

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2021
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 January 13, 2021 at 6:06 p.m. by the Chairperson, Fred Orloski. Also present via Zoom was Selectboard Members Joyce Palmer-Fortune and Jonathan Edwards, Town Administrator Brian Domina, and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

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

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

Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Joyce – yes, and Jonathan – 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

none

Scheduled Appointments:

Veterans Memorial Committee to discuss the status of plans for redesigning the veteran’s memorial area adjacent to Town Hall

Jim Ross and Larry Ashman (Veterans Memorial Committee) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss the status of plans for redesigning the veteran’s memorial area adjacent to Town Hall. Jim Ross discussed the veteran’s memorial project with specific attention to the project’s history, proposed design plans, stone memorial, collection efforts for veteran’s names who served after the Vietnam War, Waite stone relocation, and potential new sidewalk placement. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the monument placement, new stone plaques, design/land expansion possibilities, potential future project costs, and CPC/town funding options. Jim Ross stated that there is a small amount of funds available from Ruth Leahy’s donation on behalf of her late husband. The Board encouraged Jim to hold a public meeting sooner rather than later so that residents have ample time to provide feedback on this project. Jim will enlarge the project plan to be posted outside of the Town Hall for residents to review. The Recreation Commission and the Historical Commission have reviewed and approves of this plan. The Community Preservation Committee is reviewing the Veterans Memorial Committee’s application and requested one additional document. Jonathan requested that Jim attend the next Open Space Committee meeting to discuss this project. Jim will schedule a virtual public meeting, plans will be posted on the website, and there will be a public comment space for people who cannot make the meeting. Jim will modify the project’s plan based on the feedback received and will present it at a future Selectboard meeting.

COVID19 State of Emergency

To review, discuss, and consider modifications to the following: *Directive on Town Employees Returning to Work During the COVID19 Pandemic; Order Closing Town Buildings to the Public Except by Appointment; Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions; and the Directive on Face Coverings; or any other issues related to COVID19.*

The Board took no action and will revisit this on January 27, 2021.

To discuss the expiration of the FFCRA Employee Paid Leave Provisions and to discuss how to handle future COVID19 related work absences.

Brian informed the Board that there was an Employee Paid Leave Provision in the FFCRA. It provided 80 hours of paid medical leave for employees who were directed to quarantine, had COVID19, or symptoms and seeking a diagnosis. There was another 80 hours available for employees to care for an individual subject to quarantine or needed to be out of work due to school or childcare being closed. Brian stated that these provisions have expired and were not renewed. In the absences of the federal legislation, the Town as an employer would resort back to our regular town policy (e.g., vacation/sick time). Brian inquired if the situation were to arise in the Town, how would this be handled administratively? The Board had a brief discussion regarding potential new protocol, town employee remote work challenges, and whether the Board should consider a similar policy. The Board requested that Brian prepare a draft policy to review at their next meeting. In the interim, Brian will handle any incident while the policy is being written and a special meeting will be called if any issues arise. Fred inquired how we are informed about COVID19 cases? Brian stated that the State has a tracking system for infectious diseases and the Board of Health members, and our public health nurse has access to that system.

Old Business:

To discuss and vote to approve the lease-purchase agreement for the woodchipper

Brian informed the Board that at the last meeting the Board approved the financing proposal. The Board needs to approve the leasing proposal. The Board voted to enter into the lease-purchase agreement for the woodchipper. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

New Business

To discuss and vote to set the mileage reimbursement rate for calendar year 2021

The Board voted to set the mileage reimbursement rate at 56 cents, which is equal to the 2021 IRS rate for business use. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

To discuss and vote to appoint voting delegates for MIIA and MMA Annual Business Meeting

Brian informed the Board that the MIIA and MMA Annual Meetings (usually part of the MMA Annual Conference) will be held on January 21st and 22nd. The Conference will be virtual this year due to COVID19.

Joyce made a motion to appoint Brian Domina as the Whately voting delegate at the MIIIA and MMA annual meetings. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

Town Administrator Updates:

Brian informed the Board that the Town Hall exterior lighting is an ongoing issue. There were complaints from the neighbors that the parking lot lights were too bright. Eversource replaced the light with an LED light and downsized the light, which still received complaints. The light is currently shut off. The Town is exploring different lighting options.

Brian informed the Board that the Green Communities Grant program will be available in for the spring 2021 and Fall 2021, but the grant round is not open yet. Funding for solar PV is not allowed. The Board discussed funding for the school, Water Department, water merger project, pump house efficiency, potential battery storage, and Town Offices. Brian stated that he is not sure how interested the school is this year since consultants would have to go through the school building. Brian will discuss with Wayne (Water Superintendent) as to what the Water Department's potential use of green communities' grants/funds could be. The Energy Committee will put this topic on their meeting agenda for Tuesday, January 19. One grant will be funded per fiscal year.

Brian informed the Board that Williamsburg Road has been re-opened, bridges have been fixed, and guardrails have been installed. The road and bridges are now reopened to vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Brian informed the Board that there is a new grant out for EV Charging stations. Brian will reach out to FRCOG to talk about the grant program in detail and what technical assistance they can provide. Locations are wide open, there are some conditions that apply. Brian will receive more information after Friday. There is one program that would allow these on private property. Joyce suggested that the Blue School could be used as a potential private location for EV charging stations. Fred suggested that the Whately Truck Stop and Muffins General Market could be potential private location with public access. A year and half ago, the Whately Diner was not interested in our proposal for EV charging stations at their location.

Brian informed the Board that there have been discussions regarding setting up an emergency rental assistance program with CPA Housing funds or already appropriated Housing Trust funds. The Housing Committee has been dormant over the last few years. Jonathan is pushing that the CPC does not wait for the Housing Committee and schedule a special town meeting to appropriate CPA funds. The Board discussed potential low-income housing locations, rental properties in town, low-income housing demands, and potential reorganization of the Housing Committee. A Housing Trust was established for the purpose of funding projects quickly. There is a DLTA agreement with FRCOG to review the Town's housing needs and that study is starting. The Board encourages the Housing Committee and the CPC to work together to research this potential need. Fred (Housing Committee Member) will try to get the Housing Committee together to begin meeting again.

Jonathan informed the Board that an informal working group has been created to perform a needs assessment for a new Senior Center. The needs assessment could be funded by DLTA. Conway may be interested in participating in a needs assessment as well. The Board of Oversight along with the informal working group, Dietz Architecture, and a Umass Boston professor are having preliminary discussions. The DLTA funds would be available this fiscal year. All options are on the table for the existing buildings (e.g., demolition or remodel)

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

None

The meeting was adjourned 7:20pm

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: January 27, 2021 & February 10, 2021

Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office

Selectboard Meeting Minutes dated 12.30.2020

Payroll Warrant WP21-15

Vendor Warrant WP21-15

Veterans Memorial Funding Request Form – Community Preservation Committee

Letter from Jim Ross dated 12.23.2020 RE: Veterans Memorial CPA application

Letter from Judy Markland dated 12.27.2020 RE: Veterans Memorial, Rotary Park, and The Howard Waite Memorial

Letter from the Whately Historical Society dated 01.07.2021 RE: Veterans Memorial

Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights

KS State Bank Contract

IRS – Standard Mileage Rates dated 01.11.2021

Letter from the Office of the Governor – Fiscal Year 2021 CCC Municipal Grant Programs - dated 01.04.2021.