



## BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, Aug. 16, 2021

Members Present: Shana M. Shufelt, Chair  
Steven J. Ouellette, Vice Chair  
Richard W. Brewer, Clerk  
Ann E. Boxler  
Absent: Brian Valcourt

Also Present: Timothy King, Town Administrator

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

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with above members present. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Chair announced that under provisions of Mass. General Laws, the meeting was being recorded.

### **1. Acknowledgments & Recognitions**

None.

### **2. Covid Update**

Director of Public Health Matthew Armendo and Board of Health Chair Tanja Ryden were present to update the Board on the new surge in coronavirus cases. Mr. Armendo detailed the rapid increase in reported cases of Covid-19 in the past six weeks: July 1-15, 2 new cases; July 16-31, 28 new cases; and Aug. 1-15, 60 new cases. Residents testing positive were mostly unvaccinated, with many patients being children; 64 percent of the population have been partly or fully vaccinated; two residents have been hospitalized with serious symptoms. The Board of Health is recommending the Select Board order wearing face masks in all indoor municipal facilities under its control, not including schools; and further order weekly testing for all town employees who are not vaccinated. Mr. Armendo noted that Westport Apothecary and CVS in Westport have good supplies of all vaccines, and other area vaccination sites are available; all residents over 12 who are eligible for vaccination are urged by the BOH to get vaccinated as soon as possible to help curb the spread of the Delta variant hitting Bristol County at high levels. He further indicated that the BOH is working to develop a vaccination incentive program with Westport Apothecary; at present, the town is getting reports of six new cases per day.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to require employees and the public to wear masks in all municipal buildings, excluding schools, whenever within six feet of another person, until further notice. Seconded by Mr. Brewer, the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

The requirement extends to all public meetings held in those municipal buildings; town employees may stay unmasked if working alone, or not within six feet of another person, Ms. Ryden explained. She advocated for mandated testing for unvaccinated employees, citing the increasing risk of transmission of the Delta variant, with the unvaccinated at the highest risk of infection and most likely to be a carrier. The rapid antigen test proposed for use produces results in 15 minutes; a positive test result would be followed up with a more reliable test and patient isolation for 10 days or the disappearance of any symptoms. Both

the Chair and Mr. Ouellette expressed support for recommended testing, but voiced concerns about testing logistics and an official mandate; no votes were taken.

The Health Director also updated the Select Board on the continuing staffing issues at the transfer station, which have resulted in the BOH ordering two weekend closures of the station, through Aug. 22. The Highway Department and Cemetery Department have been helping out at the station when possible, but the assistance is limited. The transfer station is also unable to accept bulky debris or construction and demolition material through Aug. 27, he reported. Mr. Armendo also noted that the Animal Control Department has received numerous complaints of dogs being left in cars during the recent spell of hot weather. He indicated it is unsafe for pets to be left in cars, even for 10 minutes, during the summer months, as temperatures can quickly rise to a dangerous level; residents were urged not to do so.

**6:05 pm**

**3. Licenses/Permits.**  
**Public Hearings**

Cumberland Farms - Change of Beneficial Interest:

Mr. King indicated this hearing was required by the sale of the company to a new corporation; the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission has recommended the licenses be transferred to the new entity.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to approve the Change of Beneficial Interest request, and transfer the licenses held by Cumberland Farms to the new owners. Seconded by Mr. Brewer. The motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

**No Public Hearing**

Request for 1 Day Wine & Malt License Weatherlow Farms Friday, Sept. 11, 5-9PM.

Owner Ryan Wagner was present, seeking a 1-Day Wine & Malt License for Weatherlow Farms, for a Farm Dinner to be held from 5 to 9 p.m. on Sept. 11, 2021.

**MOTION** by Mr. Brewer to approve the 1-Day Wine & Malt License for Weatherlow Farms, from 5 to 9 p.m. on Sept. 11, 2021. Seconded by Ms. Shufelt. The motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

**4. Appointments and Resignations**

a. Beach Committee – Paula Brown

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Paula Brown to the vacancy on the Beach Committee. Seconded by Mr. Brewer. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

b. Authorization to Post Town Planner Position

Planning Board Chair Robert Daylor was present to seek authorization to post the Town Planner position, being vacated by the likely hire as the new Town Administrator. Mr. Daylor suggested that the early posting of the position before it was officially vacated would reduce the time the important post was left unfilled.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to post the position of Town Planner, subject to the successful negotiation of an employment agreement for the Town Administrator post with the current Town Planner. Seconded by Ms. Shufelt. The motion passed on a 4-0 vote.



## **5. Discussion**

### **Presentations of Proposed America Rescue Plan Projects & Prioritization**

The Chair indicated that she and Mr. Brewer have been working with a group including Finance Committee members to develop spending priorities for Rescue Plan funds coming to the town. All departments were asked to submit recommendations for potential projects, reviewed by the working group and summarized on a chart presented on the meeting room's big screen. Ms. Shufelt noted that \$839,127.80 in ARP funds have been received, and a similar amount is expected in 2022; departments submitted over \$3 million in project recommendations, but only \$1.6 million in ARP funds will be available. Mr. Brewer noted that between \$2.5 and \$3 million in relief aid for Westport is expected through funds to be distributed by Bristol County; restrictions on spending have not yet been announced. The Chair noted that replacement of lost municipal revenues was not on the priority list of projects to be reviewed this night.

Items on the potential priority list included: BOS – licensing & permitting software \$10K; COA – roof replacement supplemental funding \$34K, supportive day respite services \$50K, and supportive day staffing \$27.3K; BOH – health clinics, staffing, equipment \$90K, trailer for mobile clinics \$15K; IT – fiber optic network extension \$1.65 million; Planning Board – Sewer design Phase One and Rt. 6 preliminary plan \$650K, and Sewer design for Rt. 6 detail and Water Master Plan \$900K. Mr. King spoke in favor of the licensing and permitting software, noting potential efficiency improvements that could be implemented with the new system. The COA Director indicated \$25,000 to \$30,000 was needed to supplement the \$85,000 in CPA funds allocated for the roof replacement because of skyrocketing lumber and materials prices. She also reported that the COA did not renew its contract with Bristol Elder Services for supportive day services because the rate increases were too high; the \$77.3K requested would provide town staffing for in-house program services, to be billed at \$50 per day instead of the current \$41 per day. She suggested the ARP funds could get the revised program running for the first year; the current program is being offered one day per week, under appropriate social distancing guidelines. She noted that the Friends of the COA have donated \$2,500 for scholarship funds for the program, with another \$2,500 pledged by the Community Foundation of SE Mass. for scholarships for residents.

Mr. Armendo detailed the BOH's proposed projects, including funding health and vaccination clinics, and outfitting a trailer for onsite or mobile clinics; purchasing vaccine storage equipment and PPE supplies; hiring surge staffing, data entry personnel for increased reporting requirements, and additional public nurse help. There was general consensus among Board members that these projects should be high priorities for funding. IT Director Keith Novo updated the status of the current fiber optic expansion project linking all town buildings, and said the proposed project would extend that service into the community, creating six or seven major loops that network service providers could easily tap into for further extension of affordable fiber optic service into different neighborhoods across town. The \$1.6 million recommended would finance design, planning, and construction of the multiple loops, he indicated. Planning Board Chair Robert Daylor referenced a memo detailing his board's recommendation that the \$650,000 for the planning and design of municipal water and sewer line extensions to Route 88 be made a priority. Investing another \$900,000 in pending relief funds to the projects would produce bid-ready plans that should qualify for millions more in federal infrastructure aid money, he suggested.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to select the \$650,000 in planning and design funding for water and sewer lines, and the \$105,000 in Board of Health spending recommendations for health services as the Board's initial allocations from the \$839,127 in ARP funds available. Seconded by Ms. Shufelt, the motion passed on a 4-0 vote.

## **6. Action Items**

- a. Accept Donations for the Westport Veteran's Memorial from Robert & Nancy Brage, \$50; Paul Schmid, \$250; Norman & M. Irene Buck \$100.

Veterans Service Officer Carol Freitas reported the above donations to the memorial project, bringing the total donated to \$23,320; after anticipated expenses of \$17,618 and a possible \$2,087 expenditure for security cameras, the balance is projected at \$5,700 to be committed to a maintenance fund.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to accept the donations as listed. Seconded by Ms. Boxler. The motion passed 4-0.

- b. Accept Donations for the Westport Food Pantry from Thomas & Claire McCabe - \$50; William L. Pardee - \$50; Tanja Ryden - \$50; Cash from various anonymous donors - \$150; Lee's Gift Card from Anonymous Donor - \$20.

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to accept the donations as listed. Seconded by Ms. Boxler. The motion passed 4-0.

- c. Request for Comment to Planning Board – Silverback Construction Rte 177 & Cheryl's Way. None.

- d. Approve Change Orders for 2020 Chapter 90 Roadway Improvements – Highway Surveyor Tabled, with a request for more information from the Highway Surveyor.

## **7. Town Administrator Report**

Mr. King provided updates on the energy consultant's Clean Energy Report on the use of Green Communities fund; the installation of a new electric vehicle charging station at the Annex; and the status of liquor license quotas. He also indicated that the Audit Committee is reviewing the auditor's management letter, and wants to meet with the Board to discuss the recommendations; the Board also wants the auditor to attend the meeting. Mr. King was also pleased to report the Treasurer's Office has completed bank reconciliations through the end of June; the Board applauded the commendable effort.

## **8. Approve Minutes** July 19, 2021, July 26, 2021, August 2, 2021.

**MOTION** by Mr. Brewer to approve the minutes of the July 19, July 26, and Aug. 2, 2021 minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The vote was 4-0 in favor.

## **9. Report on Bill Warrant**

Ms. Boxler reported all in order on the last warrant.

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

Ms. Boxler noted topics of interest at the last COA meeting, and pointed out that the fiber optic network expansion, and the extension of municipal water and sewer lines were among the priorities set out in the master plan update now underway. Mr. Brewer reported that the Audit Committee was reviewing the audit report, and was pleased there were no material weaknesses in policy/practice indicated. Ms. Shufelt said the School Building Committee was still on track for a September opening of the new facilities.

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

The Chair noted some of the outstanding opportunities for volunteer public service existing on the current vacancy list.

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

## **13. Comments and Statements**



Resident Jon Alden asked for some clarification on the vote to prioritize ARP spending, which was reviewed by the Chair. She indicated the allocations leave about \$84,000 of the total \$839,127 in ARP funds received uncommitted.

**14. Executive Session** – pursuant to the provisions of MGL c 30A section 21(a), Chair declares an open meeting will have a detrimental effect to:

- a. Discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining Labor Advantage for Workers (3)
- b. Discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining Westport Police Assn.
- c. Approve Open Meeting Law Complaint Response Letter
- d. Discuss Town Administrator Employment Agreement
- e. Approve Executive Session Minutes – August 2, 2021

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette at 7:20 p.m. to enter into Executive Session to discuss the items listed in the Chair's declaration. Seconded by Mr. Brewer. The motion passed on a 4-0 roll call vote: Brewer, aye; Ouellette, aye; Shufelt, aye; Boxler, aye.

### **Adjournment**

Respectfully submitted, Robert Barboza, Recording Clerk

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ Richard Brewer, Clerk, Select Board Member