

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
February 10, 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 February 10, 2021 at 6:02 p.m. by the Chairperson, Fred Orloski. Also present via Zoom was Selectboard Members Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Jonathan Edwards, Town Administrator Brian Domina, and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

Review and vote on the meeting minutes of January 27, 2021.

The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes of January 27, 2021.
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:

(6:05) Senator Jo Comerford & Representative Natalie Blais to hold an open discussion with the Selectboard on local priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Natalie Blais virtually appeared before the Board to hold an open discussion on local priorities for the upcoming legislative session. Senator Comerford and Representative Blais had a lengthy discussion regarding the challenges that municipalities have faced and continue to face during the COVID19 pandemic with specific attention to local public health, education, rural transportation challenges, and new legislation for dirt road maintenance. Senator Comerford and Representative Blais thanked Brian for his work on advancing the Haydenville Road project. The Board discussed local priorities with specific attention to PILOTs, Haydenville Road project efforts, delays in state approvals for rural marijuana establishments, state/federal funding for education (i.e., lack of preschool and meal revenue due to COVID-19), the police reform bill (specifically training expenses/delivery of service), electric vehicle charging station needs, solar battery storage, and economic development support in small rural communities. Brian thanked Senator Comerford and Representative Blais for their help on the Haydenville Road project and discussed COVID-19 vaccine outreach challenges.

Representative Blais requested that the police reform bill concerns be submitted to them in writing and that concerns be stated as specific as possible. Representative Blais recommended looking into the rural infrastructure grant program which was originally a 10-million-dollar program and is now a 20-million-dollar program. Senator Hinds and Representative Blais sponsored the Rural Growth Fund. The bill went through the House and Senate but was vetoed by Governor Baker. Representative Blais

and Senator Hinds will follow-up with Governor Baker to discuss the future of this bill. Jonathan strongly feels that the Police Reform bill discussion needs to continue, and he volunteered to work alongside Representative Blais on economic development.

Fred (Selectboard) stated that the Town of Whately will be celebrating the 250th anniversary on April 26, 2021 and requested a proclamation from the Commonwealth. Fred requested that Senator Comerford and Representative Blais make April 26, 2021 available to attend a potential Selectboard meeting and reading of the proclamation. Senator Comerford recommended Senate and House citations.

Michael Herbert & Stephen Herbert (Urban Grown) to hold a preliminary discussion with the Selectboard on a proposed marijuana cultivation establishment.

Michael Herbert and Stephen Herbert (Urban Grown) virtually appeared before the Board to hold a preliminary discussion on a proposed marijuana cultivation establishment. Stephen Herbert discussed ongoing Cannabis Control Commission marijuana cultivation regulation challenges. Stephen discussed his proposed marijuana cultivation establishment with specific attention to the previous Host Community Agreement, funding challenges, and a potential site location. Stephen stated that he could not disclose the potential location at this time because they have not yet obtained site control, but hopefully will soon. Stephen requested that the Board review the previous Host Community Agreement between Urban Grown and the Town. Urban Grown currently has a provisional license that can be transferred to a different location. A Community outreach meeting will need to be held along with Planning Board and ZBA approvals. Once local approvals are obtained, Urban Grown will need to go back to the Cannabis Control Commission and file for a change of location. Michael and Stephen Herbert will come back to the Board with a formalized plan once site control is obtained. No decision was made at this time.

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*

Brian informed the Board that COVID19 cases continue to decline in our area. Currently, Whately has one active case. Brian would like to hold a discussion at the next Selectboard meeting regarding the appropriate time to re-open the Town Offices to the public. The Board expressed their concerns of prematurely re-opening the Town Offices and had a brief discussion regarding the necessary precautions that the Commonwealth has recently taken to help stop the spread. No decision was made at this time.

Old Business:

To discuss the status of previously funded capital projects and to discuss future capital projects

Brian discussed the status of previously funded capital projects with specific attention to the Town Offices renovation, maintenance shed at Blue School (2017), IT upgrades/regional study (2018), metal roof repairs (2019), the water merger project (2020), the Water Department's booster pumps/generator installation (2020) and telecommunication equipment for the Fire and Police Departments (2020). The Board had a brief discussion regarding the town's priority projects. Brian suggested that the two projects to focus on would be the Water Merger project and Town Offices renovation. The Capital Improvement Planning Committee's (CIPC) first meeting will be Thursday February 18, 2021.

New Business

To discuss and vote to renew the insurance policy for the Center School

Brian informed the Board that the insurance policy for the Center School is due to be renewed. The annual premium will be \$3,542.24. The Board had a discussion regarding the RFI proposal/deadline, potential use of the building, public input, and potential financial impacts. The Board inquired with Brian, what a reasonable amount of time would be for a RFI draft? After a brief discussion, the Board requested that Brian come back with a reasonable timeline for a RFI to be presented at a Selectboard meeting. Brian suggested that the three projects for the upcoming fiscal year could be the Center School, Town Offices renovation, and Water merger project.

A motion was made to renew the insurance for the building and property located at 218 Chestnut Plain Road. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce -yes.

To discuss and vote to appoint Amy Schrader, Jacob Schrader, and Chris Williams to the Recreation Commission

A motion was made to appoint Amy Schrader, Jacob Schrader, and Chris Williams to the Recreation Commission. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

Town Administrator Updates:

Brian informed the Board that there are a lot of new grant opportunities. Brian discussed the grant opportunities with specific attention to culverts, One Stop for Community Growth, Green Communities grant, Veteran Heritage Grant, Complete Streets grant, MVP action grants, Community Compact best practices grant, and IT security grants. The Board suggested looking into whether hiring a grant writer would benefit and/or be worth the investment for the Town at this time. The Board and Brian had a lengthy discussion regarding grant opportunities with specific attention to high priority and low priority grant opportunities, town staff resources/needs, Departments/Boards/Committee needs, and town planning efforts to promote growth. The Board also discussed the possibility of adding additional hours or creating a new or shared position to focus on some of these important issues. After much discussion, the Board recommended focusing on the Green Communities, MVP, OSFG- Community Planning, Complete Streets, and culvert replacement grant opportunities. The Board recommended putting a planning position on a future agenda to be discussed. The Board requested that Brian put together a list to be presented at the next Selectboard meeting to stay focused on the priority projects. Brian will begin preliminary discussions regarding a potential future regional/ joint planning position. Brian will reach out to Sunderland's Town Administrator to discuss any shared needs. Jonathan will connect with Sunderland's Selectboard.

Brian informed the Board that the Veterans Memorial Public Input Meeting originally scheduled for Thursday was postponed. Brian and Keith will work with Jim on the completing the design or getting him help with the design.

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

Fred stated that May 10, 1771 was the Town's first annual meeting and suggested moving the Town's Annual Meeting to Monday, May 10, 2021 to celebrate that day. Fred asked Brian to consider this change.

Fred stated that the 250th Committee requested that the Board participate in their 250th celebration parade. The Board discussed participation options to include the Whately Flag and possibly a Selectboard banner.

The meeting was adjourned 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: February 24, 2021 and March 10, 2021

Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office

Selectboard Meeting Minutes – dated 01.27.2021

Payroll Warrants WP21-17 dated 02.01.2021.

Vendor Warrants WP21-17 dated 02.01.2021.

Whately Capital Improvement Projects- Previously Funded FY2017-Present

Commercial Property Coverage Part Declaration – Center School 218 Chestnut Plain Road

Grant Opportunities Spreadsheet – 2021