



BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, Sept. 13, 2021

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

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. 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. The Chair also welcomed James Hartnett to his first meeting of the Select Board as the new Town Administrator.

1. Acknowledgments & Recognitions

Ms. Shufelt recognized resident Jim Coyne, local advocate for the National Ataxia Foundation (NAF), to speak about the neurological disease that has affected 10 Westport families. Mr. Coyne said the fatal disease attacks the brain, and victims gradually lose their ability to speak, walk, and control their bodily functions. He supports the NAF's continued research to find a cure for the disease, and raises awareness for the cause by asking the Select Board to annually recognize Sept. 25 as National Ataxia Awareness Day.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to issue a proclamation declaring Sept. 25, 2021 as Ataxia Awareness Day in Westport. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

2. Covid Update

Director of Public Health Matthew Armendo was not present, but sent an update which was read by the Chair. The town has had 57 new cases reported between Sept. 1 and Sept. 12, with most cases involving unvaccinated residents; two residents are currently hospitalized because of the virus. The Chair noted that vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against the virus, and urged all eligible residents to get vaccinated as soon as possible. At present, about 66 percent of the town's residents have been vaccinated. Ms. Shufelt also noted that there is a face mask requirement in place for all town buildings, and a BOH recommendation that masks be worn in other public indoor settings where six feet of social distancing cannot be maintained. More pandemic updates and information is available on the Board of Health website.

6:05 pm

3. Licenses/Permits.

Public Hearings: None

No Public Hearing

- a. Request for 1 Day Wine & Malt License Holy Ghost Club, Sept. 25

b. Request for 1 Day Wine & Malt License Holy Ghost Club, Sept. 26

c. Request for 1 Day Wine & Malt License Holy Ghost Club, Oct. 2

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to approve 1 Day Wine & Malt Licenses for the Holy Ghost Club on Sept. 25, Sept. 26, and Oct. 2, subject to Police Dept. recommendations. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

d. Request for 1 Day Wine & Malt License Lafrance Bros. Inc. Event at Westport Fairgrounds, 200 Pine Hill Rd. Oct. 10, 2021

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to approve the 1-Day Wine & Malt License for Lafrance Bros. Inc. on Oct. 10, 2021, subject to Police Dept. recommendations. Seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

4. Appointments and Resignations

a. Appoint Paula Brown as Board of Selectmen Administrative Assistant/ Confidential Secretary. Mr. Hartnett indicated he and Mr. Brewer had interviewed candidates, and he recommended the appointment of Ms. Brown.

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to appoint Paula Brown as Board of Selectmen Administrative Assistant/Confidential Secretary, effective Sept. 27, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

b. Appoint Robert Marshall as Town Hall Custodian. Mr. Hartnett recommended Mr. Marshall's appointment.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Robert Marshall as Town Hall Custodian, effective Sept. 20, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

c. Appoint Amy Messier of Somerset as Assistant Planner. Mr. Hartnett indicated that four good candidates had been interviewed, and he was recommending the appointment of Ms. Messier.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Amy Messier as Assistant Planner, effective Sept. 27, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

d. Appoint Rebecca Priest as Part Time Building Department Clerk. Mr. Hartnett recommended the appointment.

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to appoint Rebecca Priest as Part Time Building Department Clerk, effective Sept. 20, 2021. Seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The motion passed on a 4-0-1 vote, with Mr. Valcourt abstaining.

e. Appoint Jim Hartnett as Town Representative to South Mass. Health Group; Chief Procurement Officer; Affirmative Action Officer; National Organization on Disability Representative; Capital Improvement Planning Committee; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator; Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act Coordinator; Secondary Records Access Officer.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Jim Hartnett as Town Representative to South Mass. Health Group; Chief Procurement Officer; Affirmative Action Officer; National Organization on Disability Representative; Capital Improvement Planning Committee; Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator; Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act Coordinator; Secondary Records Access Officer. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

5. Discussion

a. 2022 License Renewals: The Chair noted a list of alcoholic, motor vehicle, and mechanics' licenses were provided in the meeting packet, and asked Board members to consider blanket approval of the list if there were no outstanding issues. Mr. Ouellette indicated there have not been any inspections of car lots recently, since the Police Dept. staffer doing the job has retired; the Town Administrator was asked to see if other Police Dept. personnel can take over the inspection duties. Tax Collector Susan Brayton asked for a copy of the list to check for tax delinquents.

b. Excise Tax Demand Fee: Ms. Brayton had been asked to attend to discuss the demand fee for late excise tax bills. Mr. Ouellette said there was a longstanding problem with residents not getting mail, or mail arriving late, including excise tax bills. He protested the \$30 demand fee he was charged for an unpaid bill, which he never received; it was one of four or five excise tax bills which he gets every year. Mr. Ouellette asked that public input be solicited for his proposal to reduce the demand fee. Ms. Brayton indicated she was aware of the failures of the U.S. Postal Service, but noted tax bills are due and payable on the indicated date whether received by the property owner or not. By law, she cannot waive or abate any demand fees; residents can sign up for online bill payment, which includes a reminder function. She suggested the Board reconsider trying to reduce the demand fee, which contributed about \$130,000 in local revenues for the town in Fiscal Year 2021.

c. Climate Resilience Committee: Planning Board Chair James Whitin was present to request the formation of a Climate Resilience Committee, as recommended by the recently-completed East Beach study. He suggested appointment of two Select Board members, two Planning Board members, Highway and Building Dept. representatives, and delegates from the Board of Health, Beach Committee, AgCom, Police and Fire Departments, state Dept. of Conservation and Resources, and local environmental groups. The large committee could be broken up into work groups to accomplish specific assigned tasks, under the "supervision" of a five-person executive group, he indicated. Planning Board member John Bullard supported the proposal, saying a climate change response effort will involve many town departments; he recommended one member from the Select Board and one member from the Planning Board be picked as co-chairs to coordinate member efforts. He suggested outside consultants will be needed to help assess problem areas and plan for future actions. Ms. Shufelt said interested volunteers should contact the Select Board Office within 30 days, with appointments to be voted in October.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to approve the formation of a Climate Resilience Committee, with the recommended representation. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

6. Action Items

a. Approve Memorandum of Agreement with Pond Meadow Water Trust: Mr. Brewer detailed the past history of water company claims that town workers repairing the culvert over Herring Run Brook had damaged the private waterline; there was no evidence the town was responsible for any damage, but the former town administrator had negotiated a compromise measure, a Memorandum of Agreement stating the Trust would pay for repairs, while the Highway Dept. would dig access trenches for the work. Mr. Brewer felt the MOA was too brief, and should be reviewed by the new town administrator; he wanted some assurances that other private water companies could also use the new sleeve installed for the repaired water line. Mr. Valcourt suggested all the private water lines should be replaced at the same time, with the Pond Meadow Water Trust MOA serving as a model for agreements with the other companies. Mr. Whitin recommended a delay in signing the MOA, noting it was likely the site would be dug up again in the near future to accommodate other line repairs. He suggested the long-term solution was a municipal water system serving the private water company customers; ARPA funds could

be used to finance a municipal system, and/or the installation of underground sleeves to accommodate all private water lines crossing the brook.

Keith Watson and three other members of the Westport Harbor Water Association were present to oppose the MOA signing. Mr. Watson cited an association letter indicating salt water intrusion had degraded its well, forcing them to find a new well site; with no sites available south of Herring Run Brook, they will need to run a line over the brook from a new well next summer. He urged a delay of work until that time, to be economical and cause less disruption to the sensitive environment by allowing the association to cooperate on the installation of new sleeves for water lines. Select Board members agreed that Mr. Hartnett would try to coordinate work plans with all interested parties, with the MOA to be revisited at a later date.

b. Approve Contract with Kleinfelder Northeast Inc. for Water/Sewer Design on Route 6 using ARPA Funds: Planning Board member Robert Daylor was present to recommend approval of the contract for Route 6 water and sewer extensions, so the project will be "shovel ready" for potential federal infrastructure improvement aid or county-held federal relief funding. The first phase of design work will be funded with a \$650,000 allocation of ARPA funds; this contract will continue extensions of lines in a second phase.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to approve the contract with Kleinfelder Northeast for Water/Sewer Line design services. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

7. Town Administrator Report

With Mr. Hartnett having only 10 hours on the job so far, this item was passed over.

8. Approve Minutes August 30, 2021.

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to approve the minutes of the Aug. 30, 2021 minutes as presented. Seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

9. Report on Bill Warrant

Ms. Boxler reported no issues with the warrant.

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

Mr. Brewer indicated that a meeting date with the auditor and Audit Committee has not yet been finalized. He noted the Capital Improvement Planning Committee should meet as soon as Mr. Hartnett is settled into his new position; Mr. King had served as CIPC chair. He also urged the Board to consider action on the COA request for \$50,000 in funding for mental health services at the next meeting. Mr. Ouellette called for the remembrance of Westport resident Diane Snyder, a victim of terrorists on 9/11. He reported touring the new school, and called for an agenda item addressing streamlined permitting. Mr. Valcourt reported no recent meetings, but is planning to call the campground committee to its first meeting soon. Ms. Boxler voiced her support for the COA funding request for health services, and reported on the Buzzards Bay Area Habitat for Humanity groundbreaking ceremony on Sept. 10; the nonprofit is building an affordable duplex on Sodom Road lot donated by the Affordable Housing Trust. Ms. Shufelt reported her attendance at that groundbreaking ceremony, citing a great partnership between Habitat for Humanity, the Affordable Housing Trust, and supporters such as BayCoast Bank. The new school opened on time, and is still under budget, she reported; some interior finish work remains to be done, and work continues on the new athletic fields.

11. Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List

The Chair noted the numerous vacancies on town boards and commissions; Mr. Ouellette asked the community cable coordinator to advertise the vacancies on the public access channel.

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

None.

13. Comments and Statements

None.

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

- a. Discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with Westport Police Association
- e. Approve Executive Session Minutes – August 30, 2021


MOTION by Mr. Ouellette at 7:18 p.m. to enter into Executive Session to discuss the items listed in the Chair's declaration. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: Brewer, aye; Ouellette, aye; Shufelt, aye; Valcourt, aye; Boxler, aye.

Adjournment

The Board returned to open session and the Chair called for adjournment.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Brewer. Motion passed 5-0 on a roll call vote: Boxler, aye; Brewer, aye; Ouellette, aye; Valcourt, aye; Boxler, aye; Shufelt, aye.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Barboza, Recording Clerk

APPROVED:  Richard Brewer, Clerk, Select Board Member