

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
October 14, 2020
Town Offices
Open Session via Zoom
6:00 p.m.**

The open session of the Selectboard of the Town of Whately was called to order on October 14, 2020 at 6:03 p.m. by the Chairperson, Fred Orloski. Also present via Zoom were Selectboard Members Jonathan Edwards and Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Town Administrator Brian Domina, and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

Review and vote on the meeting minutes of September 30, 2020.

The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 30, 2020.

Roll call vote: Joyce – yes and Fred – yes.

Review past vendor and payroll warrants

The Board had no comments or questions on past vendor and payroll warrants

Comments from the public on items not listed on the agenda

Don Skroski (resident) informed the Board that he virtually attended a Selectboard meeting a few weeks ago regarding the railroad crossing noise concern on Christian Lane. Don inquired what the status was on his concern? Brian stated that Keith had met with Pan Am, but did not make any progress towards a resolution. Gina Bendinelli (resident – 109 Christian Lane) informed the Board that she sent an email to the Town last week regarding the railroad crossing noise concern on Christian Lane. Gina strongly supports the Town addressing this issue. Lester Hancock (resident) informed the Board that there were no issues before the railroad crossing was improved. Lester stated that the wrong material was used which is creating the noise issue. The Board suggested contacting John McGovern's office to inform them of the problem and the improper material used. Gina Bendinelli (resident), Lester Hancock (resident), and Don Skroski (resident) expressed concern regarding the 40 mph speed limit on Christian Lane with specific attention to vehicles speeding and young children in the area. The Board appreciated their concern and will investigate this matter further.

Scheduled Appointments:

Karen Gaston (Diamond Shine) to discuss a possible marijuana cultivation establishment at 73 State Road

Karen Gaston (Diamond Shine) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss a possible marijuana cultivation establishment at 73 State Road. Karen informed the Board that she has been trying to get in touch with the Building Inspector regarding the zoning for this property. The Board had a brief discussion regarding Karen's proposal. Brian informed the Board that if zoning allows, a separate Host Community Agreement would need to be signed by the Board. The current Host Community Agreement is for a retail establishment at 85 State Road. A separate host Community agreement would be needed for a cultivation establishment at 73 State Road. The Board expressed concern that certain legal matters should be addressed before the Board signs another Host Community Agreement. Karen Gaston (Diamond Shine) supports the Board's decision and will be in touch with the Building Inspector.

COVID19 State of Emergency

To discuss, review and consider modifications to the following:

i. Directive on Town Employees Returning to Work During the COVID19 Pandemic

The Board took no action and will revisit this on October 28, 2020

ii. Order Reopening Town Buildings to the Public for Limited Hours and Appointment Only

The Board took no action and will revisit this on October 28, 2020

iii. Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions

The Board took no action and will revisit this on October 28, 2020

Jonathan informed the Board that the one of our surrounding towns is currently a COVID19 hotspot. Jonathan strongly encourages residents to take COVID19 precautions and expressed the importance of face masks and social distancing.

To discuss the status of CARES Act spending and to consider additional expenses

Brian reviewed the COVID19 Emergency funding spreadsheet with specific attention to FEMA funding/eligibility, local match requirements, municipal services, expanding the public health mission, services/support to residents, Whately Elementary School and Frontier Regional requests for funds, and ventilation upgrades at the Fire, Water, and Highway Departments. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding appropriate improvements to the Senior Center, potential tent purchase, air filtration options, grant funding options, risk analysis, other sources of funding, high-speed internet requests, and Frontier Regional/WES laptop maintenance protocols. Jonathan suggested that the Town of Whately use excess CARES Act funds to purchase a tent and heating unit for \$7,000.00 for the Senior Center. Then the Town could lend the tent and the heating unit to the Senior Center to show support for our seniors and communities. Jonathan recommended reimbursing the Town of Deerfield for the senior meals program the SCSC provided. Brian stated that he will reach-out to Deerfield's Town Administrator, Kayce, to discuss reimbursement. Brian informed the Board that the Foothills Health District received additional funds from the CARES Act. Whately's monetary portion for a public health nurse may not be necessary due to these additional funds. The Board requested that more research is done to find out what residences do not have internet access. This can be done by reaching out to residents, reviewing MBI Broadband maps, and contacting Comcast. The benefit of the expenditures for CARES funds must be received by December 31st

After much discussion, a motion was made to purchase the items listed on the CARES Act spreadsheet excluding the ventilation for the Police Department and Public Health Needs. The Board further requested that Brian create a strategy for purchases and money outlay as needed. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

To discuss recommendations related to Halloween activities

Brian informed the Board that the Board of Health recommended the CDC Halloween guidance for the town. Brian inquired if the Board would like to add or suggest anything different? The Board had a brief discussion regarding face mask requirements, outdoor gathering sizes, BOH authority, and Halloween safety tips. Jonathan suggested that mask wearing should be applied to everyone, whether receiving or giving out candy and that transportation beyond walking should be 6 feet apart. The Board of Health recommendations will be posted on the Town's website and on the Police Department's Facebook page.

Old Business:

To discuss submitting a grant application to the Community Compact IT grant program

Brian informed the Board that the previously discussed cable expansion is not an eligible IT grant program item. Brian suggested submitting the grant for the new radio system for the Police and Fire Department. This grant application would be submitted for around \$50,000. Fred suggested purchasing a TV or a projection screen for Town government meeting uses. After a brief discussion, a motion was made to apply for the IT grant for the Police and Fire Department radios. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Joyce – yes, and Jonathan – yes.

New Business

To sign the election warrant for the November 3, 2020 election

A motion was made to sign the Election Warrant for November 3, 2020. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes, and Joyce – yes.

To discuss and vote to set licensing fees for calendar year 2021

Brian informed the Board that October is the time to discuss and vote to set licensing fees for calendar year 2021. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the liquor and license fee chart with specific attention to possibly discounting fees, COVID19 business challenges, Sunderland's license fee reductions, and potential business proposals for fee reductions. Jonathan expressed concern regarding the license fees and suggested discounting certain license fees for 2021. Joyce suggested that the decision be made on a case by case basis based on actual hardships. The Board will entertain economic hardship reductions by request. After much discussion, a motion was made to keep the fees without increasing for calendar year 2021. Motion was seconded. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes, Fred – yes, Jonathan – no.

To consider a proposal from the FRCOG to complete phase 1 of the Open Space & Recreation Plan Update

Brian informed the Board that at the last Annual Town Meeting CPA funds were appropriated to help with the update for the Open Space & Recreation Plan. The funds appropriated were \$20,000. Jonathan made a motion to accept the proposal from FRCOG to complete phase 1 of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update.

Town Administrator Updates:

Brian informed the Board that one of the two bridges for the Williamsburg Road Bridge project has been put in place. The project should be completed in the next month or so.

Brian informed the Board that Chestnut Plain Road has been paved and line painting will begin shortly.

Brian informed the Board that Poplar Hill Road paving is complete, and a few finishing touches will complete the project.

Brian informed the Board that the library lift project was resubmitted for the ADA Municipal Improvement grant. This grant submission is for half of the project cost - \$75,000. The other half will be funded by the Robert Duda fund. Hopefully, the Town will hear back in December.

Brian informed the Board that the Cemetery Commissioners are researching if it is possible to purchase additional land next to the East Whately Cemetery. One of the challenges, is that the adjacent land is currently in APR. Brian and Neal virtually met with Representative Natalie Blais to request her assistance with moving this purchase forward.

Brian informed the Board that the Governor released his revised budget for F21. Brian stated that the Town will be receiving \$50,000 more in local aid than the original budget. For FY21, the Town appears to be in good financial shape. There is some concern that FY22 might be a more difficult year than FY21.

Brian informed the Board that there is a Housing Committee vacancy, Finance Committee vacancy (appointed by the Moderator), multiple vacancies on the Council of Aging, and a vacancy for the FRTA Representative. These vacancies will be posted on the Town's website to hopefully generate interest.

Brian informed the Board that there is a Water Commissioner vacancy. The same process used for the School Committee vacancy will be used to select a Water Commissioner. A notice will be posted on the Town's website requesting that candidates submit a letter of interest. This position will be decided by a joint vote with the Selectboard and the Water Commissioners. This vote will take place at the next Selectboard meeting on October 28, 2020.

Items Not Anticipated within forty-eight (48) hours of the meeting:

None

The meeting was adjourned 7:51pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: October 28, 2020 & November 18, 2020

Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office

Selectboard Meeting Minutes dated 09.30.2020

Vendor Warrant W21-08 dated 09.25.2020

Payroll Warrant WP21-08 dated 09.25.2020

Email from Karen Gaston dated 09.10.2020

Frontier Regional Municipal CARES ACT Funding Request Summary

Whately Elementary School Municipal CARES ACT Funding Request Summary

November 3, 2020 Election Warrant

2021 Liquor and Regular License Renewals

2021 Whately License Holders

FRCOG Agreement for Services by and between the Town of Whately – Whately Open Space and Recreation Plan Update