

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
February 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 February 28, 2023 at 6:02 pm by Chairperson Joyce Palmer Fortune via Zoom. Present were Selectboard members Fred Baron, and Julie Waggoner. Town Administrator Brian Domina, Administrative Assistant Amy Lavallee, Town Clerk Amy Schrader, Fire Fighter JP Kennedy, Police Chief James Sevigne via Zoom, Water Commissioners Georgann Dufault, John Lukin, George Bucala, Water Superintendent Wayne Hutkoski was also present. Historical Commission Representative Donna Wiley was also present.

1. Meeting Minutes: Review and vote to approve the meeting minutes from February 16, 2023

Fred made a motion to approve the minutes from February 16, 2023. Motion seconded by Julie. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. 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

Lisa and Mike Moore, residents at 73 Chestnut Plain Road, brought forth a complaint to the Selectboard regarding Baystate Blasting company which is next to their property. They are concerned with ongoing fill activity at that site that they believe is illegal. Their concern is that the fill is being put in an area that is under aquifer overlay protection. They also brought forth a complaint regarding the increased truck traffic and subsequent noise from these trucks. Selectboard informed them that this falls under Building Inspector enforcement. The residents stated that they have been unsuccessful in their attempts to resolve the issue through the Building Inspector. Selectboard agrees to write a letter to the Building Inspector and MassDOT regarding the issue, as well as to our State Representative and Senator, as well as the State Representative from Hadley because the residents believe the fill is coming from the Route 9 Reconstruction Project.

4. Public Hearings:

a. (continued from 02/16/23) Utility Pole Hearing (6:05 pm): Petition to Install and Maintain Underground Lines for the Transmission of Electricity from Western Massachusetts Electric Company (dba Eversource) in the area of the intersection of River Road and Straits Road in Whately, MA.

The Selectboard agreed to continue the hearing until March 14, 2023 at 6:05 pm as there was no Eversource representative present. Fred made the motion to continue hearing until March 14, 2023 at 6:05 pm. Julie seconded. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

5. Scheduled Appointments:

a. Water Commissioners (6:25 pm) to discuss with the Selectboard the installation of water meters at town buildings and other aspects of the relationship between the Water Department Enterprise Fund and other Town finances

The Water Commissioners discussed with the Board which Town Buildings need water meters. It was determined that the Library, Highway Garage, Fire Station, Police Station, Herlihy Park, and the Cemeteries require meters, and that the Elementary School needs it's current meter replaced. The cost provided was approximately \$15,000 for all. The Board discussed possibilities of what account the cost could be paid from. The use of the Water Superintendent's truck for plowing Town Buildings was also discussed. The Board and Commissioners agree to form an agreement for any future possible use of the truck for plowing town buildings and for town buildings where it makes more sense to play an agreed upon fee for water usage as opposed to metered usage. The Water Commissioners will meet March 7, 2023, to discuss further. Julie agreed to attend as Selectboard Representative.

6. COVID19:

Reminder – COVID19 rapid tests are available at the Town Offices

7. Old Business:

a. To discuss next steps with the Whately Center School (insurance renewal, Historical Commission input)

Donna wrote a letter to the Selectboard and discussed with them on behalf of the Historical Commission regarding the future of the Center School. The Historical Commission would like the Selectboard to draft a new RFP for the sale of the building with historical preservation restrictions, as well as preservation of the milk bottle. She discussed with the Board various sources of revenue that could be used for rehabilitation of the building.

Fred Baron made a motion to renew the Vacant Building insurance policy on the Center School. Julie seconded. All in Favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

b. To discuss the formation of a stakeholders group for the Exit 35 Area Planning Study

The Board discussed the possible make up of a group to study the economic development possibilities around Exit 35. The Board agreed that the group should be made up of at least one Planning Board member, Brian, and Julie. The consultant on the project is Berkshire Design Group. The plan is to hold several larger stakeholder meetings that includes property owners.

c. To discuss the Haydenville Road Reconstruction Project as it relates to land provided in mitigation under Article 97 of the Massachusetts State Constitution

Brian informed the Board that he attended the Franklin TPO meeting and that MassDOT would like to push the project date back to FY26. The Board discussed the need for a land swap with the City of Northampton under Article 97 and the possibility of the town purchasing an acre or two of land from a 34 acre parcel of land in close proximity to the project site.

Fred made a motion to write a letter from the Selectboard to contact the owner of parcel 03-0-11 for purchase of a small portion of the parcel. Julie seconded. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

7. New Business

a. To discuss the staffing levels of the police department in relation to the fiscal year 2024 budget request

Chief Sevigne discussed with the Board the desire to hire a full time officer at a salary of \$49,000 to eliminate 11 part time shifts that are getting increasingly harder to fill due to new State requirements. The Chief is looking for support from the Selectboard to bring this proposal to the Finance Committee. Julie agreed to meet with Chief Sevigne to discuss the proposal further.

b. To discuss the training needs of newly hired employees and possible solutions (consultants, training stipend)

The Board would like this discussed with the Personnel Committee and for the Committee to provide recommendations for the Board to consider.

c. To review, discuss and vote on the following appointments (if necessary):

i. Treasurer/Collector (Interim or Permanent)

Brian informed the Board that the Treasurer/Collector screening Committee recommends Amy Schrader as Treasurer/Collector effective March 1, 2023. Brian discussed with the Board that Amy would like to retain her current Town Clerk position along with the Treasurer/Collector position. He also discussed that the Board could appoint Amy Lavalley as Assistant Town Clerk at this time to help Amy Schrader with the Clerk position, splitting the hours to 10 hours Town Clerk

for Amy Schrader and 18 hours Assistant Clerk for Amy Lavallee who would bring her current Administrative Assistant hours down to 14 hours to help with the transitional period. Brian informed the Board that they could appoint Lynn Sibley as Assistant Treasurer/Collector at 18 hours a week.

Fred made a motion to appoint Amy Schrader as Treasurer/Collector, Lynn Sibley as Assistant Treasurer/Collector, and Amy Lavallee as Assistant Town Clerk, with the pay retroactive according to the Personnel Committee's decision. Joyce Seconded. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

ii. Assistant Treasurer Collector

Brian recommended to the Board that they appoint Lynn Sibley as Assistant Treasurer/Collector at 18 hours a week. See motion above.

iii. Assistant Town Clerk

Brian recommended to the Board that they appoint Amy Lavallee as Assistant Town Clerk at 18 hours a week. See motions above.

iv. Fire Chief (effective June 17, 2023)

Brian informed the Board that the Fire Chief screening committee recommends JP Kennedy as Fire Chief effective June 17, 2023.

Fred made a motion to accept the screening committee recommendation and appoint JP Kennedy as Fire Chief effective June 17, 2023. Julie Seconded. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

v. Community Development Administrator/Assistant Town Administrator

No recommendation yet.

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

Julie discussed that the Climate Resilience Committee met with the students at the Conway school of Design for a presentation. They are looking to have another community engagement meeting soon.

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

Herlihy Park accessibility improvements: Brian informed the Board that work will start the following day and that they are on track to finish well before the May 1st deadline.

Complete Streets project update: Brian is anticipating going out to bid in the next week or two to complete the sidewalk along Chestnut Plain Road, sidewalks at the school and relatively minor intersection improvements in West Whately.

CRMA grant application – Christian Lane: Brian informed the Board that the grant announcements should be out this week and that the Town is planning to reapply for funding to complete the Christian Lane culvert engineering adjacent to Castaways.

Municipal electricity aggregation: Brian informed the Board that the Energy Committee is waiting to meet with Colonial Power for more information about the next round of bidding.

10. Items not Anticipated:

Brian shared with the Board a letter received by resident Ruth Fairman regarding Castaways' proposal of a topless dispensary.

Brian shared a letter from Senator Paul Mark that included his local office hours.

Brian shared with the Board the annual report from the Franklin County Regional Housing Authority

11. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 8:48 pm. Motion seconded. All in favor. Roll Call Vote. Joyce-yes, Fred-yes, Julie-yes

Next Meetings: March 14, 2023, and March 28, 2023

Documents List

Meeting Minutes, February 16, 2023

Resume and Cover letter from Amy Schrader

Resume and cover letter from JP Kennedy

Letter to the Selectboard from Ruth Fairman

Email from James Sevine to Brian Domina, *RE: Poles*, February 12, 2023

Petition to Install and Maintain Underground Lines for the Transmission of Electricity.

Memo to the Selectboard from Georgann Dufault, *Re: Current Issues requiring Attention*, February 16, 2023

Letter to Brian Domina from the Berkshire Design Group, *RE: Exit 35 Planning Study*, March 25, 2022

Haydenville Road-Proposed Article 97, February 27, 2023

FY24 Budget Summary, Whately police Department

Memorandum to Selectboard from Brian Domina, *RE: Treasurer/Collector Screening Committee Recommendation*, February 28, 2023

Memorandum to Selectboard from Brian Domina, *RE: Fire Chief Screening Committee Recommendation*, February 28, 2023

Letter to Selectboard from Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, January 29, 2023