



## BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, December 18, 2023

Members Present: Richard W. Brewer, Chair  
Steven J. Ouellette, Vice Chair  
Ann Boxler  
Shana Shufelt  
Manuel Soares, Clerk

Also present, James Hartnett, Town Administrator

### **6:00 p.m. Call To order & Pledge of Allegiance**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and announced:

**Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – this meeting is being recorded.**

### **Welcome Comments from the Chair**

### **Acknowledgments & Recognitions**

The Chair noted the recent passing of Lucy Lord, a former Board of Health employee, and extended the Board's condolences to the family. Mr. Hartnett reported the Governor's Dec. 14 signing of special legislation authorizing the change of the Board's official name from Board of Selectmen to Select Board. The Chair expressed thanks for the dedicated efforts of the town's Highway Department, police, and other emergency services personnel during the severe early morning storm that downed many trees and flooded roads.

### **1. Public Hearings – 6:05PM**

a. Fee Hearing – Proposed Fee Increases – see attached

Mr. Hartnett indicated that all departments had reviewed their fee schedules, compared them to fees in surrounding towns, and helped develop the attached fee schedule. He reported that the proposed fee increases have been properly posted and advertised to the public before the hearing. He indicated that the higher fees would generate \$8,000 or \$9,000 more annually for licenses and fees charged by the Select Board office, and between \$50,000 to \$100,000 more annually for all town departments. Mr. Hartnett recommended that the attached fee list be amended by changing the fee for Hix Bridge Landing permits from \$20 to \$35 per year. There was no public comment on the proposed fee schedule.

**MOTION** by Ms. Shufelt to approve the attached fee schedule with the amendment that the fee for Hix Bridge Landing permits be set at \$35 per year. Second by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

### **2. Appointments and Resignations**

a. Request to appoint Ryan Furtado as Cemetery Laborer

The Town Administrator noted that Mr. Furtado has been a dependable seasonal employee for several years, and recommended that he be hired as a full-time Cemetery Laborer effective Dec. 19, 2023, to fill a vacant position.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Ryan Furtado as a Cemetery Laborer, effective Dec. 19, 2023. Second by Ms. Shufelt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

### **3. Action Items**

a. Request from the Planning Board for comments and recommendations from the Board of Selectmen for a two lot subdivision located at 247 Gifford Road.

Mr. Hartnett said the Planning Board had requested review of plans for a two-lot subdivision on Gifford Road. After brief discussion, Board members agreed they would have no official comment on the plans.

b. Request from George Ripley, Library Director to pre-approve education reimbursement for Assistant Director Bonnie Strebel.

Mr. Hartnett indicated that a \$500 partial reimbursement for the professional coursework taken by the Assistant Director was allowed under her employment contract. He recommended approval of the request.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to approve payment of the \$500 partial reimbursement requested. Second by Ms. Shufelt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

c. Request from George Ripley, Library Director to declare several pieces of furniture at the Library surplus and authorize the Town Administrator to direct their disposal.

- 2 Large wooden tables.
- 1 atlas case
- 7 wooden chairs .
- 2 large folding tables
- 1 children's double-sided bookcase

The Town Administrator recommended approval, noting other town departments had been asked if they had need of any of the furniture.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to declare the listed furniture as surplus property, to be disposed of by auction or other means to be determined by the Town Administrator. Second by Ms. Shufelt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

d. Assign Select Board Members to participate in Union Negotiations with the Westport Permanent Firefighters Association, Police Officers of Westport Alliance, and Highway Department AFSCME Council 93.

After some discussion, the Board accepted the volunteer efforts of Mr. Ouellette as firefighter union negotiator; Ms. Shufelt as the police union negotiator; and Mr. Soares as the Highway Department employees union negotiator.

e. Request to post the Cemetery Laborer II Position

Mr. Hartnett reported the need to post a Cemetery Laborer II position and recommended the action.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to post the Cemetery Laborer II position as requested. Second by Ms. Shufelt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### **a. Town Administrator's Fiscal Year 2025 Budget**

Mr. Hartnett gave a slide presentation outlining his proposed preliminary town budget for Fiscal Year 2025, reporting projected local receipts, new growth, Free Cash figures, and a staffing plan recommending no staff reductions or eliminated public services. His list of anticipated revenues included an estimated 2.0 percent increase in state aid, a \$280,000 increase in the new growth figure, and a slight increase in investment income. On the expense side, projected increases in health insurance expenses (5%), pension assessments (5.8 %), property insurance costs (9.5 %), and state assessments (3.2%) are also expected; other proposed budget increases were also noted. The Town Administrator also provided a list of priority human resources needs not included in the preliminary budget for the Board's consideration. The list included part-time building inspector and/or clerk; a town engineer/project manager; a new highway department employee; a new fire department employee; and a human resources/assistant town administrator position. The presentation included the Town Administrator's recommendations for the use of an estimated \$3 million in Free Cash, and for a final decision on the old high school to be made during the next fiscal year. Mr. Ouellette offered his suggestions for using some of the Free Cash to fund some critical staffing needs. Ms. Shufelt questioned the town's ability to use Free Cash for new permanent positions; Mr. Brewer asked that the limitations on the use of Free Cash for staffing be investigated and reported back to the Board. The Chair advised Board members of a scheduled Jan. 3 meeting with school officials and the Finance Committee to discuss school budget requests for the coming fiscal year.

#### **5. Town Administrator Report**

Mr. Hartnett reported on a \$146,875 grant award from the state Community Compact Program which will help fund implementation of online permitting and inspection scheduling processes for various town departments. He updated the Board on DCR plans to remove an abandoned sailboat washed up on Horseneck Beach, and noted scheduled swearing-in ceremonies for the new police and fire chiefs. He reported on the recent paving work on the Town Hall parking lot, and noted continuing negotiations with UMass Dartmouth for the potential use of the old high school for furniture storage during renovations to a campus classroom building. Mr. Hartnett also reported that Congressman Keating's office is developing a plan for funding a harbor dredging operation; Mr. Soares volunteered to investigate the possibility of using dredged material for a shoreline replenishment effort at East Beach.

#### **6. Approve Minutes**

##### **a. December 4, 2023**

**MOTION** by Mr. Soares to approve the minutes of the Dec. 4, 2023 meeting of the Board as submitted. Second by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

#### **7. Report on Bill Warrant**

Ms. Boxler reported no unusual expenses on the current warrant she reviewed.

#### **8. Selectmen Liaison Committee Reports & Suggestions for Future Agenda Discussion / Action**

Ms. Boxler reported on the recent meeting of the Affordable Housing Trust, which submitted a \$300,000 request for Community Preservation Act funding for the next fiscal year. Ms. Shufelt

updated the activities of the School Building Committee steering committee. Mr. Brewer noted that a resident proposing a town meeting article banning single-use plastic bags in Westport has asked to make a presentation to the Board, tentatively set for the Jan. 87 meeting. Mr. Ouellette reported on the last SRPEDD meeting, and the upcoming Infrastructure Committee meeting. Mr. Soares added more information on Infrastructure Committee activities, and noted that Edgewater Apartments owners are investigating a possible sewer line connection that would accommodate expansion of the affordable housing development there.

#### **9. Comments and Statements**

There was no public comment offered this evening.

#### **10. Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List**

The Chair noted a welcome decrease in the number of vacant positions on the list.

#### **11. Topics not reasonably anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.**

None.

It was noted that the next regular Board meeting will be held on January 8.

#### **Adjournment**

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Second by Ms. Shufelt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

The Town of Westport does not discriminate based on disability and is committed to hosting accessible meetings. To request a reasonable accommodation to attend this meeting, please contact the municipal ADA Coordinator James Hartnett at [HartnettJ@Westport-ma.gov](mailto:HartnettJ@Westport-ma.gov).

#### **Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List**

**\*\*Committee members with terms that end in June should advise if they wish to continue\*\***

ADA Transition Plan Committee – 1 Vacancy

Agricultural Commission Alternate – 2 Vacancies (Alternate)

Bike / Walking Path Committee - 2 vacancies.

Economic Development Task Force - 3 vacancies

Energy Committee – 2 vacancies.

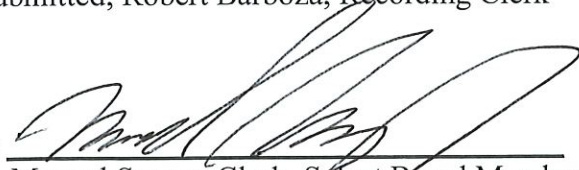
Fence Viewers – 1 vacancy.

Safety Regulation Board - 1 vacancy.

**\*\* Committees are kindly requested to advise who serves as chair, vice chair and clerk \*\***

Respectfully submitted, Robert Barboza, Recording Clerk

**APPROVED:**

  
Manuel Soares, Clerk, Select Board Member

**FILE ATTACHMENTS:**

3a Planning Board - Rosewood Lane  
3b Library - Tuition Reimbursement  
3c Library – Furniture  
3d WFD Negotiation Request  
6a 12042023 Minutes  
TA Report Sailboat Email  
TA Select Board Legislation  
Budget Information Draft Update 12-18  
2024 Fees