



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

Minutes of January 4, 2021
Meeting held via ZOOM

The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m.

Present from Selectboard were Phil Dowling (Chair), Maureen Dempsey, and Teri Anderson. Others present were Bill Jablonski (Highway Superintendent), Dave Antosz (Fire Chief), Robby Armenti & Tom Martin (Board of Health), Susan Bronstein (Covid Coordinator), Patty Cotton (Treasurer), Karl Norris, Bill & Lynn Truswell, Todd Alexander (Emergency Management & local inspector), Shelby Macri (Country Journal). Minutes were taken by Cheryl Provost.

- Public Hearing to consider Right of First Refusal to purchase land held under Chapter 61A was opened at 7:01 p.m. by Phil Dowling. The land consists of approximately 11 acres on South & Main Road as shown on Assessors Map 31, Lot 65, currently owned by Philip and Laurie Norris. They have entered into a purchase agreement for \$115,000.00 with Bill & Lynn Truswell.

Information was reviewed.

Phil opened discussion to Truswell's. They intend to remove the land from Chapter 61A and construct a house. The survey is registered with the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds. They intend to leave the portion with South Road frontage open. The remaining 17-acre parcel on South Road will remain in 61A and will continue to be farmed by Karl Norris.

Phil opened discussion for public comment. Karl Norris spoke in favor of the purchase. No other comments. Public comment closed.

Phil opened discussion to board. No discussion. Phil motioned to waive Right of First Refusal. Second by Maureen. Teri motioned to amend by referencing the 11+ acre parcel as shown on Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan approved by Planning Board December 14. Second by Phil. Amendment approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Original motion as amended approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Public hearing closed and moved to Selectboard meeting at 7:12 p.m.

- COVID-19 actions:
Board of Health, Tom Martin reported:

- 32 positive cases in 13 household in town overall since tracking began last year
- Massachusetts surveillance system continues to show fault and inability to track cases
- Foothills Health District was awarded a public health grant for \$23,000.00 by the Commonwealth. Funds will be used for nursing activities such as contact tracing. The funds should last through June 30, 2021.
- looking at how the board handles COVID in the future
- Vaccination schedule is out. Robby is staying updated and disseminating information. Vaccinations are expected to be available to first responders January 11. Fire Chief Dave Antosz is working together with surrounding communities to schedule vaccinations at a central location. The Moderna vaccine will be used.
- Tom reviewed the Commonwealth's phases of vaccination
- currently 5 cases in 2 households. Transmission is occurring from family gatherings.
- Foothills Health District nurse seeing an increase in tracing in the district.

Discussion ensued regarding a new strain of the virus that appears to be more contagious. Phil encouraged strict use of masks and limiting social gatherings.

- Tom reported there are approximately 30 Westhampton residents tested weekly.

Tom and Robby thanked the Selectboard for the letter of support for their work and commitment throughout the pandemic.

Covid Coordinator, Susan Bronstein reported:

- CARES funding is extended through December 30, 2021. Funds already received are included in the extension. Covers items not in budget as of March 2020. Another reporting period is coming soon.

- Highway Department updates, Bill Jablonski reported:

- last couple of weeks were short with holidays
- busy with multiple storms, had 4 inches of rain on Christmas
- work being done on Kings Highway Bridge in between storms; doing prep work to build retaining wall. Bridge is closed to traffic during the day and opened at night.
- Holyoke Water Department blocked turnarounds (used by plow trucks) with rocks. Bill contacted them and was told they do not want anyone on the reservoir and they are ticketing people for trespassing. Bill and Southampton Highway Superintendent spoke to them about access to turnarounds for emergency vehicles and resolved the matter. Access to the property is restricted as a water source for Holyoke.
- received funds through CARES to hire an assistant to the transfer station attendant, Don Fox, to help with compliance of social distancing and mask wearing. Adding funding for an assistant to the FY22 transfer station budget request after CARES funding expires. Don is overwhelmed trying to keep up. A job description is needed to open a search. The Selectboard concurred that they had agreed to hire a temporary assistant with CARES funds. Suggested a temporary assistant be hired through December 30, 2021 through CARES and Bill budget for the remainder of the fiscal year (December 31, 2021-June 30, 2022) to search for a permanent assistant. Bill, Phil, and Cheryl will work on a job description.
- Bill thanked the Selectboard for the Letter of Commendation to him and the highway department for extraordinary work through 2020 during the pandemic.

- Public Safety Complex Building Committee update, Phil reported:
 - due date for filed sub bids pushed up a week to January 14. Due date for general contracting pushed up a week to January 22.
 - optimistic will receive a large number of bids
 - change made to the project was pulled back on some of the items to be completed by the highway department. There are a number of tanks to be installed into the ground to be completed by contractor. Highway can do the grading and site prep. Once the construction is complete, they can return and pave it.
 - Switched building material from metal to wood. More options with pre-engineered structures and committee thought it advantageous to do so.
 - initial budget for engineering was \$236,000.00. Of that, \$200,000.00 was set aside for the architect; \$41.80 was added to architect invoices for expenses; \$30,000.000 of Owner's Project Manager (OPM); \$6,000.00 for bid cycle, of which \$4500.00 was for providing printed plans. Some changes were made to the plans; one being where building sits on property, another changed material from metal to wooden. More plans were requested because of the changes, going over budget. Propose a request for a transfer of \$2,000.00 from the reserve fund to put into the Public Safety Complex to cover the next couple weeks of bids. So moved by Teri. Second by Maureen. Motion approved by roll call vote:
Phil Dowling-aye
Maureen Dempsey-aye
Teri Anderson-aye
- Todd Alexander reported FEMA has a new food security program, something that may be available to the church food bank. There's also an option through MEMA to receive boxed food orders and gift cards, requests can go through him. Maureen reported the food bank is pretty well stocked, the community has been generous. There are donations for gift cards also being received. Not aware of the need for deliveries. Tom Martin reported the public health nurse asks households if there is a need for food services when they are required to isolate. None have participated that he's aware of. Todd will be given the health nurse's contact information to notify of the program.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness workshop series invitations will go out this week. The series will follow the Community Resilience Building (CRB) guidance developed by the Nature Conservancy, which has been successfully used in over 400 communities. The workshop's objectives are to:
 - Identify natural hazards that present the greatest threat to the community
 - Evaluate strengths and vulnerabilities of residents, infrastructure, and natural resources
 - Develop and prioritize actions that reduce the impact of hazards and increase resilience
 - Share the results of preliminary public feedback received through an online survey

The series will include three live sessions on three consecutive Thursdays from 5:30-7:30 discussing climate risks and adaptation related to:

- Infrastructure Assets | Jan 21st
- Community Resilience | Jan 28th
- Natural Resources | Feb 4th

- Treasurer Search Committee, Maureen reported reference checks on Ira Brezinsky were completed. All spoke highly of him, saying he's a committed, hard worker. Cheryl reported a similar report from her reference check.

Phil motioned to hire Ira Brezinsky as Treasurer, effective February 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 at the current pay rate (annual salary \$16,599.00). Training to begin as soon as funds are available from the reserve fund at \$25.00 hourly with pay for trainer at \$29.00 hourly. Second by Maureen. Teri asked if the appointment should be temporary if looking at restructuring. Phil sees that process taking time and it should be a permanent hire. Maureen supports a permanent appointment considering the difficulty of finding qualified persons with time and interest. Discussion ensued regarding term of office with Patty's resignation mid-term (3 year). Motion called to vote. So moved by roll vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Patty reported some issues with tax bills, suspect the Assessor's file conversion. Phone calls were received with questions on bills where changes in parcels were made. Patty and Anne Marie will need to meet with Assessor to go over assessments and bills. Anne Marie will be needed to help resolve the issues. Discussion ensued regarding estimate of hours. Patty explained it's too soon to tell, will have to see if more calls come in.

- Hampshire Regional School District Superintendent Search Committee is being formed. One member from a Selectboard or Finance Committee from one of the member towns will be selected to serve on the committee. Maureen stated she is willing to submit her name unless there is someone on Finance Committee interested. Phil motioned to put Maureen's name forward for the position. Second by Teri. So moved by roll vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

- Town Hall Roofing Project, Phil reported on the warrant is an invoice for \$46,850.00. Phil made recommendation to hold back 5% for punch list items incomplete. FRG is scheduled to return to clean up and remove remaining material as well as install the new rubber roof over the porch of the town hall as agreed in the change order. They can invoice for the balance and change order. Phil motioned to pay \$44,000.00 to FRG Contractors. Second by Teri. Motion approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Phil reported Art Pichette should have gutter prices in two weeks. So noted.

- Budget review, fiscal year 2022 proposals will be reviewed next meeting.
- Structure of finance department will be reviewed at a future meeting. A request will be made for

technical assistance from Mass. Dept. of Revenue, Division of Local Services to consider an evaluation and recommendation of structure of the finance and administrative offices.

- Anti-racism resolution input will be reviewed at a future meeting.
- Animal Control Officer & Inspector of Animals; Teri reported she received information on hours and will follow up with Chief Jody Kasper, Northampton.
- Correspondence was reviewed:
 - CivicCMS (town website support) 2020 Annual Review and update on 2021
 - Fiscal Year 2021 Community Compact Cabinet program kickoff for Best Practice and Efficiency and Regionalization programs. Applications for the Best Practice program opens January 15. One competitive application round for Efficiency and Regionalization programs opens March 15, 2021 and closes April 15, 2021. Discussed submitting an application for Efficiency and Regionalization programs. Will seek information from Eric Weiss to learn what assistance is available from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Minutes of December 21 & 28, 2020 were reviewed and approved by roll vote 3-yeas, 0-nay.

Payroll warrant was reviewed and approved for \$82,016.04 by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-abstain

Teri Anderson-aye

Vendor warrant was reviewed and approved for \$77,209.16, with exception to payment to FRG Contactor reduced to \$44,000.00 by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Next meeting: 7:00 p.m., January 19, 2021.

Adjourned meeting at 8:32 p.m.

Approved by vote of the Selectboard at virtual meeting held January 19, 2021.

Phil Dowling

Maureen Dempsey

Teri Anderson