



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

Minutes of January 19, 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), Robby Armenti & Tom Martin (Board of Health), Steve Holt, Shirl Morrigan, Shelby Macri (Country Journal). Minutes were taken by Cheryl Provost.

- COVID-19 actions:
Board of Health, Tom Martin reported:
 - went through a surge of cases
 - 48 positive cases in 22 households in town overall since tracking began last year
 - currently 3 cases in 2 households
 - there are some problems identifying all cases through the Massachusetts surveillance system and with contact tracing
 - Westhampton Elementary School closed one week, opening January 21
 - Hampshire Regional High School open
 - no transmission linked to schools
 - new Covid 19 B.1.1.7 variant is in Massachusetts
 - in stage 1 of vaccination roll-out, waiting for information on stage 2. No plans to run vaccination clinic in town.

Robby Armenti reported she is meeting with Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition (HPHPC) January 20 and will get more information on vaccinations. Discussion was held regarding how to notify residents of the vaccination phases and when and where to go.

Covid Coordinator, Susan Bronstein was unavailable to attend meeting; no updates.

- Highway Department updates, Bill Jablonski reported:
 - submitted a Chapter 90 Reimbursement Request for \$11,884.00 for guardrail on Southamptton Road
 - submitted a Chapter 90 Reimbursement Request for \$17,883.55 for line painting various roadsPhil motioned to authorize Chapter 90 Reimbursement Requests for \$11,884.00 for guardrail on Southamptton Road and \$17,883.55 for line painting various roads. Second by Maureen. Motion approved by roll call vote:
Phil Dowling-aye
Maureen Dempsey-aye
Teri Anderson-aye

Bill continued:

-submitted an employee evaluation for Mike Demarey and made recommendation to designate him as a regular Grade 1 full-time highway crew employee; probation ends January 20. He obtained the required licenses and is a great asset to the department. Board confirmed they reviewed the evaluation. Phil motioned to make Mike Demarey a regular Grade 1 full-time highway crew employee. Second by Teri. Motion approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Phil requested Bill give Mike the message the board appreciates his efforts and to thank him for stepping into the position. So noted.

Bill continued:

-past couple of weeks had a couple snow plow jobs

-trying to get the yearly service done on equipment

-started working on services of fire department equipment

- Public Safety Complex Building Committee update, Phil reported:
 - received filed sub-contractor bids January 15. There were many and bids were close. Phil spoke of examples of close sub-bids. Mark Sullivan (Owner's Project Manager) is encouraged by the number and amount of bids and that totals are near or below projected cost.
 - rendering of building is completed. Two copies printed, one at town hall.
 - variance was approved by Zoning Board of Appeals for a five foot setback from the road and is under appeal period.

Steve Holt commented he is looking forward to how the public will be informed. Also, how to conduct town meeting. Discussion ensued regarding potential locations and time for town meeting. Holding informational meetings and setting up an online Q & A. All details are included in the plans. Plan to house Fire equipment in the highway garage. The highway equipment will need the space back in November. On a tight schedule to complete the project. A ballot vote will be needed after town meeting. Discussed schedules of town meeting and election.

- Treasurer unavailable for updates; Patty Cotton has begun working with the incoming treasurer.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness workshop series begins this week on January 21. Topic is infrastructure assets.
- Town Hall Roofing Project, Phil reported the contractor returned, finished all work, and cleaned up. Phil motioned to authorize full payment of \$46,850.00 and \$3,850.00 for change order to FRG Contractors. Second by Teri. Motion approved by roll call vote:
 - Phil Dowling-aye
 - Maureen Dempsey-aye
 - Teri Anderson-aye
- Business license for Steve Holt at 49 North Road for Wholesale & Retail was reviewed and

approved on motion by Phil, second by Maureen by roll call vote:
Phil Dowling-aye
Maureen Dempsey-aye
Teri Anderson-aye

- Budget review:
 - fiscal year 2022 proposals will be reviewed next meeting
 - confirmed meeting with Finance Committee February 25
 - Teri questioned if cyber security IT upgrades should be looked at as a budget item. Cheryl reported the IT systems have updated security and emails on the town domain have securities. The most benefit would come from employee training and user training. Discussed the upgrades and improvements made over the past few years. Discussed options for training programs.
- Structure of finance departments. Teri spoke of the Compact Community Cabinet Grant programs for best practices and regionalization. The best practices grant includes financial management. There is also information technology best practices, may pay for cyber security training. Another category is human resources best practices with one of the eligible items being a wage classification plan. Discussed benefits of the human resources program. Additional discussion was held regarding regionalization of services. Cheryl reported she submitted a request 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. She also contacted Eric Weiss regarding what Pioneer Valley Planning Commission can offer for assistance with regionalization and he's available to meet on February 1, he requested a topic to focus on. Cheryl agrees with focus on human resources and noted that Mass. Inter-local Insurance Assoc. offers cyber-security training at no additional cost. Teri will provide E Weiss with information.
- Anti-racism resolution: Teri had sent a draft Westhampton Diversity and Inclusion Plan for review. Phil reported he did not get all the way through it. Teri gave an overview of the plan and how it will work. Discussion ensued regarding feedback on resolution and request for responses. Phil noted that there has not been a department head meeting in a while and it's time soon, this could be brought to one. So noted.
- Animal Control Officer & Inspector of Animals: Teri sent an email to Chief Jody Kasper, Northampton with the towns' information and is waiting for a reply. The current budget will allow for approximately 2 hours of coverage per week from Northampton. Should look at increasing the budget to reflect the number of hours that is really needed for the job. Discussion ensued regarding increasing the budget and considering a request from finance Committee. Additional discussion was held regarding the number of hours expected for the job.
- Correspondence was reviewed:
 - Community Compact Cabinet FY21 Grant: Best Programs applications open January 15 and are accepted on a rolling basis. Efficiency and Regionalization Program applications open March 15-April 15 and is highly competitive.
 - Mass. Inter-local Insurance Assoc. Cyber Security Resources and Alerts

Minutes of January 4, 2021 were reviewed and approved as revised by Teri Anderson by roll vote 3-yeas, 0-nay.

Payroll warrant was reviewed and approved for \$81,929.99 by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-abstain

Teri Anderson-aye

Vendor warrant was reviewed and approved for \$210,044.88 by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Teri inquired on the Expense Report and how the Council on Aging Coordinator salary is 79% spent. Cheryl reported that the coordinator salary is paid in part through town appropriation and part state grant. The grant contract is usually executed in December or January. The coordinator is paid from town appropriation up front for the first half of the fiscal year and the grant is used after.

Phil will be in contact regarding town meeting and election schedule. Phil reported he will put numbers together for Unibank Fiscal Advisory Financial Services. He has been in contact with the advisor and has form of article and ballot question.

Teri reported she was contacted by Ed Etheridge seeking the Selectboard vote waive right of first refusal to purchase land held under chapter 61A. Cheryl reported she will complete the form to send to him.

Teri inquired of a grant received by Hilltown CDC that included Westhampton for downtown pedestrian friendly streets program. No information available. Susan Bronstein may have information forthcoming and will be asked to provide information.

Teri referred to Hampshire Council of Government dissolving and the transfer of Hampshire Retirement to the state and asked if it's known what the details are. Phil replied the state took over the financial responsibility but not the retirement system.

Teri mentioned prior discussions of theft of lawn signs and proposed to make a statement on it.

Teri made a motion that the Selectboard make the statement:

It has come to the Select Board's attention that numerous lawn signs with messages across the political spectrum have been stolen in town over the past few months. The Westhampton Select Board condemns the theft of lawn signs of any kind. Theft of lawn signs is misdemeanor larceny in MA subject to larceny charges and possible trespass violation for unauthorized entry onto private property. Residents are encouraged to immediately report stolen signs to the Police Department. If you observe someone stealing a sign, please contact the Police Department.

Phil agreed to the first two sentences. Discussion ensued regarding the remainder of the statement. Phil is opposed to making a statement to trespass violations and larceny. He prefers a positive energy behind such a statement. He noted that the Selectboard is not political and their role is to serve the community, making note that there are other ways to express personal political opinions.

Teri does not see this as politicizing the issue. The statement “signs of any kind” is used because it’s reported that signs across the political spectrum are stolen and it’s not a left or right matter. It’s a matter of people trespassing on private property to steal free speech property and that is against the law. She sees it as a statement to the public that it is a violation of the law, not just a matter of whether you agree or disagree with an opinion.

Phil made a motion to amend the statement:

It has come to the Select Board's attention that numerous lawn signs with messages across the political spectrum have been stolen in town over the past few months. The Westhampton Select Board condemns the theft of lawn signs of any kind.

Second by Maureen

Discussion opened. Maureen supported the statement of the first two sentences. She questioned if the sort of people stealing the signs would read the statement.

Amendment called and passed by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-abstain

Phil motioned to approve the statement as amended. Second by Maureen. Motion approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Hampshire Regional School District Superintendent Search Committee Sarah Mulvehill. There is an application process. Maureen would like to tell Sarah to apply.

Teri motion to nominate Sarah Mulvehill to submit interest for the position on the high school superintendent search committee. Second by Phil. Motion approved by roll call vote:

Phil Dowling-aye

Maureen Dempsey-aye

Teri Anderson-aye

Teri reported she received a copy of correspondence from Catheryn Hondorp sent to the board in 2018 that she never received a response on. She is requesting a response. Teri will forward a copy to Maureen and Phil to review for discussion at a future meeting.

Discussion was held regarding Mass. Municipal Assoc. Annual Meeting workshops.

Next meeting: 7:00 p.m., February 1, 2021.

Adjourned meeting at 9:10 p.m.

Approved by vote of the Selectboard at virtual meeting held February 1, 2021.

Phil Dowling

Maureen Dempsey

Teri Anderson