

**Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2024
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 26, 2024, at 6:05 pm by Chairperson Fred Baron. Also present were Selectboard members Julie Waggoner, and Joyce Palmer Fortune (Via Zoom). Co-Interim Town Administrators Lynn Sibley and Patrica Vinchesi, Administrative Assistant Jessica Murphy, Highway Superintendent Keith Bardwell, Center School Visioning Committee Chairperson Jennie Morrison, Housing Committee Chair Catherine Wolkowicz, Board of Health Chair Fran Fortino, Planning Board Member Judy Markland, Finance Committee Member Paul Newlin, Community Development Coordinator Sylvie Jensen (Via Zoom) and Chris Larabee from the Greenfield Recorder were also present.

1. Meeting Minutes: Review and vote whether to approve the meeting minutes from March 12, 2024.

Joyce made a motion to accept the minutes from March 12, 2024. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-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

4. Public Hearing:

None

5. Scheduled Appointments:

a. (6:15 pm) Sue Monahan - To review, discuss and vote application for May 12, 2024, Mother's Day Marathon

Fred moves to approve the application for the May 12, 2024, Mother's Day Marathon. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

6. COVID19:

Tests continue to be available at the Town Offices, Library, and Police Station for free for residents.

7. Old Business:

a. Center School Update – Jenny Morrison

Jenny shared the Visioning Committees proposal that will allow the building to remain in town hands, be restored in a manner that will preserve its historic character and is more aligned with what residents are looking for. Jenny explained they propose that the Town renovate the exterior, then partner with a housing non-profit to develop a portion of the interior for affordable housing and to manage it subsequently. The town would renovate the remainder for either a café/meeting room or office space, which would generate income to support operating costs. Funding for the town's portion would come from grants, CPA funding or Volunteer work. The affordable housing portion could be financed through long-term loans serviced by the rentals compared to the previous proposals. Judy shared of the existence of available funds from the CPA, noting that the CPA has accumulated a substantial amount of unallocated funds over the years, providing a significant cushion for supporting the project. There is also discussion about the history of CPA funds and the lack of suitable projects in recent years, indicating potential support for this proposal. Judy mentioned deadlines for submitting applications to the CPA by the second Tuesday in June. Additionally, there's discussion about the bidding process for projects over \$100,000, which require certification and considerations like prevailing wage.

Catherine expressed concerns about the viability of the project due to funding constraints and the difficulty in finding suitable nonprofit partners, highlighting the challenges of securing funding for small-scale projects. Currently, the minimum number of units required for funding is 20, making smaller projects financially unviable. Catherine mentions that finding nonprofit partners willing to undertake such small projects will also be challenging, with many nonprofits focusing on larger-scale projects with 60-70 units. Catherine emphasized the complexity of affordable housing projects, including fair marketing requirements and other regulatory considerations. Catherine discussed more concerns regarding the ownership structure of the proposed project, particularly regarding potential liabilities associated with town ownership of housing units. Catherine suggested that further discussions with the housing director at RDI and other stakeholders may be necessary to explore potential solutions and partnerships. The Board went on to address structural issues, particularly related to roof repair, which is deemed urgent to prevent further deterioration. Joyce questioned whether the proposed project aligns with the town's capabilities and resources, emphasizing the importance of realistic planning, highlighting potential challenges such as funding constraints, lack of staff resources, and uncertainty regarding grants. Jenny expressed her view that failure is a possibility but believes it's worth trying regardless. Joyce requested a list of volunteers who plan to commit to the project, indicating a desire for transparency and accountability regarding the individuals involved.

The Board discussed the time commitment required for the project, with concerns raised about individuals diverting their time from their regular responsibilities to focus on the project. Town employees, such as Keith Bardwell, highlighted their existing workload and the challenges of taking on additional tasks related to the proposed project. Despite concerns about resource

allocation and uncertainties, the Board recognizes the importance of taking the time to do the project right, even if it means a longer timeframe for completion.

Julie made a motion to accept the initial draft proposal from the Center School Visioning Committee with a timeline for further development of the proposal, including progress reports within 3 months and a more finalized version by October 1st. Fred Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Julie-yes, Joyce-no

1.Review, discuss and vote on proposals received.

Julie made a motion to reject both proposals received from Cyr and Gelormini, and Obear construction. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Julie-yes, Joyce-no

2. Review, discuss and vote on insurance for Center School

Julie made a motion to renew the insurance policy for the Center School, including coverage for Terrorism from April 1, 2024, to April 1, 2025. Fred seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

b. Review and discuss Letter of Support for 75+ acre Land Acquisition by Department of Fish and Game, Assessors Maps 6-0-12 and 6-0-23 owned by Gary Gemme and David Wojciechowski.

Lynn shared that the land is currently owned by Gary Kevin and David Wilkinsowski, consists of 49 acres, with Lot 23 comprising 15 acres and Lot 12 comprising 26 acres. The total value of Lot 12 is \$7,986, and Lot 23's value is \$23,455, totaling \$16,441 with tax-exempt status. The land straddles Hatfield, and the Fishing Game department is seeking a letter of support for the acquisition of this property. The Board discussed the tax status of the land post-acquisition, with the understanding that it would become taxable once acquired by the Department of Fish and Game. Joyce noted that the benefit to the town would be increased protected land. The Board has agreed to send a letter of support to the Department of Fish and Game.

c. Animal Inspector Appointment.

Lynn shared that Rick Adamcek, the current inspector, has agreed to stay on until June 30, 2024, but expressed reluctance to continue beyond that due to compensation concerns. The division of agricultural resources requires the appointment of an animal inspector by April 1st.

Fred made a motion to renew Rick Adamcek as the animal inspector until June 30th, Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

d. Review, Discuss and Vote on intent to become a member of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Animal Control Program.

The Board discussed the possibility of joining the Franklin County Sheriff's Regional Animal Control Program, noting that the program does not encompass the duties of an animal inspector but has many other positive benefits. Lynn shared that the initial estimate of joining the program costs \$5,200, however, it is not set-in stone. Lynn will plan to get a definite cost estimate.

Joyce made a motion to pursue joining the Franklin County Sheriff's Regional Animal Control Program. Julie Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

8. New Business

a. Review, discuss, vote Selectboard Regulation under revised codification of Town Bylaws

Lynn shared recommended changes such as "Board of Selectmen" to "Select Board" and updating titles like "superintendent of streets" to "highway superintendent." Lynn noted that these changes are considered administrative in nature and don't seem to have significant consequences. Lynn explained that these changes had previously been approved by the Board but needed to be officially integrated into the town's code.

Julie moves to accept the changes under the revised codification of Town Bylaws. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

b. Review, discuss, vote Frontier School Excess & Deficiency Amendment Request for Fire Alarm Panel \$200,000

Fred shared that the school is seeking \$200,000 from their excess and deficiency account to cover the cost. Lynn stated that typically, approval from the constituent towns in the district would be needed for spending, possibly through a town meeting and capital package. However, in this case, the request is being made outside of that process.

Julie moves to accept the Frontier School Excess & Deficiency Amendment Request for Fire Alarm Panel \$200,000. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

c. Review, discuss and vote to change the date for Annual Town Meeting – Calendar voted March 12 remains the same.

Lynn shared that the originally scheduled date of June 4th, will need to be rescheduled due to a conflict in schedules.

Julie made a motion to change the date for the Annual Town Meeting from June 4, to June 18, with the remainder of the calendar voted on March 12 remains the same. Joyce Seconded. All in Favor. Fred-yes, Joyce-yes, Julie-yes

d. Review, discuss and possibly vote regarding the request from Foothills Health District to use space in building temporarily

Fran shared that the Foothills Health District will potentially need to vacate their current office space in Williamsburg around June 2024. Fran proposed the possibility of Whately hosting them on a temporary basis, sharing that there are spaces within the building, including the Board of Health room. However, it's noted that it might be a bit tight considering the number of staff members. Fran mentioned use of the back storage space, but it's unclear if that would be a suitable option. The Board agrees to consider available options as more information about the timeframe becomes available.

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

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

Opioid Settlement Funds:

Tricia shared that the second installment of opioid settlement funds have been distributed with 60% going to the state and 40% distributed among 351 municipalities for prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery programs.

Toroverde Records request regarding costs above and beyond routine costs to the town in relationship to Toroverde:

Lynn clarified that no additional costs were incurred beyond the usual business-oriented costs.

Town Hall Storm Window updates:

Keith discussed defects and potential moisture exposure leading to recurring problems, noting that he spoke with Greenfield Glass who confirmed there was an issue with the film being exposed to moisture. There's debate over whether to proceed with repairs or seek alternative solutions, such as storm windows. Keith mentioned Allied storm windows as a potential solution, with positive feedback from others who have used them for historic buildings. Keith will be in contact with Allied for further discussion.

11. Items Not Anticipated

None

12. Adjourn

Joyce moved to enter Executive Session pursuant to M.G.L. c. 31A § 21 (a)(1) to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition, or mental health rather than professional competence, of an individual. The Selectboard will not be returning to open session. Motion Seconded. All in Favor

Next Meetings:

April 9, 2024 & April 30, 2024

Documents:

Meeting Minutes March 12, 2024

Vendor Payroll Warrants 24-20

Sue Monahan Mother's Day Race Application

Email from Amy Lavallee regarding Town Bylaws

Letter from Frontier Regional School District regarding the replacement of a fire panel

2024 Revised Annual Town Meeting Calendar

Letter from the Historical Commission regarding the Milk Bottle

Whately Center School RFP Review Committee Proposal Scoring

MIIA Insurance Renewal Center School

Email from Kevin Chaffee regarding a letter of support for the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game to purchase land in Whately

Letter from the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game regarding purchase of Land in Whately

Nomination of Inspector of Animals Letter

Franklin Regional County Sheriff's Office Animal Control Services Contract

Letter from Jonathan Gonzales (ToroVerde) regarding documentation

Email from Allied regarding Town Hall windows