



BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, Nov. 22, 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 meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. with the above members present. The Chair read the notice advising the public that the meeting was being recorded. The meeting commenced with the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Acknowledgments & Recognitions

The Chair recognized Assistant Harbormaster Jonathan Paull, retiring after 32 years in that position, in the audience with members of his family. Ms. Shufelt read notes provided by Marine Services Director Chris Leonard detailing Mr. Paull's many contributions to the Harbormaster's Department over the years. Former Harbormaster Richie Earl recalled Mr. Paull being recruited in 1989 to join the staff, and having spent many weekends serving residents and visitors to local waters. Mr. Earl described him as dependable, dedicated, and loyal to the department over three decades of service. Thanks and praise for his efforts were also provided by Mr. Brewer, Mr. Ouellette, and Mr. Valcourt. Ms. Shufelt read the official town citation of appreciation for 32 years of faithful service to the town. Mr. Brewer also made note of the Nov. 12 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new junior/senior high school, where Ms. Shufelt and Mr. Hartnett received plaques recognizing their valuable contributions to the School Building Committee during the planning and construction process.

2. Covid Update

The Chair offered an update provided by the Public Health Department indicating a recent surge of COVID-19 cases has Westport back in the Red/High Risk category of communities. There have been 107 new cases reported among Westport residents since Nov. 1. The Board of Health is recommending the mask mandate for public buildings remain in effect until the incidence level has returned to Yellow/Moderate level for three consecutive weeks. Town resident testing is at a 5.96 positivity rate, more than double the state average; at least 72 percent of residents are currently at least partially vaccinated, with numbers up due to the start of new 5 to 11 year old vaccinations, the BOH reported. It was noted that a vaccine clinic for residents will be held at the old high school campus on Dec. 3, with all COVID vaccines, boosters, and flu shots available. More information is available on the Board of Health page on the town website.

3. Licenses/Permits

None.

4. Appointments and Resignations

a. Request from Ron Costa to be re-appointed to Citizens for Citizens as the Town of Westport representative.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Ron Costa as the town's representative to Citizens for Citizens. Second by Mr. Valcourt. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

b. Accept the Retirement of Jonathan Paull from the Harbor Master Department, after 32 years of service.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to accept the resignation of Mr. Paull from the Harbormaster Department, with a letter of regret to be sent to the retiree. Second by Mr. Brewer. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

c. Request to appoint Tony Viveiros to the Long Term Building Committee.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Tony Viveiros to the Long Term Building Committee. Second by Mr. Ouellette. The vote was 5-0 in favor.

5. Discussion

a. Route 177- Robert Street Roundabout, Update from Pare Engineering

Keith MacDonald of Pare Engineering was present for an update on plans for a roundabout at the intersection of Route 177 and Tickle and Robert Roads. He reviewed the current conditions, including a flashing caution light, a posted 50 mph speed limit, and a history of eight auto accidents at the site in the past three years resulting in numerous injuries and one fatality. MassDOT judged the best solution to the safety issues to be slowing down traffic with the installation of a rotary circle, to be funded with state and federal monies if the town assumes responsibility for design costs, and designs to MassDOT standards. The town has secured a \$150,000 traffic safety grant to cover design costs; 25 percent design plans for the roundabout and related improvements have been submitted to MassDOT for review, Mr. MacDonald reported. He provided display copies of plans including streetlights at approaches, crosswalks, a five-foot sidewalk on Robert Street, and an eight-foot bike lane on Tickle Road. Mr. Valcourt noted he regularly uses those roads, and regularly sees numbers of pedestrians and cyclists on the roadways who would benefit from slower traffic and safe crosswalks at the busy intersection. Mr. MacDonald said the first public hearing on the plans is tentatively scheduled for April; design plans should be finished by October 2022, and advertising for bids planned for March 2024. Mr. Hartnett indicated the rough estimate is a \$2 million project, likely to get complete state or federal funding if the town is willing to wait for that financial assistance.

b. Tree Lighting

The Chair indicated that the local Boy Scout Troop has requested permission to decorate the trees in front of Town Hall with electric lights as they have in past years, on Dec. 4. It was also noted that the Westport Recreation Department will be lighting up a holiday tree at Westport Woods at 4 p.m. on Dec. 2.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to allow the Boy Scouts to decorate the trees at Town Hall for the holidays on Dec. 4. Second by Mr. Ouellette. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

6. Action Items

a. Request from Superintendent Thomas Aubin to use the campground property on Old County Road for emergency access.

The Chair provided details on the Superintendent's request to extend a gravel driveway through the campground property to provide emergency vehicles with temporary access to the elementary school parking lot. The required tree removal, road clearing, and gravel spreading would be done by the Highway Department. Mr. Valcourt indicated the Campground Use Committee has not been able to meet, but no members he has spoken with objected to the temporary access road.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to approve the temporary access road over the campground property for emergency vehicle use. Seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

7. Town Administrator Report

Mr. Hartnett provided additional details on topics including receipt of the \$380,000 state grant for the Route 6 water and sewer line extension; receipt of most department budget proposals, with individual follow-up meetings with department heads planned; and the first meeting of the budget season by the Capital Improvement Planning Committee. He also reported on meetings by town officials with Westport Point residents regarding traffic and safety improvements at the southern end of Main Road. Guide line painting, a center island at the turn-around, some limited paving work, and re-striping the parking area at the mud dock have been identified as the priorities for immediate action; Chapter 90 highway aid funding will be sought. Mr. Hartnett also issued a public warning to residents to take extra care driving between dusk and dawn, as deer mating season has the animals more active than usual. He cited a AAA report naming Westport as the number one "deer crash" community in the Commonwealth last year at this time.

8. Approve Minutes

a. November 8, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to approve the minutes of the Nov. 8, 2021 regular meeting as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 vote.

b. November 3, 2021 Dog Hearing Minutes

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to approve the minutes of the Nov. 3, 2021 dog hearing as submitted. Seconded by Ms. Boxler. The motion passed on a 4-0-1 vote, with Mr. Valcourt abstaining because he was not present at that meeting.

9. Report on Bill Warrant

Ms. Boxler reported nothing unusual about the bill warrant.

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

Ms. Boxler noted that the Affordable Housing Trust has expressed an interest in participating in discussions about the future fate of the old high school with the Long Term Building Committee; the COA is setting up a scholarship program for the senior day program, as some families are having problems paying fees during the pandemic. Mr. Valcourt reported that the Energy Committee continues to review action proposals, and noted the Capital Improvement Planning Committee is seeing its first requests for funding for the next fiscal year. Mr. Ouellette thanked the Highway Department for assisting with the posting of flags for Veterans Day ceremonies; he noted poor internet service and lack of a cable box drop-off site were the most common complaints at the license renewal public hearing conducted by the Cable Advisory Board. Mr. Brewer detailed activities at recent SRPEDD and CIPC meetings. Ms. Shufelt noted the wonderful Veterans Day ceremonies held last week; her attendance at the ribbon-cutting for the new school; Route 6 project plans presented to Westport Business 2 Business meeting; and her attendance with Ms. Boxler at a promotion ceremony for Westport's newest Eagle Scouts. She also noted that tours of the new school will be offered as soon as the work completion checklist is completed; the project remains under budget, and the building committee still holds \$3 million in unspent contingency funds.

11. Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List

The Chair noted all the listed vacancies, and asked residents to please volunteer for suitable openings by applying to the Selectmen's Office. ADA Transition Plan Committee – 1 vacancy (COD Rep). Agricultural/Open Space Preservation Trust Fund Council – 1 vacancy (CIPC Rep) Agricultural Commission Alternate – 2 Vacancies. Bike / Walking Path Committee - 2 vacancies. Energy Committee – 3 vacancies. Fence Viewers – 1 vacancy. Personnel Board – 2 vacancies. Recreation Commission – 3 vacancies. Safety Regulation Board - 1 vacancy. Tax Incentive Program Committee (1 vacancy –Westport Economic Development Task Force Rep). Westport Citizen's Betterment Committee – 1 vacancy. Westport Cultural Council – 1 vacancy.

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 declares an open meeting will have a detrimental effect to:

a. Approve the Executive Session Minutes of November 8, 2021

b. To Discuss strategy – Diane F. Cramphin vs. Town of Westport - Adamsville Landing Case

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette at 6:57 p.m. to enter into Executive Session for the reasons declared by the Chair. Second by Mr. Valcourt. The motion passed on a 5-0 roll call vote: Brewer, aye; Ouellette, aye; Valcourt aye; Boxler aye; Shufelt aye.

Adjournment

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

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Brewer. Motion passed 5-0 and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Barboza, Recording Clerk

APPROVED:
Member



Richard Brewer, Clerk, Select Board