

## **Selectboard Meeting Minutes**

**March 28, 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 March 28, 2023, at 6:04 pm by Chairperson Joyce Palmer Fortune. Present were Selectboard members Fred Baron, Julie Waggoner. Town Administrator Brian Domina, Administrative Assistant Amy Lavallee, and Treasurer/Collector Amy Schrader were present. Police Chief James Sevine was present via Zoom. Energy Committee member Nat Fortune, Highway Superintendent Keith Bardwell, Water Superintendent Wayne Hutkoski, and Water Commissioners John Lukin, Georgann Dufault, and George Bucala, Jr., were also present.

### **1. Meeting Minutes: Review and vote to approve the meeting minutes from March 14, 2023**

Fred motioned to approve the meeting minutes from March 14, 2023. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-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**

Brian read an email from resident Dan Denchy regarding his opinion on the Town Clerk position.

### **4. Public Hearings:**

None

### **5. Scheduled Appointments:**

#### **a. (6:05) (Amy Schrader – Whately Town Clerk) to discuss a recommendation from the Board of Registrars in regard to early voting for the June election and to accept a letter of resignation from the Town Clerk.**

Amy discussed with the Board the recommendation from the Board of Registrars that the Town opt in for early in person voting during regular business hours and continue early vote by mail for the June 2023 elections. Julie motioned to accept early voting as recommended by Amy Schrader and the Board of Registrars. Fred Seconded. All in favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

Amy discussed with the Board the submission of her resignation from the Town Clerk position. Julie made a motion to accept the resignation of Amy Schrader as Town Clerk. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

#### **b. (6:15) (Whately Energy Committee) to discuss the municipal electricity aggregation program and next steps for soliciting future years of the program and to authorize a signatory for the future contracts**

Nat discussed with the Board the request that the Town renew its participation in the municipal aggregation program. Nat discussed with the Board that the last contract allowed Town residents

to purchase electricity at 10¢ per /kWh as opposed to the Eversource basic rate of 30¢ per kWh. Nat reminded the Board that residents have the option to opt out of the program if they don't want to participate. The Town needs to enter into a new contract for future years to continue the program. The group of towns will receive indicative pricing on April 10, 2023. The Board needs to authorize an employee to sign the contracts on April 24, 2023, when actionable pricing is received. No action needs to be taken by the Board at this time and the Energy Committee will return to discuss the indicative pricing at the next Board meeting.

**c. (6:30) (Whately Water Commissioners) to discuss a request for CLFRF monies to purchase an emergency generator for the main pumphouse**

John Lukin discussed with the Board a request by the Water Commissioners for \$60,000 to purchase a new diesel generator for the pumphouse in the event of a power outage. Joyce requested the Water Commissioners look for a more environmentally friendly generator besides diesel such as solar battery packs. The Commissioners agree to come back before the Board with prices and the feasibility of other options. No action was taken by the Board at this time. John also discussed with the Board the possibility of exploring the current aquifer for a second well as required by MassDEP in the event the first well fails. No action was taken by the Board at this time.

**6. COVID19:** Reminder – COVID19 rapid tests are available at the Town Offices, Library and Police Station

**7. Old Business:**

**a. To discuss using CLFRF monies for proposed capital projects and other projects**

The Board continued the discussion about using some of the remaining CLFRF monies. The Board had previously agreed on a target spending of around \$130,000 for each of the two remaining fiscal years. The Board discussed a tentative plan to spend the \$130,000 on a number of different items but decided to hold off on a final vote of the items until discussing its proposal with the Finance Committee. The tentative plan includes using CLFRF monies for new flooring at the elementary school, window and chimney repairs at the library, electrical and plumbing upgrades at the library, replacing the pagers at the fire department, cataloging town records and maps, bylaw codification, capital payment for SCEMS ambulance, and one-time employee separation costs for an elementary school employee. The Board will take a final vote on these items at a future meeting.

**b. To set the date for the 2023 Annual Town Meeting (proposed May 23, 2023)**

The Board discussed with Brian a possible alternate date for the Town Meeting due to the possible unavailability of the Town Moderator. Brian will talk with the Planning Board to see if May 9, 2023, will work for them. The Board also discussed the possibility of a Special Town Meeting at the end of April or early May. No action was taken by the Board at this time.

## **8. New Business**

### **a. To discuss and vote to appoint Amy Lavallee to the position of interim Town Clerk until the next annual election**

Julie made a motion to appoint Amy Lavallee interim Town Clerk until the next annual election. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

### **b. To discuss a request from the Highway Superintendent for the Selectboard to declare a winter roads emergency to allow deficit spending for the winter roads account**

Keith informed the Board that the recent winter storms have depleted the Highway winter roads budget and will create a deficit in the account of \$5,000-\$7,000. He requested that the Board declare a winter roads emergency to allow deficit spending.

Fred made a motion to declare a winter roads emergency to allow deficit spending for the winter roads account. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

### **c. To discuss a request from Representative Natalie Blais to identify budget priorities for the upcoming state budget**

The Board discussed a request from Representative Natalie Blais for the Town to identify up to three capital projects that could benefit from an infusion of state funds (\$10,000 to \$100,000). The Board decided to seek funds to investigate additional drinking water sources on behalf of the Water Department and for funds to complete the design of a replacement culvert on Christian Lane.

### **d. To discuss the FY24 Personnel Committee wage and COLA recommendations**

The Board discussed the following:

The Personnel recommendation to pay a training stipend to Lynn Sibley for 8 hours a week at \$39.00 an hour to train the new Treasurer/Collector. Joyce made a motion to approve the recommendation for a training stipend to be paid to Lynn Sibley for 8 hours a week at \$39.00 an hour to train the new Treasurer/Collector from March 1, 2023, until June 30, 2023. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

The Personnel Committee recommendation to increase the Treasurer/Collector pay wage to \$34.00 an hour retroactive to March 1, 2023, and to increase the weekly number of hours from 30 to 33 hours per week.

Amy discussed with the Board a request to end evening hours for the Treasurer/Collector due to very little resident traffic during the evening hours.

The Committee also recommended that the Board accept Amy Schrader's term of employment to include her time working as the elected Town Clerk for benefit purposes.

Joyce made a motion to include Amy's time working as the elected Town Clerk when determining her term of employment for benefit purposes. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes.

Fred made a motion to set the pay rate of the Treasurer/Collector at \$34.00 an hour retroactive to March 1, 2023. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes.

Julie made a motion to increase the Treasurer/Collector hours to 33 hours per week from 30. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes. Fred made a motion to end the evening hours. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes.

The Personnel Committee recommended the Fire Chief stipend increase from \$10,200 a year to \$31,200 a year starting FY24 as well as implement a pay differential for Fire Department Officers. The Board will discuss this with the Finance Committee. No action taken at this time.

**e. To discuss and vote to approve a seasonal alcohol license for Quonquont Farms**

Julie made a motion to approve the seasonal alcohol license for Quonquont Farms. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

**f. To reappoint Rick Adamcek as the Animal Inspector**

Fred made a motion to reappoint Rick Adamcek as the Animal Inspector. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

**g. Approval to submit CRMA grant application to fund the final design of the Christian Lane culvert**

Joyce made a motion to submit the grant application for the final design of the Christian Lane culvert. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

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

Fred shared with the Board that he attended a meeting about the highway garage feasibility study with an architect and that he has another meeting on Thursday with a different firm.

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

**Haydenville Road Reconstruction project:** Brian informed the Board that there is a Franklin TPO meeting on Tuesday at noon that he will be attending, at which the project will be discussed.

**Water District Sale of Land:** Brian informed the Board that Nicholas Jones asked him to share the news that the District wants to move forward selling its land in the center of town. Nicholas wanted to double check that the Town still didn't want to purchase it.

**MMA legislative breakfast:** Brian will attend this on Friday morning and bring back any updates to the Board.

**Complete Streets project:** The Town is still waiting for plan revisions and then the project will be ready to go out to bid – hopefully a late spring or early summer project (sidewalks, intersection improvements in West Whately)

**Cannabis establishments update:** Brian informed the Board that the Whately Mustang cultivation project at the corner of State Road and Christian Lane has been terminated. This would have been a 100,000 square foot cultivation facility in the existing greenhouses.

**Highway Garage feasibility study:** Fred provided an update earlier.

**Egypt Road water loop engineering plans:** Brian informed the Board that this project is ongoing with the engineers continuing to work on plans to close the loop in the water system between Egypt Road and State Road.

#### **11. Items Not Anticipated**

None

#### **12. Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn at 8:10 pm. Motion Seconded. All in Favor. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes.

#### **Next Meetings: April 11, 2023, and April 25, 2023**

#### **Document List**

SB Meeting Minutes from March 14, 2023

Warrant WP23-20

Warrant W23-20

Resignation Letter from Amy Schrader from Town Clerk position March 23, 2023

Email from Denise Allard (Colonial Power) re: municipal aggregation process

Kinsley Power Systems – generator cost proposal dates 03/01/22

PC Memorandum re: FY24 Additional Wage Adjustments dated March 23, 2023

Email from Keith Bardwell re: Winter roads account

Letter from Board of Registrars dated March 27, 2023, re: early voting

2023 Municipal Budget Request Form

MDAR letter dated March 3, 2023, re: Nomination of Animal Inspector

Whately Water Department spreadsheet – annual operating costs and rates