



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

Minutes of the Meeting - Westhampton Selectboard

January 18, 2022, 7 PM

The Westhampton Selectboard scheduled a regular meeting on Monday, January 18, 2022, at 7 PM.

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

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. (Recording: 0:06:41)

Present: Phil Dowling, Maureen Dempsey, Teri Anderson

Also Present: Doug Finn (Town of Westhampton), Superintendent Bill Jablonski (Westhampton Highway Department), Chief David White (Westhampton PD), Roberta Armenti (Westhampton Board of Health), Tom Martin (Westhampton Board of Health), Susan Bronstein (Westhampton Planning Board)

Scheduled Business

Used Car Sales (Class II / Class III) License renewals (if any)

Mr. Finn presented two applications for renewal: J & D Sales and Repairs (19 Perry Hill Road), and Richard Huntley Auto (175 Reservoir Road).

IT was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To grant the licenses as requested.

VOTE:
ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES
(7:02 PM)

Retail Sales License Renewals

Mr. Finn presented one application from Steve Holt for renewal of a sales license for CY2022.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To grant the license as requested.

VOTE:
ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES
(7:03 PM)

Department and Committee Updates

Highway (Bill Jablonski)

Mr. Jablonski noted the activities of the highway department: two freezing-rain storms, about 2" of snow on one morning, partial snow coverage on parts of town, and morning road treatment on several occasions. Service on equipment was completed. Some work on the mezzanine break-room area is ongoing. Fire Truck service has begun.

Health (Robby Armenti)

Ms. Robby Armenti noted six new confirmed cases in Westhampton; Ms. Armenti noted that, with the adoption of home tests, numbers are likely not reliable. Contact tracing has been spotty. No hospitalizations are reported. Ms. Armenti also noted that residents may request free covid tests through the Federal Government, via www.covidtests.gov. Ms. Armenti also noted additional resources would be provided to be added to the town's website.

Mr. Tom Martin (Board of Health chair) noted that, after the state of emergency was lifted, a good deal of covid-19 related information was removed or 'archived' from the Town's website. The Board of Health recommends reinstituting quick-links to this information. Mr. Dowling asked that the links be forwarded to Mr. Finn for posting to the website.

There was some discussion related to what links, how many, and how they would be presented on the website.

Mr. Martin also noted that he would be stepping down from the Board of Health effective at the end of his term, and committed to helping the Selectboard find new members. Mr. Dowling noted Mr. Martin's service to the Board of Health for about twenty-five years. Mr. Martin offered assistance to new members as he would be able. Mr. Dowling also commended Mr. Martin for his service on the board since the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Mr. Martin noted that the past two years "felt like a decade."

Mr. Martin noted that he would draft some ideas to assist new board members, and to help to prevent 'burn out'. He also suggested appointing 'associate members' to the board, to allow for more hands to do necessary work. He noted that he was very happy with the new board member, Ms. Katch Bachellor, and praised Ms. Armenti for her continued service.

Ms. Armenti asked about the use of ARPA funds for purchase of Covid test kits. Mr. Dowling asked whether the Foothills Health District had considered a bulk purchase. Ms. Armenti noted that the FHD was still considering purchasing test kits and masks, with distribution in each town through that town's library and/or transfer station.

Mr. Dowling noted that the first priority would be for Town Employees, with public distribution a secondary goal. Mr. Martin noted that the FHD is concerned with the effectiveness of the tests, and whether they would still be useful in detecting a new variant.

There was some discussion related to the usefulness of the at-home tests. It was noted that the state would soon be distributing tests in large quantities to public schools.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the town should still proceed in finding tests for town employees, if they could be purchased for reasonable prices.

There was discussion related to costs, and sources, for tests for town employees and volunteers. Mr. Martin noted that the FHD was at least ten days away from moving forward on purchases of tests for the member towns.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To authorize the Administrative Assistant to make an immediate purchase of up to 200 testing kits for use by town employees, with costs to be covered by ARPA funds.

VOTE:

ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

(7:31 PM)

Police

Chief David White noted that Sergeant Fisher having retired at the first of the year, Chief White suggested a promotion of Officer Jeff Fish to the position of Sergeant.

There was discussion relative to whether the position was posted in-house (it was not), and whether it was required to be posted in-house (the chief noted that the position was considered an internal promotion). Ms. Anderson asked whether the police department operated under a separate hiring process. After some discussion, Ms. Anderson stated that, even with an internal promotion, and with only one viable candidate, the position should be posted. The board discussed whether or not an in-house posting would have any impact on the process. After discussion, the Chief requested that Officer Fish be promoted to Acting Sergeant, in order to allow the other officers to consider taking the position.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To grant Officer Fish a temporary promotion to Acting Sergeant, to post the vacant Sergeant position internally, to send notice to other police staff of the vacancy, and to reconsider the request for full appointment at the next regular meeting (January 31, 2022).

VOTE:

ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

(7:39 PM)

There was brief discussion relative to the recent presentation on Police Reform and its impact on small towns.

MVP (Teri Anderson)

ARPA (Susan Bronstein, Doug Finn)

Ms. Bronstein noted that she and Mr. Finn had participated in a recent webinar on the use of ARPA funds; there was some discussion on the use of ARPA funds to cover late expenses that may not be able to be covered by the CARES act funding.

There was some discussion in regard to other potential uses of ARPA funds: police certification, the purchase of a police cruiser, improvement to town facilities, funding for the Westhampton Food Pantry, certification of new police officers, and other potential uses.

Ms. Bronstein noted that there seem to be very few restrictions on ARPA funding, and that it may be used for 'any legitimate government purpose for which appropriation may be made'.

There was some discussion on the history of the CARES funds, and their use.

Mr. Dowling noted that while the Selectboard retain authority over the expenditure of the funds, public input should be sought, and proposed a public hearing to be held at the next

regular meeting. After discussion, it was determined to hold a public hearing at 6 PM, January 31, 2022, via “hybrid” public hearing.

There was some discussion relative to holding the hearing in the Town Hall, capacity limits for same, and the conditions for meeting via the public.

The logistics of the use of the Town Hall “Hybrid Meeting System” was discussed and reviewed.

Mr. Martin recommended that some ARPA funds be used to upgrade and improve ventilation in Town Buildings, particularly at the Elementary School.

Department Report: Public Safety Building Complex

Mr. Dowling reported that the main columns are in place, infill is being constructed, with trusses expected to arrive later in the week. Still waiting on headers to be installed over main bay doors; two tanks that have been backordered have arrived, but will not be installed until Spring. No new information in regard to the Second Floor build-out. No new information in regard to the funding of same from the State DPH.

The basic building design and structure were briefly discussed.

Building Use Policy - Covid-19, Short Term (Doug Finn)

A draft building use policy was presented for review. Mr. Finn noted that the proposed policy would be in effect until 1 April, and would be revisited at that time. The specifics of the policy were discussed, including building capacity, the size of the building, and potential uses of the building.

Ms. Anderson suggested changes to the types of masks that would be acceptable, and noted that the CDC does not consider a cloth face-mask to be adequate protection against transmission of a virus. Board concurred. Ms. Anderson also suggested expressly requiring face coverings where two or persons were travelling together in the same vehicle. Board concurred.

Mr. Finn recommended reconsidering this policy around April 1, 2022.

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

To adopt the policy as amended.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES. (8:17 PM)

Old Business (reminders, no action to be taken)

Conservation Commission Appointments

Mr. Dowling noted that two persons – Alyson Arnold and Kurt Heidinger – were vying for a single open seat on the Conservation Commission. The Commission would be meeting to discuss and offer a recommendation to the Selectboard. Matter tabled to a later meeting.

Review Correspondence

The board reviewed correspondence from Art Pichette related to the activities of the Property and Energy Committee; a letter from members of the “pickleball” players expressing their interest in continuing to play on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; and, a letter from the MMA regarding proxy voting.

Review / Approve minutes of January 3, 2022

The board reviewed the minutes of the January 3. Ms. Anderson requested a bit more specificity in the minutes: prioritizing the Town Staff for receipt of Covid-19 test kits; that the town would pay for a share of a bulk purchase of Covid-19 Test kits; the letters of support from Chris Norris and others for the public safety complex; that Mr. Finn was keeping a list and tracking ARPA fund requests.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson,

To approve the minutes of January 3 as presented and amended, with further specificity as noted.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES. (8:29 PM)

Review of Warrants

Payroll and A/P warrants were reviewed. Ms. Dempsey noted that she would be abstaining from a vote approving the payroll warrant, citing a possible conflict of interest.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey,

To approve the expense warrants as presented.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES. (8:30 PM)

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson,

To approve the Payroll warrants as presented.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: ABSTAIN; DOWLING: YES. (8:30 PM)

Other items not reasonably anticipated at time of posting

Mr. Finn noted the public hearing proposed for January 31, 2022, related to a request for installation of a public utility pole, and that the matter should have been brought to the board prior to setting the public hearing date. After some discussion, the standing practice remained, with the petition sent to the Highway Superintendent as soon as possible for review and advisory.

Ms. Dempsey asked whether a letter to Floyd Fisher had been sent on the occasion of his retirement. After some discussion, it was suggested that Mr. Finn draft a brief letter to Mr. Fisher thanking him for his service.

Set next regular meeting date / time

Mr. Dowling noted that the next meeting would be on Monday, January 31, 2022, 6 PM.

Adjourn

There being no further business, it was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey
To Adjourn.

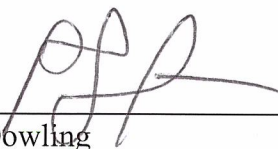
WITHOUT OBJECTION

Adjourned at 8:38 PM.


Respectfully submitted,

Douglas C. Finn.

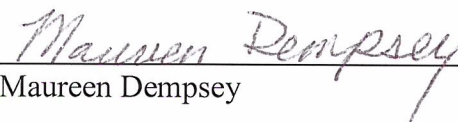
APPROVED by a vote of the Westhampton Selectboard, on January 31, 2022.



Phil Dowling



Teri Anderson



Maureen Dempsey