



## BOARD OF SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 9, 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

Mr. Valcourt addressed The Board, announcing he will not run for re-election in April, he thanked The Board and the voters.

Mr. Ouellette acknowledged the passing of Jon "Jack" Deveau, Mr. De Veuve served on various boards in town, namely the Energy Committee. Ms. Shufelt expressed The Board's Condolences to the DeVeuve Family.

### **Public Hearings**

**6:05PM** – Request for the Zoning Board of Appeals and Marine Service to increase fees.

Roger Menard, Zoning Board of Appeals addressed The Board in regards to the Proposed Increase in fees:

Administrative Appeal	\$ 500	+\$100 per continuance request
Variance	\$ 500	
Finding	\$ 500	
Special Permit Cell Tower	\$2,500	
Special Permit Adult Ent	\$2,500	
40B	\$2,500	
All Other Special Permits	\$ 500	

**MOTION** by Mr. Ouellette to approve the fee increase, seconded by Mr. Valcourt

After a brief discussion, Ms. Shufelt questioned when the increases will become effective, Mr. Menard answered immediately.

Mr. Ouellette withdrew his original MOTION to approve the fee increases.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the fee increases effective immediately, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

Chris Leonard, Director of Marine Services and John Azevedo, Chairman of the Harbor Advisory Committee addressed the Board in regards to the Proposed Fee Increases; there would be no change in the Commercial Mooring Permit the other fees would be as follows.

Private Mooring permit	\$25/year
Waterways Use Fee	\$5.00/ft
Town Mooring Seasonal Rental	\$500/mooring

Ms. Shufelt questioned if the fees were being raised enough, Mr. Leonard answered at this time, yes the increase is sufficient and in line with surrounding communities.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Fee increases effective immediately, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

### 1. **Licenses/Permits**

- a. Request from Sarah Delano, Delano's Daily Grind (formerly Grays Daily Grind), 638 Adamsville Road for a Common Victualler License.

Ms. Delano addressed The Board as the owner of Delano's Daily Grind, the business will keep the same hours and will be run as it was, no changes are planned.

**MOTION** by Mr. Vacourt to approve the Common Victualler License, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- b. Request from Rami Gerges, d/b/a Nicks Pizza, 655 State Road, for a Common Victualler License.

Remi Gerges (owner) and Alex Machairas (former owner) addressed The Board, the business will keep the same hours and will be run as it was, no changes are planned.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Common Victualler License, seconded by Mr. Ouellette, The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

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

- a. Request from Deborah Ciolfi to be appointed to The Historical Commission as an Alternate Member.

Ms. Ciolfi addressed The Board, stating she's been attending The Historical Commission Meetings for a year, she lived down The Point and wanted to renovate her house, attended a neighborhood party and a member approached her about becoming a member.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Deborah Ciolfi to the Historical Commission as an Alternate Member, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- b. Request from Chief Pelletier to appoint Raquel Rodrigues as full time EMD Dispatcher. Mr. Hartnett noted this is not a new position, it will fill a vacancy.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Raquel Rodrigues as Full Time EMD Dispatcher, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

### 3. **Action Items**

- a. Request from the Buzzard's Bay Coalition to approve the Conservation Restriction entitled "Angeline Brook Headwaters II, Meadowbrook Lane, Westport"

Allen Decker from the Buzzards Bay Coalition addressed the Board, that this is the final step in the closing on the Conservation Restriction, they are looking forward to preserving the land and formalizing trails. Mr. Valcourt and Ms. Shufelt both commended the Coalition for keeping Westport, Westport. Mr. Decker also mentioned that they have come to an agreement with Ms. Cormier on the 509 Main Road Property and will closing on the property Mid-February.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Conservation Restriction, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

- b. Request from the Personnel Board to sponsor an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant for a town-wide salary study.  
Cindy Brown addressed The Board stressing the importance of the Salary Study, the study would cost anywhere from \$15,000 - \$25,000, depending on how far the town would like to go, and the number of employee salaries to be studied. Ms. Brown mentioned the Personnel Board would like the Board of Selectmen to Co-Sponsor this article, and will come to a future meeting with cost estimates.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to co-sponsor the a Warrant Article for a Town Wide Salary Study, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- c. Request from Planning Board to initiate amendments to the Town Zoning By-Laws for consideration at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting relating to Flexible Frontage, Accessory Apartments and Solar Energy Systems.  
Mr. Hartnett recommends referring the amendments to the Planning Board for review.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to refer the amendments to the Planning Board for review, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- d. Request for Carol Freitas, Veterans Service Officer to accept the following donations: Anonymous; (4) \$25 gift cards, William & Pauline Baraby; \$50, Veterans Christmas Food Baskets, Donald Ouellette, \$40 Veterans Monument.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to accept the donations, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- e. Request to place the Diman Regional High School Debt Exclusion question on the April 11, 2023, Ballot.  
Mr. Brewer questioned the wording of the Ballot Questions, Ms. Shufelt added that the required wording is very specific and dictated by the State, and the dollar amount is not allowed in the question. Mr. Hartnett added we are still waiting on more information. Ms. Shufelt stressed the importance of explaining this question and to get the word out there that Westport will pay one way or another, whether it be excluded debt or directly out of operating expenses, which will effect resources and salaries.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to place the Diman Debt Exclusion question on the April 11, 2023 Ballot, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- f. Request to appoint Temporary Town Clerk.  
Mr. Hartnett after glowing reviews from various towns, and that he would like to prepare a contract and offer Mr. Mullen the position as Temporary Town Clerk. Mr. Mullen has worked as Temporary Clerk in numerous communities. Mr. Hartnett and Bernadette Oliver will be meeting with him on Wednesday.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to appoint Jim Mullen as Temporary Town Clerk, subject to Employment Agreement, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.
- g. Approval of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (ABCC) 2023 Seasonal Population Increase Estimation Form.  
Mr. Hartnett noted that The Board must approve this annually.  
**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Seasonal Population Form, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

#### 4. **Discussion**

- a. Assessor – Tax Exemptions

Mr. Hartnett led the discussion explaining there has been a lot of discussion about tax exemptions for the older residents.

Steve Medeiros and Theo Gabriel addressed the Board in regards to exemptions, the first being 41C exemption for those 70 and older with a maximum income of \$18,000 for a single person and \$30,000 for a married couple. The Board of Assessors at their January 9, 2023 meeting voted to raise the exemption from \$500 to \$1000. Mr. Medeiros noted it's hard to say with the new guidelines how many applications they will receive. Last year they processed 46 applications at \$500.

Ms. Shufelt noted we are looking for the Board to approve a Town Meeting Article to increase the exemption.

Mr. Ouellette questioned if this change will effect Affordable Housing, it does not according to Steve Medeiros.

Mr. Brewer questioned if Social Security is factored in, Ms. Gabriel answered the Social Security deduction is included in the figures.

Cindy Brown, asked is these exemptions come off of the Levy or the Overlay, Ms. Gabriel answered Overlay.

David Cole – recommends reducing the age to 65 and increasing the exemption to 1000, this takes nothing away from Tax Revenues, it's a matter of fairness and equity, meeting the needs of low income elderly citizens in town.

Mr. Medeiros noted the Board of Assessors did recommend the 1000, keeping age at 70, however he corrected Mr. Cole stating that there is a cost to the town, it comes out of the overlay budget.

Mr. Hartnett noted there is a cost associated with these exemptions, it comes from Assessor overlay, funded from operating budget.

Ms. Shufelt supports the Warrant Article.

Ms. Shufelt supports the Warrant Article, Debt Exclusion and Override, and also addressed the Residential Exemption, and explained charging the same tax rate for primary residence vs non primary residence.

Mr. Medeiros noted that most non primary residences are high end properties, the people are paying Personal Property Taxes, with no say at Town Meeting.

Ms. Shufelt reiterated that property values went up but tax rates went down, the town is not gaining any tax revenues.

**MOTION** by Mr. Valcourt to approve the Assessors Recommendations for the Town Meeting Warrant Article, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

b. Disposition of the Old High School

Mr. Hartnett addressed the Board stating the Budget is tight, there is a cost to keep the High School building, and he recommends putting the property on the market.

Mr. Valcourt added this is a difficult decision, with huge sentiment not to sell the property, it's a difficult decision and is recommending a Ballot Question asking the Towns People if they are willing to spend the money or not.

Mr. Brewer questioned what the official recommendation of the LTBC?

Cindy Brown noted if the town sells the property, it would be for pennies on the dollar and we would still need to house the School Administration, Athletic Fields, etc. even if the Town chooses to sell, it will need to spend money. Pay the \$200,000 for a year or two. To keep it.

Ms. Shufelt mentioned how to take random ideas and put into action, and recommends a non-binding question on Ballot.

Mr. Valcourt to draw up and work with Mr. Hartnett, the Long Term Building Committee will put together a presentation.

c. FY 24 Budget Discussion

Mr. Hartnett addressed the Board with the Budget Concerns, the Town side will require \$356,000 level service budget, and the school will require \$1,078,827 for a level service budget. The potential override needs to be discussed, timing, amount and options. Negotiated raises for Town exceed new net revenue (School and Town), budgets are not sustainable without a 2 ½ override, future free cash amounts will be impacted by budget cuts. Required obligations account for 25% of budget, compared to 17% in 2008. Mr. Hartnett presented override examples dividing the funds between the budget and stabilization. When proposition 2 ½ was put into place it was acknowledged that towns would have to pass overrides from time to time. Ms. Shufelt noted it is important to realize that these numbers were based on base budget without free cash.

Mr. Valcourt asked if we had free cash amounts yet, Mr. Hartnett answered Free Cash is not certified yet, he is estimating \$2,000,000.

Mr. Hartnett explained that an override is just a temporary fix.

Ms. Shufelt asked to add override discussion to the next agenda, invite the Finance Committee to discuss Town Meeting Warrant then ballot. A balanced budget is due to FinCom by February 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **5. Town Administrator Report**

### **Board of Health Job Postings**

Town Counsel is reviewing the employment status for new positions to be funded under the public Health Excellence Grant for Shared Services. The positions are Shared Services Coordinator, Health Agent and Administrative Assistant/Data Specialist. The successful candidates will work with Towns of Marion, Rochester, Freetown, Lakeville and Westport. The job postings are currently on hold until Town Counsel can review employment status.

### **Green Communities Grant**

The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities Division has approved a grant award in the amount of \$467,000 for the Town Hall Decarbonization Project. The Town should receive an additional \$119,000 in utility heat pump rebates and Community Preservation Funding is being requested for the necessary electrical upgrades. This was the largest grant awarded by the Baker-Polito Administration. The following are excerpts from the Governor's press release:

*"Westport has continued to be in the forefront as a community that has invested in the community's goals for clean energy. As a result, Westport will receive \$467,000 as a recipient of the Green Communities Competitive Grant, to further support the outstanding work the community has already begun," said State Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport). "Congratulations to Westport and the other 49 communities."*

*"I am incredibly proud to represent Westport, their commitment to environmental stewardship across all avenues is exemplary and their naming as a 'Green Community' is a tremendous accomplishment," said State Representative Paul A. Schmid, III (D-*

Westport). "Thank you to the Baker-Polito Administration for making this possible."

The project will consist of wall-mounted units in basement, floor-mounted units on first floor and ceiling-mounted air handling units for second floor. The project would include demolition of the existing steam system. This project will also eliminate need for portable window air conditioning units.

**6. Approve Minutes**

a. December 19, 2022

**MOTION** by Ms. Boxler to approve the December 19, 2022 Minutes, seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.

**7. Report on Bill Warrant**

Ms. Boxler noted the Warrant was approved and signed, there was one large voided check with explanation.

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

Mr. Brewer mentioned the CIPC continues to meet, the COA has been meeting and he noted the COA Committee has spent a lot of time on Grant Writing.

Ms. Shufelt mentioned that the Internet Advisory Committee and Climate Resiliency Committee were meeting this week.

**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 to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 pm, seconded by Mr. Valcourt. The Board voted 5-0 in favor.



Paula M. Brown  
Administrative Assistant

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_



Ann Boxler, Clerk  
Select Board Member

1a – Delano's Daily Grind

1b – Nicks Pizza

2a – Historical Commission – Ciolfi

2b – WPD Dispatcher

3b – Personnel Board

3c - Planning Board

3d – Veterans Donations

Diman Question



FY24 Expenses  
FY24 Revenues  
FY23 Budget  
Old High School  
Public Hearing Fee Changes  
TA2 Award Letter  
TA2 Press Release