

**Joint Selectboard and  
School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
September 30, 2020  
Town Offices  
Open Session via Zoom  
6:00 p.m.**

A joint meeting of the Selectboard and Whately Elementary School Committee was called to order on September 30, 2020 at 6:02 p.m. by the Chairperson, Fred Orloski. Also present via zoom were Selectboard Members Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Jonathan Edwards, School Committee Members, Robert Halla and Maureen Nichols: Town Administrator Brian Domina, and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

**Review and vote on the meeting minutes of September 9, 2020.**

Fred made a motion to amend the meeting minutes of September 9, 2020. The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 9, 2020. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Joyce – yes, and Fred – 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**

Fred reviewed a letter dated September 14, 2020 from Poplar Hill Road residents, Gabe and Elizabeth Cooney. The letter included compliments and thanked Keith and his crew for their work on Poplar Hill road. The Board also thanked Keith for his work on this project.

Brian informed the Board that he received a letter from resident, Richard Smith, expressing concern about pedestrian safety on Long Plain Road with specific attention to speeding cars, distracted drivers, and failure to yield to pedestrians. Richard requested that the Town consider increasing patrols with actual issuance of citations and appropriate speeding signage as methods of remediation. The Board and School Committee members had brief discussion regarding speeding on Long Plain road, WES school zone speed limit, student safety, additional speed radar signs, and potential grant opportunities. The Board requested that Brian reply to Richard's letter thanking him for his concerns and that the Board will work on improving the monitoring of traffic concerns on Long Plain Road. The Board also requested that Brian research the status of grant proposals. Brian stated that he will forward Richard's letter to Chief Sevigne.

**Scheduled Appointments:**

**Whately School Committee (JOINT MEETING) – to review, discuss and vote to fill the vacancy on the**

**Whately Elementary School Committee** - Maureen Nichols informed the Board that the School Committee received four School Committee candidates to fill the vacancy on the Whately Elementary School Committee. Jonathan suggested having a conversation tonight regarding the School Committee candidates but does not feel comfortable deciding tonight. Jonathan would prefer to give ample time for each candidate to appear and discuss their candidacy. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the position terms and decision-making process. Joyce stated that the position is a temporary one until the next election and she wanted to appoint someone to fill the vacancy at this meeting. Maureen Nichols and Robert Halla (School Committee members) felt that they had enough information from the candidate's letters to make an informed decision tonight. After much discussion, Maureen Nichols (School Committee Chair) made a motion to nominate Bethany Reilly as the Whately Elementary School Committee member (interim). Motion was seconded. Roll call vote: Maureen – yes, Bob – yes, Jonathan – yes, Joyce – abstain, Fred –

abstain.

The Board suggested writing a letter to the three interested candidates thanking them for their interest and informing them that there will be two spots open in June's election.

### **COVID19 State of Emergency**

**a. To discuss, review and consider modifications to the following:**

**i. *Directive on Town Employees Returning to Work During the COVID19 Pandemic***

The Board decided to table this discussion until their next Selectboard meeting on October 14, 2020.

**ii. *Order Reopening Town Buildings to the Public for Limited Hours and Appointment Only – discussion on outdoor meetings on town owned land***

Brian informed the Board that he reached out to the Board of Health regarding outdoor meetings on town owned land. The Board of Health replied stating that if social distancing and mask requirements are upheld, outdoor meetings could be allowed. The Board discussed that precedent has already been set with holding town interviews and the Annual Town Meeting outside. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the Selectboard's guidance on holding meetings with specific attention to non-town groups meeting on town properties, technological challenges of outdoor town meetings, open meeting law requirements, in-person meeting limits, and appropriate state guideline signage. The Board stressed the importance of complying with open meeting law requirements and recording all Town government meetings. Joyce suggested using the same COVID19 rules being used for Herlihy Field. The locations affected would be any town owned property. After much discussion, a motion was made to amend the order for Order Reopening Town Buildings to the Public for Limited Hours and Appointment Only, to provide "Outdoor spaces on town properties will be available for outdoor use consistent with the guidance from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts's Reopening Plan." Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Joyce – yes, and Fred- yes.

**iii. *Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions – discussion on recording of meeting***

The Board recommended continuing their current guidance on recording all Town Department, Boards, Committees, and Commissions meetings. Judy Markland (Planning Board member) stated that last night the Planning Board meeting was interrupted due to WIFI difficulties which caused delays in the Planning Board's agenda. The Planning Board thought that they had to terminate the meeting. Judy inquired how this type of situation should be handled? The Board recommended that all Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions assign a co-host to meetings. If the host has technical difficulties, a co-host would be able to take over and run the meeting. The original open meeting law guidance states that if a town government virtual meeting was interrupted due to technical difficulties than it should be reflected in the meeting minutes. After much discussion, a motion was made to

amend number eight on the Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions to include “ all meetings should have a co-host, who can take over the recording responsibilities if the host is unable to do so.” Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes, Fred – yes, and Jonathan – yes.

**Old Business:**

**To discuss and vote to approve a new lease with the Whately Historical Society for the Town Hall**

Adelia Bardwell (Historical Society member) and Judy Markland (Historical Society member) appeared before the Board to discuss and vote to approve a new lease with the Whately Historical Society for the Town Hall. The Whately Historical Society requested a monetary discount for the months that the building was closed due to the COVID19 outbreak. The Historical Society requested a \$45.00 discount for the prior three months that the building was closed and for every month the Town Hall continues to be closed. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the Historical Society needing to develop reopening safety protocols. The Board suggested that the Historical Society work with the Board of Health to draft a reopening plan along with a set of safety protocols. The Board inquired if the Historical Society museum would be open to the public? Judy Markland (Historical Society member) stated that they would not be opening for regular business hours, but would be interested in being open by appointment only. After a brief discussion, the Board decided that this discussion should be continued with the Board of Health and the safety protocol plan will be presented to the Selectboard at a future meeting.

Brian informed the Board that the current lease payment from the Whately Historical Society is \$1,600.00 which is paid on a quarterly basis. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the lease terms and the Historical Society’s request for a reduction/credit in the lease payment due to COVID19. A motion was made to accept the Whately Historical Society’s credit request of \$135 from the first quarterly payment due to the Town Hall being unavailable to the Tenant during the COVID19 shutdown of town buildings. Additional future credit shall also be given to Tenant for each month that the Town Hall continues to be unavailable due to the COVID19 shutdown of town buildings. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes, Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes.

A motion was made to renew the lease between the Town and the Whately Historical Society to occupy the Town Hall Interior Space, consisting of approximately 670 square feet, located at 194 Chestnut Plain Road, Whately, Massachusetts. *See Attachment A.* Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes, and Joyce – yes.

Judy Markland stated that she would like to personally thank Neal Abrahams for all his work at the Town Hall.

**To discuss and vote to approve the COMIRS Memorandum of Agreement for the public safety radio migration project**

Brian informed the Board that they have the COMIRS Memorandum of Agreement for the public safety radio migration project to consider. There were no changes to the MOA that was previously reviewed at a prior meeting. The new public safety radio system will hopefully be in use by December. A motion was made to approve signing the COMIRS Memorandum of Agreement. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

## **New Business**

### **To discuss possible projects for the Community Compact MassIT grant**

Brian informed the Board that the Community Compact MassIT grant is an annual grant and is available for all Community Compact communities. A resident on North Street inquired how they could get better internet. There are three families on North Street who inquired about getting workable internet for remote learning purposes. The Board reviewed the Town's 2012 Cable Broadband Service map. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding the Cable Broadband Service map with specific attention to North Street, Haydenville Road, Conway Road, Whately Glenn Road, Masterson Road, and anticipated Town growth. Due to the current circumstances of remote learning, this project will be listed as a high priority. The Board discussed the possibility of applying for multiple underserved locations under one project. Brian stated that he will check the grant's guidelines. Brian will work to pull together the grant application and the Board will discuss this at its next meeting.

### **To discuss winter maintenance of sidewalks on Chestnut Plain Road**

Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) informed the Board that the Sidewalk project will be finished soon, and the alternate portion of the project will be completed tomorrow. Chestnut Plain Road and the Library paving has been delayed due to the rain forecast. Keith stated that the biggest concern is the winter maintenance of the sidewalks. Keith discussed the possible options for winter maintenance with specific attention to in-house services, contractor prevailing wages, liability insurance, skateboarding/pedestrian concerns, sidewalk placement, and the need for a potential purchase of appropriate snow removal equipment. Keith recommends maintaining the new sidewalks during the winter months and not maintaining the old sidewalks. The Board had a brief discussion regarding usage of the sidewalks, in-house services cost vs. contractor costs, and surrounding towns winter maintenance of sidewalks. After much discussion, the Board requested that Keith put together a cost estimate and recommendation for winter maintenance of the sidewalks on Chestnut Plain road.

Keith informed the Board that the Williamsburg Road project is moving forward, and one of the bridges will be set tomorrow and Poplar Hill Road project is almost finished. No decision was made at this time in regards to the sidewalks.

### **Town Administrator Updates:**

Brian informed the Board that the Chestnut Plain Road Sidewalks & Crosswalks costs were higher than anticipated, but still within available budget.

Brian informed the Board that the Williamsburg Road Bridge project is moving forward.

Brian informed the Board that the Poplar Hill Road Drainage & Resurfacing project continues to move forward.

Brian informed the Board that Richard Tillberg has not accepted the appointment to the FRTA. The Board will need to appoint another Representative. Richard Tillberg suggested Catherine Wolkowicz, Housing Committee Chair. Jonathan suggested having a senior resident serves as the FRTA representative. If no luck, Fred volunteered to be the FRTA representative.

Brian informed the Board that the Whately Elementary School's tents were ordered last week. There was a brief delay to purchase because of a fire rating issue.

Brian informed the Board that the META grant not awarded.

Brian informed the Board that the Shared Streets & Spaces grant has been submitted for Whately Elementary School's sidewalk extension, school zone radar speed signs, and two other radar speed signs.

Brian informed the Board that Sue Monahan has resigned from the Tri-Town Beach Commission effective 12/31/20. The Board accepted Sue's resignation and thanked her for her years of service. In January 2021, there will be two vacancies on the Tr-Town Beach Commission.

Brian informed the Board that he would like to have a discussion regarding the possibility of creating an official social media account for the Town. Brian suggested that a social media policy be drafted for the Board to review which would include account management guidelines. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the pros/cons of information displayed on a Facebook page and current Town Department's Facebook pages. Brian expressed concern regarding public comments and suggested that public comments not be allowed. Brian will begin reviewing surrounding towns' social media policies to discuss at a future Selectboard meeting. No decision was made at this time.

Brian informed the Board that Chief Sevigne has submitted a grant application (FY21 DOJ Byrne Grant) for radar signs.

Brian informed the Board that the municipal ADA improvement grant is due October 9, 2020. Brian reached-out to the Library Trustees regarding resubmitting for the Library's lift project.

Brian informed the Board that they became aware that one of the Town's Host Community Agreement applicants has on-going legal issues in Connecticut. The Host Community agreement includes language that if someone is unable to obtain a license or a license is revoked than the Host Community agreement would not continue with the town.

Brian informed the Board that he was contacted by Debilitating Medical Conditions Treatment Center. The ZBA issued a special permit for their potential location at 7 River Road. They are currently trying to explore areas for manufacturing and processing. They would like to discuss possible re-zoning options.

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

None

The meeting was adjourned 8:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: October 14, 2020 & October 28, 2020

**Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office**

Selectboard Meeting Minutes – dated 09.09.2020

Vendor Warrant W21-07 - dated 09.14.2020

Payroll Warrant W21-08 – dated 09.28.2020

Letter from Gabe and Elizabeth Cooney - dated 09.14.2020

Letter from Luke A. Strzegowski - dated 09.21.2020

Letter from Paula M. Jenkins - dated 09.27.2020

Letter from Henry M. Frechette – dated 09.28.2020

Letter from Bethany Reilly – dated 09.28.2020

Order Reopening Town Buildings to the Public for Limited Hours and Appointments only - dated 08.26.2020

Email from BOH member, Becky Jones – dated 09.21.2020

Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions – dated 03.19.2020

Letter from the Whately Historical Society – dated 09.24.2020

Whately Historical Society's Lease – dated 10.01.2020

Memorandum of Agreement – Franklin Regional Council of Governments and the Franklin County Emergency Communication System Oversight Committee and Users of the Franklin County Emergency Communication System and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Interoperable Radio System (Attachment 1, Attachment 2, and Attachment 3)

Community Compact Information Technology Grant Program FAQ – dated 09.29.2020

Email from Cameron Lease (SEN) - dated 09.22.2020

Letter from Susan Monahan - dated 09.25.2020