

**Selectboard  
Meeting Minutes  
March 13, 2019  
Open Session  
4:00 pm**

The open session of the Selectboard of the Town of Whately was called to order on March 13, 2019 at 4:03 p.m. by Selectboard Chair, Jonathan Edwards. Also, present were Selectboard members Frederick Orloski, Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Town Administrator Brian Domina and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes from February 27, 2019.

**Comments from the public**

No public comment

**Scheduled Appointments**

**Peggy Macleod** – Peggy Macleod (Director of Western Mass Pollinator Networks) discussed the new non-profit all volunteer organization, Western Mass Pollinator Networks. This network helps expand pollinator habitats and educate the public about addressing the worldwide phenomenon of insects/pollinator decline presently taking place. Peggy presented the Board with Great Barrington's Pollinator Action Plan and the Town of Plainfield's Annual Town Meeting Minutes dated May 6, 2017. Western Mass Pollinator Network is working alongside Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to apply for a grant from the Commonwealth in order to create a pollinator habitat corridor through/across Franklin County. Peggy stated that if the Town of Whately is interested, the Selectboard will need to provide a letter of support before the grant application due date. The Board had a brief discussion regarding Town owned land, pollinator sites, plants involved, and how corridors could affect the Town's daily operations. The Board requested getting additional information from Peggy that can be forwarded to the Agricultural Commission and the Highway Department. No action was taken at this time.

**New Business**

**Special Town Meeting (March 27, 2019)** – Brian read the warrant articles proposed for the Special Town Meeting on March 27, 2019 at 7:00 pm:

**Article 1:** To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to G.L. c. 44B, to appropriate and transfer from the Community Preservation Fund Unreserved Fund Balance **\$50,000.00**, to make an additional payment on the one year note for the Town Hall Historic Rehabilitation Project, or take any other action relative thereto.

**Article 2:** To see if the Town will vote, pursuant to G.L. c. 44B, to appropriate and transfer from the Community Preservation Fund Unreserved Fund Balance **\$550.00**, to pay for the issuance costs of a

one year note for the Town Hall Historic Rehabilitation Project, or take any other action relative thereto.

**Article 3:** To see if the Town will vote to transfer the sum of **\$500.00** from available funds to pay the unpaid longevity bonus of a town employee from the past two fiscal years (FY2017 and FY2018), or to take any other action relative thereto.

The Selectboard signed the Special Town Meeting Warrant for March 27, 2019 at 7:00 pm as written.

**Real estate technical assistance grant through MassDevelopment** – Brian informed the Board that MassDevelopment has a technical assistance grant available to address specific economic development challenges for cities and towns. The Center School and the Dimaio properties would be appropriate properties for this grant. This grant would help the Town understand the development potential of these properties. This is a reimbursement grant, which means that MassDevelopment would want their money back that they invested in this program, if the Town gains revenue from it. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the program and the timeline of this grant. Jonathan stated that working with professional planners would be helpful and would give the Town a different set of eyes on these properties. The only cost to the Town would be if revenue is generated from the eventual sale, MassDevelopment would get a percentage of that revenue back. The Board stated that the Housing Committee came to the Board a few years ago and said that they are not interested in these two properties. If this grant is approved, the Town would receive assistance in July of 2019. Brian stated that a letter from the Selectboard Chair might be needed. Jonathan made a motion to submit two grant applications by Friday's deadline. Motion was seconded. All in Favor.

**Trench safety policy** - Brian informed the Board that this will be one of many policies that the Town will need to adopt under the new OSHA regulations. The Town received a grant to purchase a trench box and this policy must be adopted before the trench box purchase is made. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the use of the trench box, trench permits, and training courses. Brian informed the Board that certain Town employees will attend the appropriate training courses to become certified as a "competent person". Joyce made a motion to adopt the proposed trench safety policy. Motion was seconded. All in Favor.

**Seasonal liquor license renewal** - Quonquont Farm – The Board signed the seasonal liquor license for Quonquont Farm.

**Outdoor recreational trail networks** – Brian informed the Board that Paul Newlin requested that the Board table this discussion until the next Selectboard meeting on March 27, 2019.

## **FY 2020 Budget**

**General Government budgets** – Brian presented the Board with some of the general government FY20 budgets. General discussion occurred over the various parts of the General Government budget with more focused discussion on the Town Buildings and Selectboard budgets. Brian discussed certain line item increases and additions to the budget. Brian informed the Board that the Town has five months of electricity usage at the Town Hall which averages around \$700.00 a month.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding the potential for solar and Eversource's solar fees for municipalities.

**FY 2020 recommendations of the Personnel Committee** – Brian read the Personnel Committee's FY20 recommendations, as follows:

1. The Personnel Committee voted to recommend a 2.5% cost of living increase for fiscal year 2020 based on the applicable consumer price index and other local governments/agencies.
2. The Personnel Committee voted to recommend an increase in the Administrative Assistant position from 24 hours per week to 30 hours per week for eighteen weeks. The purpose of the increase is to ensure adequate staffing during the busiest time of year (e.g. budget season).
3. The Personnel Committee voted to recommend changes to the Holiday section of the Personnel Policy that would provide employees with a % day (4 hour) Christmas Eve Day holiday only when it falls on a weekday.
4. The Personnel Committee voted to recommend changes to the Highway Superintendent job description that make the position responsible for all town-owned buildings under the control and direction of the Selectboard. The Committee also recommended that with the additional responsibilities being added to the job description that the pay be increased by \$87 dollars per week (\$4,500 annual increase).
5. The Personnel committee voted to recommend the Town Buildings Custodian job description.

The Personnel Committee is still discussing a requested salary increase from the Chief of Police (3% increase) and researching whether the Water Superintendent's salary is too low.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding the changes to the Administrative Assistant position, Christmas Eve day holiday, Highway Superintendent job description, and the Town Building Custodian job position. The Board stated that the Highway Superintendent's job description should be treated as a draft until there has been a full year in the new position. Brian stated that the job descriptions would need to be approved by the Selectboard along with numbers 2,3,4, and 5. Fred made a motion to approve items 2,3,4 and 5. Motion was seconded. All in Favor.

**Police Department staffing levels for FY 2020** - Chief Sevigne presented the Board with his proposal for an additional full-time Police Officer position. Chief Sevigne gave a lengthy outline of his proposal. Chief Sevigne discussed Whately's growth over the last few years and the anticipated future growth which includes the opening of potential marijuana locations and new building developments. Chief Sevigne's discussion focused on the police's call statistics, administrative work load, police logs, and the advantages of adding an additional full-time police officer vs. an administrative staff person. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the definition of a "police call", the administrative work load, assistance from the State Police, and the current Police Department staffing.

The Board requested additional information about surrounding towns from the Chief of Police. Information the Board is looking for has to do with numbers of police officers and whether the

surrounding towns have an administrative assistant. The Board also requested a detailed police log from the Chief and asked what administrative tasks are performed on a weekly basis? Jonathan Edwards stated that he would rather have a conversation about adding a 20 hour a week Administrative Assistant for the Police Department rather than a full-time officer. Fred questioned whether having the full-time police officer work 2 weekend days and 2 or 3 weekdays would reduce the need for part-time officers on the weekend days and how would this effect the total personnel budget? No action will be taken until the additional information requested is provided.

### **Town Administrator Updates**

Brian informed the Board that MassDOT and Nouria Energy (Whately Diner) have no interest in partnering with the Town to install electric charging stations.

Brian informed the Board that NUPRO has submitted its notice to terminate the lease for the Town Office space as it has found a larger warehouse in Deerfield.

Brian informed the Board that the MA Downtown Initiative Grant for “branding” was not funded.

Brian informed the Board that the proposed Chapter 90 funding for FY20 is \$144,811 pending legislative approval.

Brian presented the Board with a letter from the Historical Commission requesting that it be involved in the town projects that impact the Center Historic District (sidewalks/crosswalks, veterans memorial). Joyce questioned what a good mechanism is to include the Historical Commission. Brian stated that he will communicate with the Chair, Donna Wiley, as appropriate.

Brian informed the Board that in regards to the Chestnut Plain Road sidewalk and crosswalk reconstruction project, MassDOT has an engineering pre-qualification requirement. MassDOT needs to pre-qualify the Town’s engineer before the engineer can do any design work for MassDOT funded projects. Engineers are required to have a certain level of certifications to design highways and roads. There is a waiver process that the Town can apply for. Brian stated that he will find out what the waiver process entails.

Items not anticipated within forty-eight (48) hours of the meeting - none

Adjourn – 6:21 pm a motion to adjourn was made

**Next Meeting Dates: March 27, 2019 and April 10, 2019**

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

**Document List on File in the Selectboard Office**

Meeting Minutes dated February 27, 2019

Email from Peggy MacLeod, Director of Western Mass Pollinator Network, dated February 15, 2019

Peggy MacLeod's Business Card

Town of Plainfield, MA Annual Town Meeting Minutes dated May 6 ,2017

Great Barrington Pollinator Action Plan Dated Winter 2018

MassDevelopment Real Estate Services Technical Assistance Call for Proposals FY20

Excavation and Trenching Safety – Template Program for Public Works dated 2018

Selectboard Administration Budget FY20

Town Building Operations Budget FY20

Personnel Committee COLA FY20 Memorandum

Personnel Committee Memorandum RE: Administrative Assistant Increase in Hours dated February 21, 2019

Christmas Eve Holiday Proposal

Town of Whately's Highway & Building Superintendent's proposed revised job description dated March 13, 2019

Town Buildings Custodian proposed job description dated March 13, 2019

Letter from Chief Sevigne RE: FY20 Request for one additional Full-time Police Officer dated January 24, 2019

Email from Paul Belanger, Nouria Energy, dated March 08, 2019

Email from Jeff Ethier, NUPRO, dated February 28, 2019

Letter from the Department of Housing & Community Development dated February 15, 2019

Letter from MassDOT dated February 28, 2019

Letter from the Historical Commission dated February 26, 2019