

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2024
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 February 27, 2024, at 6:05 pm by Chairperson Fred Baron. Also present were Selectboard members Julie Waggoner, and Joyce Palmer Fortune (Via Zoom). Co-Interim Town Administrators Lynn Sibley and Patrica Vinchesi, Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy, Community Development Coordinator Sylvie Jensen, Historical Commission member Donna Wiley, and Center School Visioning Committee Chairperson Jenny Morrison

1. Meeting Minutes: Review and vote whether to approve the meeting minutes from February 27, 2024.

Joyce made a motion to accept the minutes from February 27, 2024. Julie 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

4. Public Hearing:

None

5. Scheduled Appointments:

a. (6:15 pm) Jennie Morrison – Center School RFP To review, discuss and vote on the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee

Jenny presented feedback from the Visioning Committee and the dissatisfaction with proposals received for the building's use. Jenny explained that some members expressed concerns about the lack of clear plans, and the need for more concrete ideas and funding sources before proceeding. Julie suggested more time and exploration of alternatives, while Joyce expressed frustration and a desire to move forward with the existing proposals, noting that one of the proposers has a history of successfully flipping properties. The Board discussed the extent of renovations needed for the building and whether the proposed changes would make it eligible for CPA funds, sharing that the other proposal emphasized the use of these funds. The Board determined that the next

steps would involve Jenny providing a more detailed business and financial plan within the specified timeframe, while also communicating the need for an extension to the to the relevant parties.

Julie moves to request a two-week extension for the RFP submitters in order to make the final determination. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Julie-yes, Joyce-Abstain

6. COVID19:

Tests continue to be available at the Town Offices, Library, and Police Station for free for residents.

7. Old Business:

a. To review and discuss the request before the Board of Assessors to release surplus funds contained in the overlay reserve account.

Lynn shared that the Board of Assessors are scheduled to meet on Wednesday to discuss further.

8. New Business

a. To review, discuss and vote on a deadline to submit articles for the June 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting

Lynn shared a proposed calendar of the following dates:

Monday, May 6 – Deadline for receipt of all warrant articles

Tuesday, May 14 – Selectboard reviews and votes warrant articles

Tuesday, May 21 – Finance Committee recommendations due

May 23-28 – Selectboard signs ATM warrant (warrant posting deadline seven (7) days prior to Annual Town Meeting; contingency for Memorial Day holiday)

Tuesday, June 4 – Annual Town Meeting

Julie moves to approve the deadline to submit articles for June 4, 2024, Annual Town Meeting. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

b. To review, discuss and vote on whether to increase the pay rate for the Administrative Assistant's position.

Lynn shared an email from Brian recommending an increase in Jessica's pay rate due to her exceptional performance and increased responsibilities during the transition period from Interim

Town Administrator to Permanent Town Administrator. Joyce and Patricia shared that the Personnel Committee acknowledges that the current process for recommending pay raises based on comparison with other towns can be problematic. The committee suggested increasing Jessica's hours by 5 as a more acceptable option, touching upon the need for a wage classification study to address compensation more effectively in the future.

Fred made a motion to approve the recommendation from the personnel committee to increase Jessica's weekly hours by 5, retroactively from March 5th to June 30th. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

c. To review, discuss and vote on the Whately Historical Society Milk Bottle request for a permanent easement to keep the Milk Bottle at its current location.

Neal Abraham emphasized to the Board the need to have a survey done in order to determine the exact location of the easement line. This includes deciding where the easement would start and end, such as from the driveway or the street. The Board agreed that the milk bottle's historical significance must be protected, both through the easement and by ensuring a minimum distance from any potential developments. The Board also discussed the financial aspect of getting the survey done and how the funds would be appropriated for this purpose, noting that obtaining bids from surveyors would be the next step.

d. To review, discuss and possibly vote to Appoint the Animal Inspector for the Town of Whately and whether the Town should join the Franklin County Sheriff's Regional ACO program.

Lynn shared that the current animal inspector, who also serves as the animal control officer, has indicated that they do not want to be reappointed. Lynn brought attention to a regional animal control program offered by the county sheriff's office, which could potentially provide both animal control and inspection services for the town. Lynn explained that there might be a timing issue due to the county sheriff's office requiring appointments by April 1st, 2024, while their program might not start until July 1st. Lynn explained that the cost for the regional program would be slightly higher than the current budget for the animal control officer, but it seems reasonable given the services provided. The Board proposed moving the discussion of appointing an animal inspector and exploring the regional program to the next meeting's agenda for further consideration.

e. To review, discuss and vote on a letter of support for DFG purchase of property off of Long Plain Road.

Lynn shared that there isn't enough detail in the letter regarding the ownership of the property being considered for purchase. She has reached out for more information but hasn't received a response yet. Therefore, she suggests deferring the decision to the next meeting.

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

Fred shared that he attended the meeting with Weston and Sampson regarding the new Highway Department garage, noting that Weston and Sampson's design was too large in scale and over budget.

10. Town Administrator Updates: (Items likely to be discussed)

AFG grant submission for \$200,000 to purchase SCBA apparatus:

Lynn shared that the Fire Department has applied for a grant for breathing apparatus, which are currently considered obsolete. Lynn noted that such grants are highly competitive but believes the age of their equipment might work in their favor.

Chapter 90 approved amount of \$142,757.96:

Lynn shared that the town has received approval for Chapter 90 funding in the amount of \$142,757.96, which is slightly higher than previous amounts.

11. Items Not Anticipated

None

12. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 7:38pm Motion Seconded. All in Favor

Next Meetings:

March 26, 2024, and April 9, 2024

Documents:

Meeting Minutes February 27, 2024

Vendor Payroll Warrants 24-19

Letter from Adelia Bardwell regarding the Milk Bottle

Letter from the WHS regarding the Milk Bottle

MDAR Nomination of Inspection of Animals

Email from Jim Sevigne regarding the Franklin County ACO

Franklin County Regional Animal Control Services Agreement

Letter from MassDOT Chapter 90

Letter from the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game
MIA Center School Policy Renewal