

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
October 26, 2023
Town Offices
Hybrid Session via Zoom
6:00 pm**

The open session of the Selectboard of the Town of Whately was called to order on October 26, 2023, at 6:01 pm by Chairperson Fred Baron. Also present were Selectboard members Julie Waggoner, and Joyce Palmer Fortune (Via Zoom). Town Administrator Brian Domina, Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy, Historical Society President Neal Abraham (Via Zoom) and Sylvie Jensen (Via Zoom) were also present.

1. Meeting Minutes: Review and vote whether to approve the meeting minutes from October 10, 2023

Joyce made a motion to accept the minutes from October 10, 2023. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

2. Vendor & Payroll Warrants: Review past vendor and payroll warrants

No Comments

3. Public Comment: Listen to comments from the public related to items not listed on the agenda

No Comments

4. Scheduled Appointments:

None

5. COVID19:

Tests are available at the Town Offices, Library, and Police Station for free for residents.

6. Old Business:

a. To review, discuss and vote whether to approve a lease extension on behalf of South County EMS to remain at its current location

Brian shared that the SCEMS Board of Oversight has recommended the five year lease extension to remain at the current location.

Julie moved to approve the extension on behalf of South County EMS. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

b. To review and discuss the draft Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale and restoration of the Whately Center School

Brian shared that there is still an outstanding issue surrounding the location of the Milk Bottle. Brian stated that due to the high cost of the easement plan, he suggested to the Whately Historical Society (WHS) that moving the milk bottle might be the best plan of action, however the consensus from the WHS was not in favor of moving it from its current location. Brian noted that the WHS inquired whether the Town would be willing to conduct a survey as well as to process a boundary line change to adjust the property line around the milk bottle, allowing the lot to be sold and the milk bottle to remain on Town property. Brian stated that he believes this makes the most sense in the long term but will end up creating additional costs. WHS President Neal Abraham expressed concern relating to the structural integrity of the milk bottle, stating that if the milk bottle is required to be moved, he strongly recommends getting an assessment from a structural engineer beforehand. Fred noted that he had a resident propose moving the milk bottle on the grass directly across the street from Haydenville road, which Julie agreed could be a favorable option. Neal plans to get more feedback from the WHS members on potential locations. Julie recommended obtaining costs for the structural assessment as well as for moving the boundary line. Brian will adjust the RFP so it states that prior to the sale the Town will record a boundary line agreement so interested parties know the milk bottle is not included in the sale. Brian will plan to publish the RFP on November 8, 2023, with a submission deadline for responses of December 13, 2023.

Fred moved to approve the RFP. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

7. New Business

a. To discuss and vote on whether to establish a training stipend for fire fighters attending the volunteer Massachusetts Firefighting Academy

Brian shared that Fire Chief JP Kennedy requested to establish a training stipend for fire fighters who are interested in attending the volunteer Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. The Personnel Committee recommended that the Selectboard institute the stipend amount of \$1,000.

Julie moved to support the training stipend for fire fighters attending the Volunteer Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

b. To discuss, review and vote on establishing the calendar year 2024 fees for local licenses

Brian shared with the Board the local license fees from 2022 which have not had any changes and are still in effect for 2023. Fred suggested looking into when the last time the fees were changed, and to further research surrounding towns for comparison in preparation for 2025 renewals.

Joyce moved to keep the same fees for the calendar year 2024. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

c. To review, discuss and sign the Special Town Meeting warrant for November

Article 1 – unpaid invoices for a prior year. The breakdown is as follows:

Collective Copies - \$1190.91 (for the annual report printing this spring). There is a note on the invoice apologizing for the late invoice - saying that a setting in their system prevented our invoice from being printed and mailed out to the Town on a timely basis.

Cooley - \$3,144 for physical and tests from prior fiscal years going back to 2021 (12 invoices for highway department, transfer station, police, and fire). These invoices were mailed to the Town's old PO Box, and we have no idea what happened after that. No invoices were ever re-sent. It appears that Cooley had two accounts for the Town of Whately. Jessica will now keep track of any medical appointments made and follow-up if invoices aren't sent.

WB Mason - \$831

Amazon - \$556.06 – for Amazon and WB Mason Jess will be requesting statements on a monthly basis to ensure this doesn't keep happening.

Article 2 - \$26,000 to is requested to pay for the feasibility study/master plan of a new facility for the Highway Department

Article 3 - \$102,313 is requested to pay off the loan for the water merger project from the Retained Earnings of the Water Department

Article 4 - \$9,618.40 is requested for appropriation. The Town will be receiving this same amount from Berkshire gas as a utility incentive for the weatherization work at the elementary school. State accounting regulations require the Town to appropriate the amount of the incentive and to record the incentive payment as general fund revenue. The cost and revenue nets out in the end – but the hoops to jump through seem ridiculous.

Article 5 - \$4500 for a survey and easement plan for the Center School – The Board will have to decide if this is the course forward with the Center School. If the Board doesn't want to spend the funds on the easement plan and either have the milk bottle moved or push the costs onto the buyer and or Historical Society, then this Article should be removed from the warrant. I just need direction from the Board at the meeting before the warrant is approved and signed.

Article 6 – MGL requires that the Selectboard be authorized by voters at Town Meeting in order to sell real property – this Article requests that authorization.

Article 7 – is a request of the Recreation Commission to reduce its membership from 9 to 7 members. The membership was increased to nine several years back when Commissioners played a more active role – now with a Recreation Coordinator hired and difficulty in finding members – the Commission thinks it better to go back to seven members as it will make reaching the lower quorum for meetings easier.

Fred made a motion to approve the STM Warrant. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

d. To review, discuss and vote on whether to send a letter of support for H.3567/S.2388 - An Act to provide a sustainable future for rural school

Brian informed the board of an Act to provide financial support to certain municipalities that have a specific student density and median income. This act can assist families with transportation costs, as well as help with enrollment decline.

Julie moves that Brian drafts a letter of support for H.3567/S.2388. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

e. To discuss a recommendation from the Personnel Committee on pursuing a classification and compensation study and establishing a classification and compensation plan

Brian shared that the Personnel Committee recommended that the Town pursue a classification and compensation plan to be implemented for FY26. This plan will classify jobs, conduct a salary survey, then create a compensation plan for several years moving forward, in turn relieving some of the work currently done by staff every year. The Board noted that they were in support of the classification and compensation plan and will wait for further information to be collected by the Personnel Committee.

f. To discuss future locations of the South County Senior Center

Brian shared that a property located in Sunderland has recently come up for sale. Brian noted that he believes this property could be an excellent choice despite it being costly and likely requiring another town to purchase the property and lease it to the SCSC. Fred stated that he supports the idea of this location, however the Board will require more information in order to move forward.

8. Selectboard Liaison Updates: Timely updates from the Selectboard members serving on other boards and committees

Fred shared that the Town recently approved the purchase of a new ambulance with a superior medical set up.

Julie made a note to remind the Water Department to post their upcoming meetings online. Julie also noted that a resident made a comment regarding the tree removal that is currently happening on Haydenville and Williamsburg Rd. Julie communicated to the resident that any issues should be taken up with the utility company.

Joyce made a note that the BOO meeting was moved to November 2.

9. Town Administrator Updates:

Shared conservation agent: Brian shared that there are a lot of municipalities interested in moving forward with the shared services agreement for a conservation agent. Brian noted there is a second meeting scheduled on November 2.

Club Castaways: Brian suggested the Board schedule a meeting with the owners of Club Castaways to discuss operations thus far as required by the conditions of the licenses. The Board will plan to schedule the meeting for November 14th. Police Chief Jim Sevigne will attend.

RDP grant award: Brian shared that the town was awarded \$5,950 to support recycling in town.

Flood plain bylaw: Brian shared that the flood plain bylaw has yet to be updated which is a requirement for the Town to stay in the National Flood Insurance Program. Brian noted that while this places an additional administrative burden on staff, he is aiming to have the updates completed by the next Annual Town Meeting.

Future grant opportunities: Brian shared that Community Development Coordinator Sylvie Jensen is exploring applying for another MVP grant. Brian noted that it would be ideal to combine the Christian Lane drainage, bridge and culvert as a package grant. Brian also noted that the Town will be eligible for the Green Communities Grant come springtime.

Town Hall exterior painting: Brian shared that the Town Hall will likely require more sanding, priming, and repainting in the near future. Brian noted this could possibly be a capital project for FY25.

Elementary school heating/cooling integration: Brian shared that there was a scheduled meeting on November 1 to discuss how to integrate the heating and cooling systems, however it will need to be rescheduled.

Capital planning submissions due 11/30/23: Brian shared that Capital Planning submissions are due to be submitted by November 30, 2023

Solar array at Town Offices: Brian shared that Ace Solar has nearly completed the design and he should be receiving it to review as soon as it's finished.

Long Plain Road Traffic: Brian shared that a speed trailer was put between Grey Oak Ln and Eastwood Ln for a period of 2 weeks. The speed trailer recorded 260 cars traveling daily with the

average speed of 38MPH and the highest speed being 57MPH. Brian will ask Chief Sevigne to compare this data with surrounding streets in town.

10. Items Not Anticipated

None

11. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:31. Motion Seconded. All in Favor

Next Meetings:

November 14, 2023 & November 28, 2023

Documents:

Meeting Minutes, October 10, 2023

Vendor and Payroll Warrants, WP24-09, WP24-10

SCEMS Lease Extension

Center School Draft RFP

Email from JP Kennedy Regarding a training stipend for fire fighters attending the volunteer

Massachusetts Firefighting Academy

License Fee's 2023

STM Warrant

23 Plum Tree Road Sunderland Offering Package

Shared Conservation Commission Agent Proposal/Summary of Meeting