



BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, March 6, 2023

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

Also Present: James Hartnett, Town Administrator

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

Acknowledgments & Recognitions

Richard "Sweet Pea" Hart, was recognized as being a lifelong Westport Resident, supporter of the Westport Shellfish Association, he also served as Asst. Harbor Master & Wharfinger. Mary Wood McCarthy, was also recognized as being very active in the Westport Congregational Church Thrift Shop, she was a member of the Westport Women's Club, and served as a Girl Scout Leader. Ms. Shufelt offered sincere Condolences to the Hart and McCarthy Families.

Public Hearings - none

1. Licenses/Permits – none

2. Appointments and Resignations

- a. Request from Matt Armendo, Board of Health Director to appoint Brandon Weingold as Transfer Attendant II, effective March 9, 2023.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Brandon Weingold as Transfer Attendant II, effective March 9, 2023, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- b. Request from George Stelljes to be appointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an Associate Member.

Mr. Stelljes addressed the Board noting his many accomplishments as a 20yr Army Veteran.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Mr. Stelljes to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an Alternate Member, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- c. Request from Allison Valton to accept her resignation from the Board of Registrars.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to accept the resignation of Allison Valton with a letter of thanks, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- d. Request from Carrie Cunha to be appointed to the Personnel Board.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Carrie Cunha to the Personnel Board, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

3. **Action Items**

- a. Request from Dharma Voyage for 4 Hixbridge Landing Passes.
Cindy Zembo, Co-President of the Dharma Voyage Rowing Club addressed the Board, noting the program runs from May – November, they have four wooden boats, 92 members and they row 6 days a week. They offer a Youth Rowing Program in the summer and they are partnered with the High School with their Boat Building Class. Dharma Voyage is willing to pay the fee for the passes. Mr. Valcourt added that this is a great program.
MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to grant the 4 Hix Bridge Landing passes to Dharma Voyage, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5- 0 in favor.
- b. Requests from George Ripley, Library Director
 - to promote Principal Clerk Bonnie Strebel, Senior Clerk, to Assistant Director/Children's Librarian effective Monday, March 20, 2023.
Mr. Ripley addressed the Board noting that Ms. Streel started in 2007, in 2014 was named Principal Clerk and holds a Master's Degree in Library Studies.
MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to promote Bonnie Strebel to Assistant Director/Children's Librarian, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
 - to increase Principal Clerk Amy Medeiros' weekly hours to 40 hours, effective Monday, March 20th, 2023.
MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to increase Amy Medeiros' weekly hours to 40, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
 - to post the Library Principal Clerk Position
MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to post the Principal Clerk Position, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- c. Request from the Planning Board for comments regarding Special Permit for Flexible Frontage Plat 69 Lot 12, 559 Main Road.
No Comments
- d. Request from Martin Costa to hold the Annual Spring Clean Our Westport (COW) Day on Saturday, April 15, 2023, 9:00am – 12:00pm.
Mr. Ouellette spoke on behalf of Martin Costa.
MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Annual Spring Clean Our Westport on Saturday, April 15, 2023, also the banner across the road, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- e. Review Capital Improvement Planning Committee Report
Mr. Brewer addressed the Board, noting that the ARPA Funds helped with funding some of the requests, two Police Cruisers and Pick Up Truck. This report completes the process and will be submitted to the Finance Committee. Ms. Shufelt added that the items that didn't make the cut are important, and will be moved to the top of the list for next year.

Springbook Cloud Software	\$121,000
Town Hall Parking Lot Patching	\$ 20,000
Fire Department Heating System	\$ 30,000

Town Hall Pickup Truck	\$ 45,000
WES Parking Lot	\$170,000
Highway Mini Excavator	\$235,000
WES Clock-pager	\$ 80,000
Police Cruiser	<u>\$ 60,000</u>
Free Cash	\$761,000

IT relocate internet Demarc	\$ 32,000
IT Public Safety Radio Hardware	\$250,000
Battery Backups	\$ 25,000
School Two Way Radios (reduced to \$75k)	<u>\$ 75,000</u>
ARPA Funds	\$382,000

Town Hall HVAC & Ext Repairs	\$950.000	Green Communities Grant-CPC Funds
Cemetery Bathroom	\$ 50,000	Perpetual Care Funds
Cemetery Tractor	\$ 35,000	Perpetual Care Funds

f. Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Article 26 – Ms. Shufelt noted that the Moderator discouraged this article, as there is no action for the people to take, she is concerned as to where on the warrant this article should be. Mr. Valcourt suggested leaving it where it is before people start leaving before Zoning Articles, he then spoke in favor of the article, stating that a decision needs to be made and the committee doesn't feel that the committee should be making the decision for 17k residents, and he feels Town Meeting is the perfect setting to get a better feel for what the residents want.

Ms. Boxler added that she doesn't feel like it's the right setting, discussion could go on forever.

Ms. Shufelt added that the previous Town Meeting voted to sell the property, she doesn't feel we will get any more information.

Betty Slade addressed the issue stating that it depends on how it will work, how much it will cost to keep and to renovate town offices.

Article 32 – Roger Menard, ZBA addressed his resignation, stating it was a matter of principal, he went through the necessary channels to reclassify the job, and the Select Board referred it back to the Personnel Board. He stands by his letter of resignation.

Ms. Shufelt added that two weeks ago the job classification was referred back to Personnel Board and they did approve the change of classification.

Mr. Valcourt noted that he hoped Roger would re-consider his resignation, as he is invaluable to ZBA.

Mr. Brewer added his acknowledgement that the Board was mistaken, and offered his apology to Roger.

Ms. Shufelt asked Mr. Menard if his resignation stands, Mr. Menard added he would like to stay on as chair of the ZBA.

MOTION by Mr. Valcourt to close the Warrant, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, the Board voted 5-0 in favor.

4. Discussion

a. Diman Ballot Question

Mr. Brewer addressed this item, stressing the importance of this Ballot Question passing. The town needs to do more to let people know, the explanation needs to be simplified, he plans on writing a Letter to the Editor. He is more optimistic this time around seeing it's the only question, 7000 votes cast at the November election, didn't lose by much. The first Town Meeting sent a strong message in favor of Diman. There will be a huge hole in budget if it doesn't pass. He asked if the town can put material on the Website, advocate and provide an explanation? Letter's to the Editor, Article in Shorelines, etc.

Ms. Shufelt stated that it's important for people to know that the town is committed to this project.

Betty Slade added that Baycoast Bank is sponsoring the Business to Business Candidates Night on Wednesday, the Diman Ballot question will be first on the agenda.

Mr. Valcourt stated that one of the reasons it failed was not being allowed to put out there what a yes vote means or no vote means, not knowing what is being asked, it needs to be explained.

b. Proposition 2 ½ Override Discussion

Jim Hartnett updated the board on his recommendation of how to distribute the override:

	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
Levy Increase	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$0	\$0
School 54%	\$ 405,000	\$810,000	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Town 46%	\$ 340,000	\$680,000	\$1,020,000	\$1,020,000
Stabilization	\$ 250,000	\$500,000	\$750,000	\$0

School Budget \$21,295,000

Ms. Shufelt stated this is just bringing back to base budget, not growing any departments, the additional funds will get the town to level service.

Mr. Ouellette stated residents are concerned about \$250,000 going to stabilization, and questioned the turn backs at Town Meeting.

Ms. Shufelt added the DOR recommends having 5% of operating budget in stabilization account, appropriating money from free cash and override is a way of reaching this goal.

Mr. Valcourt questioned how long this will last, and how long until we have to go for another override, rainy day fund is fine, but not a funding source, what are the benefits to the town to have the stabilization.

Mr. Hartnett answered most community's fund the stabilization account for 3 years, then draw out for the next 2-3 years, increase longevity in stabilization fund, plans out for 5 years, comfortable with 4 years no reason can't get 5 years.

Mr. Valcourt questions surplus ever year, and why are we giving back to the town.

Betty Slade stated that Diman will need a debt exclusion, decent stabilization fund, helps with borrowing and bonding, and this is done with more funds in the Stabilization Account.

David Cole stated a few years ago interest rates didn't much matter, so being able to get a better interest rate will be beneficial.

Mr. Brewer questioned the Levy Increase 1,000,000 first year, 2,000,000 second year, are we better served doing it this way or should it be in three installments.

Mr. Hartnett when we looked at it, significant benefit long term.

Mr. Brewer added that this has to pass, he recognizes the financial implications, a lot of people have stated that it may be more appealing if it is spread out, a lot of people are asking about that, not sure if it will make a difference at the ballot box.

Ms. Shufelt at the last meeting, it was discussed about 1-1-1, but by frontloading it, it will last longer, not a long term plan in any case.

Mr. Thrasher, asked how soon will these documents be available, Ms. Shufelt added within the next couple of days.

c. Budget Update

Ms. Shufelt suggested discussing the base budget, submitted to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Hartnett add that the Governor submitted her budget for FY24, this is just the first step in the process and will likely be modified as it works its way through the House and Senate. The budget shows a moderate increase in State Aid, mainly Chapter 70 funding, increases in assessments including Regional and Charter schools will offset a portion of the increase.

Town Administrator Revised Budget 3-6-23

School Budget Allocation	\$20,634, 352
Additional State Aid	\$ 300,558
Free Cash	\$ 300,000
Town Side Transfer	\$ 60,252
Total	\$21,295,162
School Shortfall	\$ 0

With Governors Budget, the Board reviewed the following additions

Health Insurance	\$20,000
IT	\$40,000
Highway (Salary)	\$ 6,000
Select Board (Hearing Room Expenses)	\$ 5,000
Police	\$10,000
Library	\$20,000
Town Hall Annex	\$15,000
Planning Board	\$12,000
Select Board (Professional Services)	\$15,000
Town Clerk (Equipment)	\$ 2,000
Animal Control Officer	\$ 6,000
Board of Health (Add'l Nurse Hours)	\$10,000
Cemetery Dept.	\$10,000
Highway (Equipment)	\$20,000
Highway (Oil/Gas)	\$10,000
Recreation	\$ 2,000
Town to School	\$60,252

Ms. Shufelt commended Mr. Hartnett, on doing a phenominal job, job to protecting and restoring funds on the Town Side.

Mr. Ouellette, questioned Veterans services cuts in state aid, Mr. Hartnett will check with Carol Freitas.

5. Town Administrator Report

Recycling and Energy Drive – June 24, 2023

Senator Rodrigues has reserved June 24, 2023 to host a Recycling and Energy Drive in Westport. The event is coordinated by the GreenTeam Junk Removal, sponsored by National Grid, Eversource and our local legislators. The GreenTeam Junk Removal team and the Senator's staff will work with the Town to coordinate the logistics of the event. A postcard will be sent out to residents 10 – 15 days before the event. The postcard will list the updated rates for disposal of selected items and list the items that will be accepted that day. This event is another great opportunity for residents to properly dispose of unwanted items and donate usable items to charitable organizations. The Board of Health Director, Matt Armendo has been working with the Senator's office to coordinate the event.

Green Communities Grant

Kathy Stanley, the Town's energy consultant organized the initial kick-off meeting held last week for the Green Communities Grant. Looking to hire an electrical engineering consultant within the next month to design the upgrades needed to support the new heat pumps for the Town Hall Building. The majority of the installation work will be completed during the spring and summer of 2024. The majority of the project will be funded by the Green Communities Grant and Utility incentives.

Budget Information

The Governor submitted her budget for FY24, this is just the first step in the process and will likely be modified as it works its way through the House and Senate. The budget shows a moderate increase in State Aid, mainly Chapter 70 funding, increases in assessments including Regional and Charter schools will offset a portion of the increase.

6. Approve Minutes

a. February 21, 2023

MOTION by Ms. Boxler to approve the February 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 4-0 in favor, with Mr. Valcourt abstaining.

7. Report on Bill Warrant

Ms. Boxler noted the Bill Warrant was all set.

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

Ms. Boxler – James Sabra now acting Chair of Affordable Housing.

Mr. Valcourt – nothing to report

Mr. Ouellette – Cable moving forward, Irene Buck is working on the contract.

Mr. Brewer – Audit Committee is meeting next week, also he attended a VSO Event at the VFW, coordinated by Carol Freitas, kudos to her it was a great event.

Ms. Shufelt – Internet Advisory Committee moving forward with broadband, working on ways to communicate with the residents about the importance of a Municipal Light Plant.

9. Comments and Statements

10. Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List

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

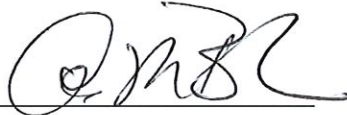
Adjournment

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette at 8:24 p.m. to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.



Paula M. Brown
Administrative Assistant

Approved: _____



Ann Boxler, Clerk
Select Board Member

File Attachments:

2a BOH - Brandon Weingold
2b Stelljes – ZBA
2c Valton - Board of Registrars Resignation
2d Cunha - Personnel Board
3a Dharma Voyage
3b Westport Library Requests for Approval at Next Selectmen Meeting
3c PB Comments
3d Martin Costa – COW
3e FInCom BOS Rec CIPC 3-1-23
3e FY24 CIPC Projects
3f 5-2-23 ATM Articles Index
3f 5-2-23 ATM Warrant 5th Draft
4b Override Numbers 2-28-23 (2)
4c FY 24 Budget B
4c FY24 BOS Recommendation 2-22-23
4c FY24 Budget FInCom BOS Rec CIPC 3-1-23
4c FY24 Budget Free Cash
6a 02212023 Minutes
FY24 Town Bylaw Date Changes