

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
January 27, 2022

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, January 27, 2022, by video conference call. The chair called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Present: David Mathers, Denise Banister and William Sayre

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Daryl Springman (Deputy Fire Chief), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Denise Wickland (Police Chief)

Reporters: Bera Dunau (Gazette), Shaw Israel Izikson (Country Journal)

1. Police Chief – Police Chief Denise Wickland made her regular report. She said the budget is in good shape, calls are in a lull, and they made it through the first storm without major incidents. They have an ongoing struggle with staffing; she has put out a call in-house for a full-time officer, and if there is no response she will explore hiring someone who doesn't have academy training. Her budget includes a separate \$17,000 line item for Police Academy or Bridge Academy training, as previously discussed. Three officers will come up for bridge training in 2023. She reminded the Board that all officers are temporarily certified by the state but if her part-time officers want to remain officers, they will need to do the Bridge Academy. The rest of the budget is level-funded. There was some discussion about the state program for free radar signs. Concerning the State Police Dispatch Services Memorandum of Understanding, she recommended that the town sign the renewal agreement. **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the State Police Dispatch Services MOU. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye). Chief Wickland has been in touch with the Public Safety Complex architect and is excited about the new building, though acknowledging that space is tight and the town will outgrow it.

2. Fire Department – Deputy Chief Daryl Springman gave the department's regular report. He reported that the labor line will run out. Their call volume is up a little – they consistently see some small growth every year. They got a grant, and are applying for another; in addition, two competitive grants are coming up for replacing engines though they haven't had luck with them in the past. Inspections are taking a lot of time and they are training an additional person to assist in inspections. The PPE situation is fine. They are always looking for new firefighters; with normal attrition and retirements they expect to hit a dip. Suggestions included putting the need on the town signs and holding an open house at the new public safety complex. They plan to replace brush truck Engine 3 with a multipurpose truck that is better for their current uses. Engine 4 is slated for replacement but has been doing OK. The Hatfield Fire Department, in conjunction with Westhampton, has its own radio repeating system, and has given permission to Williamsburg to use it, at no cost. A suggestion was made to use the Northampton Building Inspection department for inspections, but the types of inspections the Fire Department needs to do may not fall under the agreement with Northampton, and it is a huge benefit to firefighters to be familiar with the buildings in town.

3. Elections – Town Caucus – Board members will sign the Town Caucus Call for Saturday, March 5, at 11 a.m. at the Highway Garage.
4. Municipal aggregation – The town’s municipal aggregation program, designed to bundle electricity users and to get a better rate, is set to expire in the spring. The current Energy Committee members were not yet part of the committee the last time around. Town Administrator Nick Caccamo will follow up with committee member Paul Fenn, who is very familiar with these programs, and with the Energy Committee. The current aggregation supplier recommends moving quickly because energy prices are volatile.
5. Economic self-assessment, scope of work – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the proposed scope of work for the grant-funded Economic Self-Assessment being handled by the Donahue Institute. The steps involve analysis of existing conditions, community engagement and development of a questionnaire, analysis of the town’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), followed by the final report with recommendations in June or July. A small working group from the town, consisting of the Town Administrator and four other members, will work in parallel to look at land use and zoning issues. He is personally interested in land use and is confident that he has a good handle on time management and will have the time to be involved.
6. MassDOT speed boards pilot program – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the MassDOT speed boards pilot program, which will give the town one new speed board of the town’s choosing, at no cost, whether a trailer set-up or an in-place solar power sign board. He will work with MassDOT, the Highway Superintendent and the Police Chief.
7. One-Stop grant funding – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo explained that the state’s One-Stop grant funding program, launched last year, tries to put state funding opportunities in one place so that communities don’t need to navigate different funding agencies. The expression of interest phase is now open for the new round of funding, and communities can express two areas of interest. Discussion included town road construction, Mill River Greenway goat path construction, and brownfields. He will reach out to appropriate committees and departments for suggestions and come back next meeting with a list from which the Board can choose two.
8. Budget – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the Select Board budget worksheet. The general expense line is almost depleted, in part because it was used for the unanticipated cost of Zoom. The format will be clarified to separate the lines approved at past town meetings from the Selectmen’s normal budget lines.
9. Vacancies – The Board considered several expected vacancies in elected positions, Moderator, Regional School Committee and Local School Committee. Some possible names were mentioned. The Moderator is a very important position but not very time-consuming.
10. Licenses – Live entertainment – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to approve live entertainment, a D.J., for the Burgy Bullets on Saturday, February 12, from 5 to 11:30 p.m. **So voted** (DB aye, WS aye, DM aye).

11. Town Administrator's report –

Covid update – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the omicron variant seems to have peaked but there are still new cases. Mask compliance in the town offices continues to be good, and there have been no difficult incidents. One employee is working completely from home, with options to accommodate the public. Departments are at full strength and working as normal.

Board of Health meeting – The Board of Health voted to continue the mask order to at least March 1 and will re-evaluate at that time. The Board delivered the order and signage to town businesses.

Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority bill in legislature – At the hearing yesterday on the bill proposed by Rep. Natalie Blais, HB 3821, creating a Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority, on the model of the Mass. School Building Authority, Nick gave the town's comments. It is unclear if it will become law.

Wage Classification study – The team from UMass Boston has received completed questionnaires and conducted interviews with employees. The next step is market analysis and they have sent the town a tentative list of municipalities in Hampshire, Franklin and Hampden counties and asked for feedback. They continue to be flexible and have done this type of study a number of times.

Budget FY23 – In the FY23 budget process, the letter has gone out to the departments asking for their budgets, and as always they are asked not to include wage increases, which will be addressed later in the process, by the results of the wage classification study or by the usual cost-of-living increase.

Foothills office space agreement – The Foothills Health District voted to pay \$200 a month retroactively to July 1, 2021, to support general utilities, heat, electricity, internet. They recently gave the town a check for just under \$7,000, to cover that plus phones and email addresses, which will go into the general fund. Concerning the bathroom adjacent to the Board of Health office, the Fire Chief did not like the proposal of a partition between the two spaces, for safety reasons. The bathroom is accessible when the Foothills staff is present, but they want to keep their office locked at night to protect their confidential files. Further brainstorming is needed to make the bathroom available after hours. Suggestions included giving keys to committees as needed, having a key available in the Planning Board room, and putting a notice on the room reservation request form.

Library roof inspection – The planned inspection was cancelled because of weather and will be rescheduled.

James Building abutter issue – The back line of the James Building property is in question, since it was assumed to go to the meandering brook, and the restoration plantings (required by the Conservation Commission) planned for that area may not be on town property. There is \$5,000 available for a survey of the parcel. Nick will reach out to Hill Engineers for cost information.

Boston Post cane – The replica cane, in a base with a properly inscribed plaque, is ready for delivery to cane recipient Paula Wentworth.

12. Annual report dedication – The Board decided on the dedication of the annual report.

13. Correspondence – Correspondence included a copy of a DEP letter to the owners of 74 Village Hill Road about responsibility for lead abatement.

14. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to approve the minutes of January 13 as presented. **So voted** (DM aye, WS aye, DB aye).

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

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Town Caucus Call

Economic self-assessment scope of work

Select Board budget

Live entertainment application

Minutes

Adjourned at 11:39 a.m.

Approved:

Clerk