



SELECTBOARD

TOWN OF WESTHAMPTON
TOWN HALL
1 SOUTH ROAD
WESTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01027

Selectboard Minutes of November 8, 2021

A regular meeting of the Selectboard was held on November 8, 2021. Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, attendance was by remote access only. Members of the public attended the meeting via "Zoom" conferencing. Meeting ID Code: 8704 390 0582 and Passcode: 966901

There was no in-person attendance by the public. The meeting was audio/video recorded for purposes of minutes only.

Call to Order – Call of Role

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

Present: Phil Dowling, Teri Anderson, Maureen Dempsey. Quorum declared.

Also present: Winifred Gorman, Sue O'Rourke, Marilyn R Witherell, Bill Jablonski (Highway Dept), Dave Zagorski, Chris Maza (The Reminder), Barbara Pelissier, Susan Bronstein, Roberta Armenti, Jessica Lerman; Douglas Finn.

Scheduled Business

7:00 p.m.-Tax Classification Hearing

Pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 56 M.G.L. the Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing on Monday evening, November 8, 2021 at 7:00 PM regarding property tax classification according to use. Interested taxpayers were invited to present written or oral comments on their views at the time of said Public Hearing.

The public hearing was opened at 7:02 PM. Present: Mr. David Zagorski, Principal Assessor.

Presentation:

Mr. Zagorski presented a Tax Classification summary for Fiscal Year 2021¹, recommending a single tax rate for all classes of property, no open space discount, no residential exemption, and no small commercial exemption.

There was no public comment.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To adopt a single tax rate for all classes of property, with no open space discount, no residential exemption, and no small commercial exemption, for Fiscal Year 2022.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes.

¹ Addendum #1, attached to these minutes.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To close the public hearing.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes.

Department and Committee Updates:

1. Highway Department

Mr. Jablonski noted the activities of the Highway department subsequent to the recent “nor-easter” storm. Mr. Austin Norris continues with his OSHA training.

Updated highway agreement approval

Mr. Jablonski requested endorsement of the updated Highway Agreement, with Mr. Norris added at Grade 1.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey,

To add Mr. Norris to the Highway Memorandum of Agreement at Grade 1, and to approve.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes.

Mr. Jablonski noted that the new shed for the purposes of collecting hazardous waste (light bulbs, thermometers, etc., at the Transfer Station; an eight- to ten-week lead-time is expected.

Public Safety Complex Committee

Mr. Dowling expects that the concrete floor will be poured this week; the issues related to the manufactured building have been largely resolved.

Ms. Pelessier asked whether minutes for the public safety committee were ready. Mr. Dowling noted that minutes from meetings #39, #40 and #41 are approved and would be posted on the website within the next day or two. Ms. Pelessier requested that minutes be approved and made available in a timely manner. Mr. Dowling noted that would be the intention going forward.

Town Property & Energy Assessment Committee

Mr. Dowling noted that the Town Hall floor refinishing project has been completed, at the cost of materials only. The board recognized and thanked Mike Labreque for his donation of labor. Mr. Dowling noted that insulation projects at the WES and the Town Hall were ongoing, as were a number of smaller projects.

Administrative Assistant

Mr. Finn noted that he continued to get to know office, staff, and town procedures, and would be working with the treasurer on payroll procedures, and accountant on bill payment procedures. Priorities will be: getting up to speed on expenditures, the general calendar, and working closely with department heads, the finance committee, CIPC, and the Selectboard to listen, learn, and help to understand long-term goals and short-term priorities.

Mr Finn noted that

- An MIIA grant for safety gear to be used (primarily) during tree cutting operations has been submitted, which could provide about \$3,300 worth of safety and communications gear into the town
- The chair-lift at the Town Hall is due for its biennial inspection. To be done by Associated Elevator, with review by Mass Department of Public Safety. Estimate is about \$1,400.
- A draft “Town meeting” Calendar has been developed for review by the Finance Committee and Selectboard; still undergoing review.
- To Do: comprehensive list of past and present board and committee members, clearly identifying their memberships and terms of service.

Other boards or committees

No other reports were submitted.

Consider Participation Agreement for Mass in Motion

There was continued discussion relative to the request to participate in a grant application proposed by “Healthy Hampshire” (Collaborative for Educational Services, Hawley Street, Northampton).

Topics included: how Westhampton would benefit from the services; how potential recipients of services would be identified and contacted; whether there was any downside to Westhampton’s participation at this point; what burden the Town might take on through participation, and other general topics.

After some discussion, it was MOVED by Anderson, SECONDED by Dempsey

To participate as a partner in the Mass In Motion grant application, as requested.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (7:34 PM)

Further, it was MOVED by Anderson, SECONDED by Dempsey

To authorize Mr. Dowling to sign the participation agreement on behalf of the Selectboard.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (7:35 PM)

Selectboard Business

American Rescue Plan Act

Mr. Dowling reminded members and the public that the Selectboard continues to seek out potential uses of “ARPA” funds expected to be granted to the Town. Mr. Dowling noted that potential plans to build out the second floor of the Public Safety building were in progress, which could be one potential use of the funds.

CARES expenditures

Mr Dowling noted that

- Valley Communications had visited Town Hall, and should be providing an estimate for purchase and installation of a digital projector and screen.

- Two “Owl Labs” cameras would be purchased to continue to facilitate remote or hybrid meetings.
- The library was looking to purchase a shed for outside storage of equipment, as well as two HEPA filters.

After some discussion it was confirmed that Susan Bronstein would continue to track CARES expenses.

Municipal Vulnerability Plan

Ms. Anderson noted that the first meeting of the working group would be on November 17, consisting of community members and board members, and to talk about next steps. The Diversity and Inclusion training for staff and public, the “Cooler Communities” program at the schools, the Open Space Planning process, and the Resilient Master Planning process were all ongoing.

Review Correspondence

Karl Hayes, Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples Day

The board continued consideration of a letter received by Karl Hayes¹, in regard to recognizing the second Monday in October as Indigenous Peoples’ Day.

After some discussion relative to the request, and consideration of matters of history and inclusivity, it was MOVED by Anderson, SECONDED by Dowling

That the Town of Westhampton hereafter recognizes the Second Monday in October, the state holiday, as Indigenous Peoples’ Day / Columbus Day.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (7:54 PM)

Consider and approve minutes of October 12, and October 25

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the Minutes of October 12, as presented.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (7:56 PM)

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To approve the minutes of October 25, as presented.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (7:57 PM)

Review and approval of warrants

The board took several minutes to review the payroll and expense warrants.

It was MOVED by Anderson, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the warrants as presented.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (8:08 PM)

Any other issues to come before the board not reasonably anticipated at time of posting

Mr. Finn noted that the Town had received certain monies from the state (through the

¹ Addendum #2, attached to these minutes.

Complete Streets program) which may have been sent in error. Town's Accountant will continue to research, and will contact the state for direction how to dispose of the funds.

Mr. Dowling noted that free cash had been certified at an amount of about \$925,000, which represents a significant increase over the previous year. The Finance Committee is anticipated to start the annual budget process in early December.

Mr. Finn encouraged board members to submit agenda items for inclusion on the next meeting agenda.

Schedule Next Meeting and Adjourn

Mr. Dowling noted that the next meeting would be held at 7:00 p.m. on November 22, 2021.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

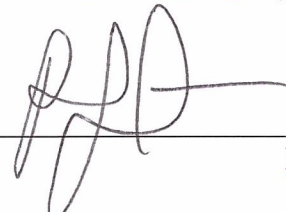
To adjourn.

VOTE: Dowling: Yes; Anderson: Yes; Dempsey: Yes. (8:11 PM)

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Finn

Minutes approved by a vote of the Selectboard at a regular meeting held on November 22, 2021.



Phil Dowling



Maureen Dempsey

Teri Anderson

FISCAL YEAR 2021 TAX CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY

Residential Values for FY22: \$236,081,152
CIP Values: \$ 13,107,821
Total: \$249,188,973

Residential Values for FY21: \$226,979,304
CIP Values: \$ 14,525,877
Total: \$241,505,181

FY22 values increased approximately 3% for residential

FY22 values decreased approximately 1% for CIP

ALLOCATION

It is recommended that there should be at least a 20-25% commercial base before considering a split rate. In Westhampton, 95% of the tax burden is borne by residential property owners and 5% is carried by all other classes of property.

Shifting the tax burden does not increase revenue. It merely shifts the same burden to other taxpayers. Chapter Land is considered commercial property. A shift would potentially nullify any tax savings.

The Board of Assessors recommends a single tax rate for all classes of property.

OPEN SPACE DISCOUNT

The town has no properties classified as Open Space.

RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION

As Westhampton does not have a large number of vacation or non-owner occupied properties, it is not recommended to vote for a residential exemption.

SMALL COMMERCIAL EXEMPTION

The Small Commercial Exemption allows for up to 10% of the value of commercial parcels to be exempt from taxation if the business has an annual average of less than 10 employees and the value of the property is less than one million dollars.

As there is no large commercial business in town (e.g. big box store) it is not recommended to approve a small commercial exemption.

ASSESSOR RECOMMENDATIONS

For Fiscal Year 2022 the Board of Assessors recommends:

A Single Tax Rate for all classes of property
No Open Space Discount
No Residential Exemption
No Small Commercial Exemption