

**Joint Selectboard and
Whately Water Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2020
Town Offices
Open Session via Zoom
6:00 p.m.**

A joint meeting of the Selectboard and the Whately Water Commissioners was called to order on October 28, 2020 at 6:04 p.m. by the Vice Chairperson, Jonathan Edwards. Also present via Zoom was Selectboard Member Joyce Palmer-Fortune; Whately Water Commissioners, Georgeann Dufault and George Buccala; Town Administrator Brian Domina and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

Review and vote on the meeting minutes of October 14, 2020.

The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes of October 14, 2020.
Roll call vote: 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

Jonathan expressed appreciation to the Highway Department for doing an exceptional job on the sidewalk and crosswalks project on Chestnut Plain Road. The Board thanked Keith and the Highway Department crew for a job well done.

Election Update

Lynn Sibley (Town Clerk) informed the Board that 51% of the town's voters have already cast ballots. The last day to request an absentee ballot or early voting ballot by mail was today by 5:00 p.m. Early voting is still available until Friday October 23, 2020. In-person voting will be held on November 3, 2020 at the Town Hall from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Early voting ballots must be post marked by November 3, 2020 and received by November 6, 2020. Ballots can be placed in the drop box until 8:00 p.m. on November 3, 2020. The Secretary of the State's office ordered that the ballot drop boxes be closed on Halloween from 3:00 p.m. in the afternoon until 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning. After that time, the ballot drop box will be open 24/7. A camera has been installed on the Town's drop box to catch any suspicious activity. Lynn discussed the two options for counting ballots with specific attention to advanced removal and advanced depositing. Lynn does advanced removal which allows her to take the ballots out of the envelopes to be prepared for counting on election night. The Town is a paper ballot community. Lynn Sibley (Town Clerk) and the Board encouraged registered voters to use the drop box outside of the Town Offices.

Election Day voting will be on November 3, 2020 at the Town Hall 194 Chestnut Plain Road from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Scheduled Appointments:

Whately Water Commissioners (JOINT MEETING) to review, discuss and vote to fill the vacancy on the Board of Water Commissioners

Brian informed the Board that the Whately Water Department received one Water Commissioner candidate to fill the vacancy as a Whately Water Commissioner. George Buccala (Water Commissioner) and Georgeann Dufault (Water Commissioner) nominated John Lukin as a Whately Water Commissioner (interim). Motion was seconded. Roll call vote: Georgeann – yes, George – yes, Joyce – yes, and Jonathan – yes.

Paul Newlin (Watermelon Wednesdays) to discuss a request to use the Town Hall for livestream and/or in-person events

Paul Newlin (Watermelon Wednesdays) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss his request to use the Town Hall for livestream and/or in-person events. Paul informed the Board that he would like to utilize the Town Hall space for mainly livestreaming and recording concerts. Neal Abraham (Town Hall Steward) stated that the Town Hall auditorium is currently set-up for the election. But anytime after that, the Town Hall auditorium would be available. The Board recommended that Paul create a COVID protocol/plan along with the Board of Health to present to the Board. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding the pros/cons of opening the Town Hall to specific groups, COVID protocols, Town Hall ventilation challenges, town resources, and COVID precautions. Neal Abraham (Town Hall Steward) discussed sanitation, cleaning/disinfecting protocols, air purifier purchases, and the possibility of using the town's custodian services for the Town Hall. Keith Bardwell (Building Superintendent) stated the Town's custodian is currently using his hours to maintain the Town Offices. The custodian's hours will need to be adjusted or the amount of time spent cleaning the Town Offices would need to be decreased. After much discussion, the Board recommended that Paul work with the Board of Health to create a COVID protocol plan. Paul will entertain a COVID protocol discussion with the Board of Health, but he is hesitant to proceed with his request. No decision was made at this time.

Whately Historical Society to discuss a plan to resume activities at the historical museum

Neal Abraham (Historical Society member) presented the Board with a re-opening plan to resume activities at the Whately Historical Society's museum. Neal discussed the Historical Society's re-opening plan with specific attention to air purifiers, small working groups (socially distanced), and a maximum number of occupants allowed. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the challenges of social distancing in the museum, air purifiers, and maximum number of people allowed. Fran Fortino (Board of Health Chair) informed the Board that the Board of Health reviewed and approves this plan. The Board of Health and the Selectboard recommends purchasing air purifiers and erring on the side of caution for indoor gatherings. Jonathan suggested that a sign-in sheet be created for contact tracing purposes. Neal and Adelia will revise the Historical Society's re-opening policy to include Jonathan's recommendation. A motion was made to approve the Historical Society's re-opening plan with the amendment to include the contact tracing protocol. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes and Joyce – yes.

Fran Fortino (Valley Neighbors) to discuss pursuing an age-friendly designation for Whately

Fran Fortino (Valley Neighbors) virtually appeared before the Board to discuss pursuing an age-friendly designation for Whately. Fran discussed the history of age-friendly designations, needs assessment for Senior citizens, regional planning, potential funding sources, and the application process. The Board had a brief discussion

regarding any potential financial impact on the Town, and the future of transportation services through advanced technology. Fran Fortino (Valley Neighbors) stated that as of right now and/or in the future, there is no negative impact or financial commitment on the Town. A motion was made to designate, as recommended by Fran, for Whately to become an age-friendly community. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes and Joyce – yes.

COVID19 State of Emergency

To discuss, review and consider modifications to the following:

- i. Directive on Town Employees Returning to Work During the COVID19 Pandemic*
The Board took no action and will revisit this on November 18, 2020
- ii. Order Reopening Town Buildings to the Public for Limited Hours and Appointment Only*
The Board took no action and will revisit this on November 18, 2020
- iii. Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions*
The Board took no action and will revisit this on November 18, 2020

To discuss the status of CARES Act spending and to consider additional expenses

Brian reviewed the CARES Act spreadsheet with specific attention to FEMA ineligible items, Senior Center tent and heater purchases, BOH purchase of vaccine needles, and Comcast internet expansion. FEMA stated that making schools safe is not a response cost to the emergency. The Town will have to use CARES Act funds for the schools. Comcast provided an unfavorable timeline to get the internet expansion project done before December 30, 2020.

To consider a formal grant agreement with Frontier Regional School District for its requested CARES Act funding from the Town of Whately

Brian informed the Board there this a formal grant agreement with Frontier Regional School district. It lays out the commitment to Frontier and Frontier's commitment to the Town. The Board needs to approve the grant agreement. The risk of items not being funded by the CARES Act would fall on Frontier. A motion was made to approve the formal grant agreement with Frontier Regional School District. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes and Joyce -yes.

Old Business:

To discuss snow removal from town-owned properties and sidewalks on Chestnut Plain Road

Keith Bardwell (Highway and Buildings Superintendent) appeared before the Board to discuss snow removal from town-owned properties. Brian reviewed the Town's winter maintenance needs with specific attention to the Town Hall, Town Offices, Chestnut Plain Road sidewalks. Keith Bardwell stated that there are no town funds available for contractor services and/or equipment needs. Sunderland and Deerfield plow their sidewalks with appropriate snow removal equipment. The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding treatment of the sidewalks, liability concerns, and equipment needs/costs. In previous years, the Town has not provided snow removal services for the sidewalks on Chestnut Plain road. The town's options are to hire an independent contractor, contract employee, or not maintain the sidewalks during the winter months. After much discussion, the Board

requested that Keith gather information regarding contractor pricing vs. contract employee and explore options for snow removal at the Town Offices and Town Hall. No decision was made at this time.

New Business

Whately Center Woods update and discussion on the needed culvert replacement

Keith informed the Board that he has been monitoring the Kestrel Land trust purchase along with the needed culvert replacement. Keith discussed the needed culvert replacement with specific attention to the culvert's size, project timeline, and the potential of in-kind services provide by the Highway Department. A discussion ensued regarding the Town's in-kind contribution with the culvert replacement. Jonathan strongly feels that the Town agreed to help with this culvert replacement. The Town will not be supplying material for this project. The Board requested that Keith provide in-kind services for this project, as time allows. Brian will reach-out to Mark Wamsley from Kestrel Land Trust to further discuss this project.

Notice of Proposed Acquisition - Sobieski APR, Project ID # 20B06 (River Road): to consider waiving the 120-day notice period

Brian informed the Board that the funding for the two listed APRs was approved at the last Annual Town Meeting. The Board is being asked to waive the 120-day notice period unless the Board intends on taking action not in support of the APRs. Brian read the Notice of Proposed Acquisition for the Sobieski APR. After a brief discussion, a motion was made to wave the 120-day notice period for the Sobieski APR, Project ID # 20B06 (River Road). Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes and Jonathan – yes.

Notice of Proposed Acquisition - Ashman Revocable Trust APR, Project ID # 20A02 (Long Plain Road): to consider waiving the 120-day notice period

Brian read the Notice of Proposed Acquisition for the Ashman APR. A motion was made to wave the 120-day notice period for the Ashman Revocable Trust APR, Project ID # 20A02 (Long Plain Road). Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes and Jonathan – yes.

To discuss and vote to adopt a social media policy applicable to all Town of Whately social media pages

Brian informed the Board that the Town has the following social media pages: Police Department, Recreation Commission, Library, and the Fire Department. Brian reviewed the social media policy with specific attention to public record retention, town employee expectations, and potential town liabilities. A discussion ensued regarding public comment protocol, public record laws, and appropriate use of the Town's social media pages. After much discussion, the Board will review the policy to discuss at the next Selectboard meeting. No decision was made at this time.

To consider the appointment of Paula Jenkins to the Whately Council on Aging

A motion was made to appoint Paula Jenkins to the Whately Council on Aging. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes and Joyce – yes.

Town Administrator Updates:

Brian informed the Board that the Chestnut Plain Road project is almost complete.

Brian informed the Board that for the Williamsburg Road Bridge project one bridge is completed, and one should be completed in the middle/end of November.

Brian informed the Board that the Poplar Hill Road resurfacing and drainage project is almost complete.

Brian informed the Board that the Community IT grant was submitted for \$50,000.00 for the cost of the new public safety radios.

Brian informed the Board that the Town received the electronic message boards through the CESFP grant. The RMV paperwork is almost complete and the message boards will be placed into service.

Brian informed the Board that the Planning Board scheduled a hearing for November 10, 2020 for proposed zoning amendments. They are proposing to re-zone two parcels on State Road to commercial and adding definition as to trucking establishments. More information is available on the Town's website on the Planning Board page.

Brian informed the Board that it is almost time for the tax classification hearing. The Board must vote to determine if the Town has a uniform tax rate or mixed tax rate.

Brian informed the Board that the FY21 Cherry Sheets (local aid and local charges) are available. The budget is looking favorable for the Town.

Brian informed the Board that the Town Hall parking lot light will be adjusted. The light will be turned off for a few nights so the Town's electrician can brainstorm some adjustment ideas.

Brian informed the Board that he has been working with Neal Abraham and Darcy Tozier (Cemetery Commissioners) to explore a possible expansion of the East Whately Cemetery. One possibility is to acquire land from the neighbor. Currently, that land is in APR and it would require the consent of MDAR and a vote of the State Legislature to release a portion of the land. Natalie Blais, Neal, Darcy and Brian will work with Representative Blais on making this request.

Brian informed the Board that after the last meeting he reached out to District 2 in Northampton regarding the Christian Lane railroad crossing. They suggested that the Town reach out to MassDOT rail division. Fred Orloski (Selectboard Chair) tried to get a specific contact in Boston, but he has not heard back yet. Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) contacted FRCOG to assist with this. Keith and Brian will provide Jonathan with background information on this situation.

Jonathan inquired if it was time to vote on the winter street parking ban? Brian stated that he will list this item on the agenda for the next Selectboard meeting.

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

None

The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: November 18, 2020 & December 9, 2020

Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office

Selectboard Meeting Minutes dated 10.14.2020

Payroll Warrant WP21-09 dated 10.08.2020

Vendor Warrant W21-09 dated 10.08.2020

Email from John Lukin dated 10.20.2020

Email from Fran Fortino (BOH Chair) dated 10.20.2020

Historical Society Museum Health and Safety Re-opening Policy October 2020

Email from Fran Fortino (Valley Neighbors) dated 10.13.2020

Age-Friendly Program Introduction Paperwork

COVID19 – Emergency Funding Spreadsheet

Coronavirus Relief Act – Municipal Program Sub-grantee Agreement between the Town of Whately and Frontier Regional School District

Email from Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) dated 10.26.2020

Winter Maintenance Needs Spreadsheet

Email from Mark Wamsley (Kestrel Land Trust) dated 10.23.2020

Email from Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) dated 10.26.2020

Letter from MDAR dated 10.19.2020 – Notice of Proposed Acquisition – Project ID#20B06

Letter from MDAR dated 10.19.2020 – Notice of Proposed Acquisition – Project ID#20A02

Town of Whately Social Media Policy – draft 10.22.2020

Email from Paula Jenkins dated 10.21.2020