

Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
April 14, 2021
Town Offices
Open Session via Zoom
6:00 p.m.

The open session of the Selectboard of the Town of Whately was called to order on April 14, 2021 at 6:02 p.m. by the Chairperson, Fred Orloski. Also present via Zoom was Selectboard Members Joyce Palmer-Fortune, Jonathan Edwards, Town Administrator Brian Domina, and Administrative Assistant Amy Schrader.

Review and vote on the meeting minutes of March 31, 2021.

The Board voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 31, 2021.

Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes, and Joyce – 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

Brian informed the Board that Den Denehy (resident) sent an email inquiring if there was a plan for removal and loaming/seeding for the 100 plus stumps that Eversource has left around town? Brian stated that the trees were removed by Eversource and that property owners were approached for permission. Eversource performed the majority of the tree removals on private property. Keith Bardwell (Tree Warden) stated that majority of the trees removed were on private property. A public hearing was held on March 30, 2021 for the removal of town trees. Eversource has offered to plant trees at their expense since there was a lot of trees removed in town. The Board had a brief discussion regarding Eversource's tree removal process, tree stump removal, and telephone poll replacement. Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) discussed the tree removal process with specific attention to stump removal, tree cutting, tree limb cutting, Eversource tree removal process, consent process, and private property rights. Amy Schrader (Administrative Assistant) offered to contact Eversource to obtain a copy of their tree pruning/removal waiver.

Scheduled Appointments:

None

COVID19 State of Emergency:

To review, discuss and consider modifications to the following: *Directive on Town Employees Returning to Work During the COVID19 Pandemic; Order Closing Town Buildings to the Public Except by Appointment; Guidance on Holding Meetings for Town Departments, Boards, Committees, and Commissions and the Directive on Face Coverings; or any other issues related to COVID19.*

The Board decided to table this discussion until their next Selectboard meeting on April 26, 2021.

Old Business:

To discuss and vote whether to offer in-person early voting for the June 8, 2021 local election

Brian informed the Board that this is to offer in-person early voting from May 28th to June 4th, at the Town Offices during regular pre-COVID operating hours. Early voting hours does not include weekends. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the operational concerns and COVID19 safety protocols. After a brief discussion, a motion was made to offer in-person early voting for the June 8th, 2021 local election during regular pre-COVID operating hours. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Joyce – yes, Fred – yes, and Jonathan –yes.

New Business:

To review and vote to sign APR documents for the Sobieski property

Brian informed the Board this is the paperwork to execute the Sobieski's APR. These funds were previously approved at our Annual Town Meeting. A motion was made to sign APR documents for the Sobieski property. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Fred – yes, Jonathan – yes, and Joyce – yes.

To discuss and vote on the recommendations of the Personnel Committee for fiscal year 2022

Brian informed the Board that the Personnel Committee has identified 10 comparable towns and compiled their wage/salaries information for FY21. After much review and discussion, the Personnel Committee recommended to increase the wages/salaries of seven town positions and recommends a 2% cost of living increase. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the Personnel Committee's review system, town comparisons, Assistant Assessor comparison differences, and wage/salary report accessibility concerns. Brian read the Personnel Committee's FY20 recommendations, as follows:

Assistant Assessor: to increase compensation from **\$22.82** (FY21) to **\$26.50** (FY22) based on the salary survey and information presented to the Personnel Committee by the Board of Assessors related to job responsibilities and compensation.

Highway Superintendent: to increase compensation from **\$71,673** to **\$72,332** (FY22) based on the salary survey and information provided to the Personnel Committee related to job responsibilities and compensation.

Senior Operator/Laborer: to increase compensation from **\$23.98** (FY21) to **\$25.00** (FY22) based on the salary survey.

Fire Chief: to increase compensation from **\$7,697** (FY21) to **\$10,000** (FY22) based on the salary survey.

Transfer Station Attendant: to increase compensation from **\$17.66** (FY21) to **\$18.56** (FY22) based on the salary survey.

Board Clerk (Zoning, Planning): to increase compensation from **\$17.47** (FY21) to **\$18.00** (FY22) based on the salary survey.

Election Workers: to increase compensation from **\$12.24** (FY21) to **\$14.25** (FY22) based on the salary survey and to ensure that the position is compensated at minimum wage.

The Personnel Committee sent a written recommendation to the Water Commissioners for a salary adjustment for the Water Superintendent position (\$28.36 → \$31.29). The compensation for the Water Superintendent is to be set by the Water Commissioners.

After much discussion, a motion was made to approve the increases proposed by the Personnel Committee for these seven town positions. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan -yes, Joyce – yes, and Fred - yes.

Brian reviewed the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (New England) report. The Personnel Committee took into consideration that the School's employees are receiving a 2% increase. The Board had a brief discussion regarding COLA percentage differences. A motion was made to support the Personnel Committee's 2% COLA recommendation. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan – yes, Fred – yes, and Joyce – yes.

To appoint Matthew Jakutowicz as the Town Buildings custodian –

A motion was made to appoint Matthew Jakutowicz as the Town Building Custodian. Motion was seconded. All in favor. Roll call vote: Jonathan -yes, Joyce -yes, and Fred -yes.

To discuss and vote to approve the installation of stop signs at the following intersections:

- i. Westbrook Road and Chestnut Plain Road
- ii. Westbrook Road and Haydenville Road
- iii. Dickinson Hill Road and Haydenville Road
- iv. North Street and Chestnut Plain Road

The Board had a lengthy discussion regarding potential stop sign locations with specific attention to public safety concerns, traffic control efforts, potential liability issues, and potential expert advice. Joyce strongly feels that a traffic engineer should be consulted when making these types of traffic control decisions.

Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) recommended bringing in a traffic engineer to assess the North Street and Chestnut Plain Road intersection. Fred Orloski proposed another location at Claverack Road and Chestnut Plain Road – both ends. Keith Bardwell (Highway and Building Superintendent) stated that he has not spoken to anyone at MassDOT regarding these stops sign requests. Keith suggested that all the intersections in town that currently have no regulations should be reviewed. After much discussion, Keith will follow-up with MassDOT and provide the Selectboard with a report.

To discuss traffic count requests to be submitted to FRCOG for program year 2021

Fred Orloski (Selectboard Chair) stated that there is a request from FRCOG to perform traffic counts or/and speed studies in Town. Fred recommended that a traffic count/speed study be conducted on Long Plain Road by the Whately Elementary School and Chestnut Plain/ Claverack Rd (south). There is a reduction in speed from 40 mph to 20 mph due to the school zone speed limit on Long Plain Road. The Board encourages that the Long Plain road study be conducted while the school is in session. Brian and Keith will discuss the application submission.

Town Administrator Updates:

Brian informed the Board that the Complete Streets Grant next round for construction funding is May 1st. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow at 1:00 pm. The prioritization plan will be updated based on some of the projects that have been completed. A grant application will be reviewed at the next Selectboard meeting. Laurie and Beth, Transportation Planners at FRCOG, offered their assistance.

Brian informed the Board that MVP Listening Session is scheduled for April 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm. This plan will make the town eligible for MVP action grants. Information is available on the Town's website.

Brian informed the Board that Keith, Fred, and himself have been working on the Haydenville Road Reconstruction Project. A meeting was held yesterday with MassDOT; however, no new information was provided. Keith has a few questions to propose to MassDOT regarding project limits and drainage constructions.

Brian informed the Board that he received a letter from Deerfield regarding funding for \$6 million for a new Senior Center. The Board inquired where the \$6 million dollar figure came from? Brian stated that he was not provided with that information, but will ask Deerfield if a budget can be provided. The Board discussed the proposed letter. After a brief discussion, the Board unanimously agreed to support the signing of that letter.

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

Brian (Town Administrator) informed the Board that this may be a bigger issue regarding the future of town services and town position restructure. Brian discussed the on-going challenges of filling volunteer Boards/Committees positions, potential town retirements, consultant, and his proposed temporary/full time position. The Board had a brief discussion regarding the potential of regionalization, additional town positions, expanding administrative staff, shared town position, and short/long term position. This position could potentially be funded with the American Rescue Plan Funds. Fred suggested that Brian put a reasonable amount in FY22 budget for an additional support staff.

Fred Orloski (Selectboard) informed the Board that there is a motor parade scheduled for April 24, 2021 at 3:00 pm. The Selectboard has a float that the Board members can ride on if desired. Joyce stated there is a special edition of the Scoop with the parade outline included. The next Selectboard meeting will be held on April 26, 2021 which is Town's incorporation date.

The meeting was adjourned 7:41 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Domina, Town Administrator

Next Meetings: April 26, 2021 & May 12, 2021

Document List Filed in the Selectboard Office

Selectboard Meeting Minutes dated 03.31.2021

Payroll Warrant WP21-21 dated 03.29.2021

Vendor Warrant WP21-21 dated 03.29.2021

Email from resident, Dan Denehy, dated 04.13.2021

Letter from Department of Agricultural Resources dated 04.08.2021 – Sobieski Property.

FY22 Personnel Committee Recommendations

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics – Consumer Price Index Overview Table – New England

FY22 COLA Projections

2021 Traffic Count Request Form FRCOG

Letter from Keith Morris dated 03.31.2021 – 2021 Yearly Operational Plan and 2021-2025 Vegetation Management Plan – Pan Am Railways, Inc.