

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
January 16, 2020

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, January 16, 2020, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Denise Banister (until 7:05), William Sayre and David Mathers

Also present: Dan Banister (Acting Highway Superintendent), Nick Dines (Mill River Greenway Committee), Charlene Nardi (Town Administrator), Thomas Por (Tree Warden), Shelby Maeri (reporter, Country Journal), Dillon Sussman (Dodson & Flinker), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant), Denise Wickland (Police Chief)

1. Tree Warden – Newly appointed Tree Warden Thomas Por met with the Board. Members felt he was well qualified and thanked him for stepping forward. He said he has reviewed the trees on the list for attention and plans to work closely with Acting Highway Superintendent Dan Banister. He also offered to think about the future, including doing a survey of trees and thinking about preventive work to save trees. Other discussion included noting that the Tree Warden can be helpful to the public in looking at diseased trees on their property, and that National Grid is good at addressing trees that could affect the company’s wires.

2. Highway Superintendent position – Town Administrator Charlene Nardi said that the Board is authorized to hire and promote, and is required to post internally before doing an advertised search. Denise Banister recused herself from the discussion. Charlene was asked to speak to the current crew members to see if there is interest. She said that the job description, which was revised seven years ago, provides for a working superintendent, with no comp time but flex time, and an increased salary to compensate for the fact that there is no comp time and no overtime. The two Board members will plan to review the job description, consider the salary, and decide on posting internally or promoting without posting, at a special meeting on February 19 at 1:30.

3. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Joint Application Authorization – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the CDBG Joint Application Authorization. **So voted** (3-0).

4. Massachusetts state Formula Grant for COA – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to authorize the chair to sign the standard contract form for the Council on Aging Formula Grant in the amount of \$7101.38. **So voted** (3-0).

5. Electricity municipal aggregation consultant agreement – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to approve the Consultant Agreement for Management of the Town’s Municipal Aggregation Program and Energy-Related Services. **So voted** (3-0). Town Administrator Charlene Nardi pointed out that there is no financial obligation for the town; the consultant is paid by the electricity provider, not by the town.

6. Letter to Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) about District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding for study of regional fire services, requested by local towns – **Motion** was made and seconded (WS/DM) to authorize the chair to sign the letter to the Pioneer

Valley Planning Commission in support of the DLTA grant application for study of hilltown regional fire emergency services. **So voted** (3-0). Charlene noted that the town is not involved in the grant.

7. Elections – Town Caucus – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to set the Caucus for Monday, March 9, 7 p.m., in the Town Offices auditorium. **So voted** (3-0).

8. Appointments – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to appoint Dan Banister to the Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation Commission and also appoint him to be the town’s Trench Permit Granting Authority, terms to June 30, 2020. **So voted** (3-0).

9. Police – Police Chief Denise Wickland gave her regular report. The department is interviewing possible part-time officers and hopes to hire one or more. The budget is in good shape. There has been a 37% increase in calls from the Dispatch Center; calls are always going up. Incidents have included several arrests for Operating Under the Influence of alcohol and drugs, a trafficking heroin arrest, a fatal overdose, vandalism at the school by teenagers who will do community service in lieu of prosecution, and counterfeit \$10 bills. She said that the Highway Department helped the Police by installing a second gun and evidence safe. She has no objection to potential cannabis shops in town, since they are regulated by the state and have requirements they need to meet. She mentioned a possible need for police officers to control traffic flow, as in Northampton. There can be further conversation when there is more information. Her vehicle is up for replacement and she is getting quotes. They discussed colors and marking of vehicles.

10. MVP report – Dillon Sussman, consultant, and Nick Dines of the Mill River Greenway Committee presented the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) report draft. A public listening session is planned for February 6. Some important pieces are: to be sure certain steps like water mains and sewer pipes are included when Route 9 is redone by MassDOT, and to have extra design funding for the public safety complex to offset work needed to make it less vulnerable to flooding, as well as doing work upstream in the Mill River to slow the flow of water and prevent flooding. Future action grants are based on what is included in the MVP report. Grants are generally \$25,000 up to \$200,000, and require a 25% in-kind or cash match. For a long-range master plan, Dillon Sussman suggested contracting with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, where he used to work. For administration, Nick Dines recommended Mill River Greenway’s model of having a volunteer bookkeeper and having administration done by the committee for all their grants. The revised MVP report incorporating the Select Board’s comments and the feedback from the public listening session will come back to the Select Board for approval.

11. Town Administrator’s report –

School article for Special Town Meeting – The School Committee has requested \$30,000 due to three new students with special educational needs. (Actual cost increase is \$93,000 but is offset by other revenue.) Finance Committee supports the request.

OPM Steering Committee article – After meeting with the Finance Committee and hearing concerns, the OPM Steering Committee changed the proposed article from \$385,000 to \$180,000, reducing the scope, with the plan to go to a Special Town Meeting in fall of 2020 to

ask for the balance of funds for the project including construction. The OPM Steering Committee is expected to bring its recommendation to the Select Board's January 30 meeting. Highway Road Maintenance account – There was initially concern that 72% of Highway account 001-422-5400 has been spent at 48% of the way through the year, but Charlene pointed out that the account is for road maintenance and the majority of the road work is done in the first half of the year.

Memorandum of Understanding with Teachers' Union on health insurance – She reported that a tentative agreement was reached on the union's charge that the school committee and the town did not follow the prescribed process. She will sign the MOU on behalf of the town.

Hampshire Regional budget – Charlene went to the budget meeting and gave feedback. They are looking at capital items that they need to address. The full budget picture is not known but they do not anticipate huge increases in any budget area.

Meeting of the five towns about school budget – Charlene reported that she has reached out to the five towns in the school union asking for the five Select Boards to get together. She has heard talk that Southampton is thinking about leaving the union. She has not had many responses yet. Timing may be tight for the budget for this year; it may be better to plan to meet in the spring or after Town Meeting.

UMass Vehicle Fuel Consumption Study – Charlene presented the UMass proposed vehicle fuel consumption study, which the Energy Committee recommends. Equipment to track fuel would be installed on vehicles for a year and department heads would be interviewed about vehicle use. She asked Police, Fire and Highway about it and no one objected to it. It was noted that the Highway Department's excavator came with a similar tracking system and the information was interesting. The other two towns in the study are Leverett and Becket. Charlene's concerns were that what works in flat communities doesn't necessarily work in rural hilltowns and that she needs to be sure that the town will not incur obligations. The general sense was that the study might provide interesting and useful information and that the town should go ahead as long as it is not obligated to do anything.

Upcoming meetings – She had provided a list of upcoming meetings for the Select Board.

FRCOG Accounting Program – Charlene reported on the recent meeting with FRCOG that she and William Sayre attended. The program is dealing with a number of challenges, including a lack of trained municipal accountants, turnover, the need for increased salaries and health insurance, staff burnout, and towns with complicated issues. FRCOG is proposing a 21% fee increase. They are also proposing having the accountants work in Greenfield rather than going to each town; this would require only a 17% increase. Charlene felt that it is important to have the accountant in the town. The 21% increase comes to a \$6,485; FRCOG has been asked if this can be phased in over a two-year period so that it isn't a big hit in one year. She feels that it is a good program and there are not a lot of options for the town. Board members agreed, saying that the amount of money is a tiny part of the budget and that the town does not have the necessary expertise.

Name of Board of Selectmen – The Board asked if it is time to change the name of the Board of Selectmen to Select Board. The state Select Boards' Association is changing its name, as are other towns. Charlene would consult with Town Counsel. It would be done by an article at Town Meeting. This will be considered at a future meeting when the third member of the Board is present.

Nash Hill Road – A resident expressed concern about speed and a crosswalk. Charlene had explained about the proposal for the East Main Street crosswalk and will ask Highway to put up an additional speed limit sign in the spring. She added that the resident said information on the town speed limits is available online. Charlene will reach out to the state for information.

Welcome to Williamsburg signs – The town has received a proposal for new signs from Bob Godfrey, with no dollar amount included. Other suggestions included making a frame, as John Hoogstraten has often done for Woodland Trails, and have a local artist repaint the existing sign, as Lisa Tucker has recently done for the sign in front of the Town Offices, which has attracted a lot of positive comments. The account for the signs currently has \$1100. Maybe one sign could be done a year. Discussion included not wanting the signs to be down for months, that they don't look good now, and that it would be good for the artist to be able to work at home on their own time. Charlene will look into the feasibility.

12. Correspondence – Correspondence included a letter from Leonard Kopelman, former partner with the town's legal firm and now at a new firm, asking for the town's business; a letter from MassDOT announcing a Chapter 90 supplemental amount of \$18,757; and a copy of a letter from Town Counsel to the Treasurer on a tax title matter.

13. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of December 19 as presented. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of January 2 as presented. **So voted** (2-0). **Motion** was made and seconded (DM/WS) to approve the minutes of January 9 as presented. **So voted** (2-0).

14. Warrant – Approved and signed the warrants: payroll warrant WP20-16 for \$110,127.09, and expense warrant W20-16 for \$555,533.75, payable 1/22/20.

15. Miscellaneous –

January 23 MassWorks grant announcement event – The Board discussed who would be present.

Highway – Charlene reported that the road temperature sensor, currently on the Highway Superintendent's truck, and which had previously served on other trucks, has broken and a replacement has been ordered.

Finance Committee meeting – The Board talked about yesterday's Finance Committee meeting focusing on articles for the Special Town Meeting.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

MVP report

CDBG Joint Application Authorization

State Formula Grant for COA

Electricity Municipal Aggregation Consultant Agreement

Letter to PVPC about DLTA funding for study of regional fire services

Minutes

Correspondence

Warrant and expense report

Adjourned 9:12 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk