed, and getting advice from an expert. Williams Sayre will talk with the Police Chief about possibilities.

5. Audit –

Management letter issues – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi presented the auditor's management letter and the town's responses. Most of the issues are in the Town Accountant's office. Charlene explained that the previous accountant had made a lot of mistakes that were not caught until much later, there was new accounting software, the new accountant came in and had a steep learning curve with little training available for municipal accounting, and the town's accounts are more complicated than in other towns, because of trust funds, enterprise funds, and school funds. She said the accountant is excellent, and is working with former experienced and trusted accountant Joyce Muka to correct the problems.

Representation letter – Charlene explained that this is the annual letter from the town saying that it has provided all the information and it is all correct. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the representation letter. **So voted** (3-0).

6. Appointments – Historical Commission – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to appoint Ed O'Neil to the Historical Commission, for a term to expire June 30, 2023. **So voted** (3-0).

7. Budget and capital planning – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi reported that the school's budget and capital item were supported by Finance Committee. Similarly Finance supported the Select Board's recommendation of moving forward with buying the new highway truck by borrowing. She reported that the elevator contract amounts had increased after the town budget was finalized.

8. Town Meeting revolving accounts – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi proposed increasing three of the revolving accounts. All money for fees and inspections goes in and gets paid to the inspectors, and the limits were exceeded in 2019. She proposed increasing the Electrical Inspector account from \$7,500 to \$10,000, the Plumbing Inspector account from \$3,500 to \$4,500, and the Fire Department account from \$3,000 to \$4,500. She will make a motion at Town Meeting.

9. Planning for Town Meeting –The Board will meet right before the meeting, at 4:30. Dave Mathers will present the dedication for the Board. Denise Banister will plan to move most of the articles. Audience members can use microphones up front or a microphone on a boom. Microphones are being supplied by Collin Black. The Town Administrator and Highway Superintendent will work on power supply and extension cords. A school bathroom will be available and the custodian will wipe it down. Charlene will consult Board of Health and Health Agent.

10. OPM Steering Committee – architect recommendation – The Committee and consultant P3 reported that they had had a good response to the RFQ, receiving 15 responses, all very capable firms. They interviewed four and selected Juster Pope Frazier, a local Northampton firm that seemed best suited to the project, that came with an open mind, and felt like a great match for the town. It was noted that not all of the town agrees with the current programming. The architect will revisit the program outline and bring their expertise. Recommendations will come back to the committee and the Board of Selectmen. The architect is strong about trying to keep the Helen E. James Building. There was a concern to look at options and cost effectiveness. The committee noted that they want to do their due diligence by looking at the Helen E. James. The next steps are to review Town Counsel's proposed revisions to the contract and to have the consultant negotiate the price. There may be a special meeting to sign the contract so that it doesn't have to wait till the next regular meeting. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to accept the OPM Steering Committee's recommendation of Juster Pope Frazier as architect for the Public Safety Complex. **So voted** (3-0).

11. Emails for town officials – It was reported that it is highly recommended that town officials have town emails rather than using their own emails for town business. The cost is \$5.50 per email per month, i.e., about \$200 for just the three Select Board members for a year. It is so costly that most small communities don't do it. If there is a public records request, the town relies on the official to provide copies of emails, and should a case go to court, the official's whole email account may have to be turned over. A shared email account runs the risk of improperly communicating with each other. It was agreed that two Board members do not use email for sensitive business, preferring to communicate by phone; a town account will be set up for the third.

12. Meeting time – Board members decided to keep the meeting time at 9 a.m.

13. Town Administrator's report –

Staffing – Signs are being put up (wash hands, wear masks, wipe down areas); Charlene will be training all employees.

Businesses out of compliance – She reported that the Health Agent spoke to a business where the staff are not wearing masks and not following other rules. The Health Agent is dealing with it, in coordination with the state Department of Public Health. Live entertainment is also not allowed yet, because it brings more people into an area and creates more risk.

Peaceful protests in town – There have been several protests in town bring attention to Black Lives Matter. Police is handling well – officers are available but not engaging. The Board will ask the Police Chief for a copy of the police policy on use of force.

Upcoming events – Residents are reaching out to the Health Agent and asking how to do things properly under the Governor’s reopening phase orders. Helen Molloy’s 100th birthday drive-by is Saturday, June 27. **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) that the Board of Selectmen wishes Helen Molloy a happy birthday and will request a certificate from the Governor’s office, in recognition of the 100th birthday of the town’s oldest citizen. **So voted** (3-0).

Outdoor seating – Outdoor seating for food and drink has been approved for five area businesses.

Enterprise funds – There have been conversations with Water/Sewer about certified earnings and a policy for what should be retained.

Permit for tent – Charlene has gotten a permit for the tent for Town Meeting.

Police budget – With all the national discussion about defunding the police, Board members wanted to say that they fully support the Police Department and the Police budget. The Police Department meets the guidelines for community policing, and the officers are well trained and professional.

14. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of June 4, June 10, and June 11 as presented.

15. Warrant – Dave Mathers will review and sign the warrant.

16. Miscellaneous –

Rain date for Town Meeting – The weather will be watched, and the meeting can be moved from June 29 to June 30 by the Moderator three days before the scheduled date.

Public safety complex process – Further discussion included starting with a kickoff meeting and sharing of concerns; community is not yet in agreement. The town’s economic situation may change but the design can be held until the town can afford it.

Adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Chapter 61A removal request

Auditor Management Letter and town’s response

Audit representation letter

Letter of interest

Minutes