



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

Minutes of the Meeting - Westhampton Selectboard

February 14, 2022, 6 PM

The Westhampton Selectboard scheduled a regular meeting on Monday, February 14, 2022, at 7 PM.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, the meeting was held as a “hybrid” (in person and remote access) meeting. Some members of the board and the public attended the meeting via “Zoom” conferencing. Meeting ID Code: 8704 390 0582. In-person attendance by the public was permitted. The meeting was audio/video recorded for purposes of minutes only.

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. The roll was called:

Present: Phil Dowling, Maureen Dempsey, Teri Anderson (via Zoom)

Also Present in person

Doug Finn (Admin Asst.), Highway Superintendent Bill Jablonski

Also Present via Zoom:

Chris Wayne, Susan Bronstein, Shelby Macri, Janice Pegels, Mary Lou and Gerald Burgess, Roberta Armenti

Ongoing discussion / deliberation on possible ARPA funded projects

Mr. Dowling deferred the matter to later in the agenda.

Local Cultural Council Contract renewal

Mr. Finn noted that the annual contract with the Massachusetts Cultural Council was due for renewal, and should be approved by a vote.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the contract, and authorize Mr. Dowling to sign.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:01 PM)

Adopt Remote Participation at Public Meetings

Mr. Finn noted the request would not comply until July 15 of 2022, as H.4345, signed into law by Governor Baker, would continue pandemic rules of meetings until that time.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To adopt the provisions of 940 CMR 29.10(2), allowing remote participation at public meetings. This does not apply to Town Meeting.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:03 PM)

Department and Committee Updates

Highway (Bill Jablonski)

Mr. Jablonski noted that there have been storms on nearly every weekend since the winter. Additional work: New exhaust system on Fire Chief's car, opening catch basins and waterways; dealing with ice-melt after freezing rain storms; continuing repairs on the fire trucks.

Mr. Jablonski noted that he kept a record of storms, and also tracks rainfall by year.

There was some discussion related to a recent bridge inspection, which noted minor deficiencies with a local bridge – Mr. Jablonski noted that the inspection showed that the bridge was in satisfactory and fully operable condition.

Health (Robby Armenti)

Deferred to later. Mr. Dowling noted that Hampshire County still shows higher rates of infection. Mr. Finn noted that the Board of Health would be meeting on Saturday to discuss the DESE decision to end the mask mandate for schools on February 28.

Public Safety Building (Phil Dowling)

Mr. Dowling provided an update on the construction project's status. Mr. Dowling noted that some delays were caused by missing or delayed equipment, and that an ongoing issue related to the sprinkler system design was still being reviewed.

Mr. Dowling noted that funding continues to be sought for the build-out of the second floor, including an elevator and second egress stairs. State reps noted the possibility of a potential earmark in the FY23 budget to fund the elevator and stairs.

ARPA Funding

Mr. Dowling advised waiting on using ARPA funds for the elevator and egress stairs, in order to see if the state funding comes through.

Mr. Dowling noted that purchase of certain items on the capital investment plan might be funded with free cash.

Food Pantry Funding

Mr. Chris Wayne noted that the need for the food pantry exists, and suggested that \$20,000 would fund the program for the next two years.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To appropriate up to \$10,000 to fund the Food Pantry program for a program of one year, beginning immediately.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

Ms. Anderson asked about the use of ARPA funds for Tests and Masks, as well as funding for staff participation in the MVP Inclusion Training.

Mr. Finn noted that finding a reputable source for NIOSH-certified masks, and Covid-19 at-home test kits, proved to be very difficult. However, a case of about 100 packs of KN95 masks (5per pack) were provided to the town, and were ready for distribution.

Ms. Armenti noted that the Foothills Health District voted to NOT purchase masks for towns or members. However, Ms. Armenti had a list of number of verified vendors who could provide masks, and went into some detail as to the various options available. Ms. Armenti also noted that the BOH agreed to assist in distribution.

Ms. Dempsey confirmed with Mr. Finn that distribution through the public library would be possible. Mr. Dowling suggested that the masks be provided to the library for distribution, and to track how quickly the supply lasted.

Ms. Armenti noted that test kits were not available for purchase through almost any source.

There was discussion about test kit availability through the federal government and private sources, as well as the efficacy of the rapid-tests versus PCR tests; the use of rapid-tests in the schools was noted.

Ms. Armenti updated the board on Board of Health activities and conversations.

Ms. Armenti and Ms. Pegals also briefly spoke about ongoing conversations regarding water testing at Pine Island Lake, and potential future conversations about natural hazards planning related to the dam and the dike at PIL.

Ms. Pegals asked for assistance from the town to help inform the public relative to the matters related to the dam and dike.

Mr. Dowling noted that the Selectboard could host a conversation within the next six weeks with interested parties, including town departments and officials, in regard to Ms. Pegals' concerns, and the town's Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.

Ms. Pegals was thanked for her time.

MVP (Teri Anderson)

Ms. Anderson noted that the MVP open space survey had been issued and open for public review.

The Master Plan survey is due out in early March.

Mr. Jablonski asked about daytime training dates relative to the MVP program. Ms. Anderson noted that she was continuing to review options.

Old Business

Conservation Commission Appointment

Mr. Finn noted receipt of a letter from Jessica Lerman, written on behalf of the Conservation Commission, recommending that Alyson Arnold be appointed to the Conservation Commission.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To appoint Alyson Arnold to the Conservation Commission for a term ending _____.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:42 PM)

Regional OOD Transportation Letter – Review and Sign

Mr. Finn presented a final draft letter to State Reps and Westhampton’s State Senator in support of higher state reimbursement for out-of-district regional vocational transportation expenses.

The board agreed to sign and send.

CPI / COLA

Mr. Finn provided information relative to CPI-W, and how it compared to the Selectboard’s recommended COLA for FY2023.

News / Correspondence

Mr. Finn noted correspondence related to the bridge inspection report (discussed earlier), and a letter from Comcast with emergency contacts.

Ms. Anderson asked about Westhampton’s involvement with the TIP committee, organized through the PVPC. Mr. Finn noted he would be working on a grant to do preliminary design and survey work for the Northwest Road project.

Ms. Anderson suggested that the Town work on requesting that the rebuild of Northwest Road be added to the TIP list. Mr. Finn and Mr. Jablonski agreed to work cooperatively to that end.

Mr. Finn noted that he was working on getting written estimates for upgraded fire and security systems for the Town Hall and Annex from a number of vendors, as well as potential cost-saving upgrades to the Town’s phone and data systems, and would report back.

Review / Approve Minutes

January 18, 2022, January 31, 2022

The minutes of January 18 were reviewed.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the minutes of January 18, 2022 as amended.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:53 PM)

The minutes of January 18 were reviewed.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the minutes of January 31, 2022 as amended.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: YES; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:54 PM)

Review of warrants

The payroll warrant was reviewed.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Anderson

To approve the payroll warrant WP22-17.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: ABSTAIN; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 2, 0, 1 (7:55 PM)

The expense warrant was reviewed.

It was MOVED by Dowling, SECONDED by Dempsey

To approve the payroll warrant W22-17.

VOTED: ANDERSON: YES; DEMPSEY: ABSTAIN; DOWLING: YES

VOTED: 3, 0, 0 (7:55 PM)

Other items not reasonably anticipated at time of posting

Ms. Anderson noted a recommendation from the Town of Leverett to amend the state's laws regarding large-scale solar, and asked if the board would consider supporting the legislation.

After some discussion, it was determined that while there was support for general idea of protecting farm and undeveloped land from being cleared and use for solar panels, the matter required more study. The board generally concurred that the MVP process seemed to be right means to conduct further review of the proposal.

ARPA Expenditures

Mr. Jablonski reiterated the need to replace two pieces of equipment that in his opinion were past end of life, and in need of immediate replacement:

- \$72,319 for an F350 with upfits, including flatbed and snowplow, replacing a 23-year old vehicle that will very likely not pass inspection after September.
- \$37,155 for Solid Waste Compactor and Octagon Container that is about 40 years old, and is showing signs of failing.

Mr. Jablonski requested that ARPA funds be appropriated to make these purchases.

Mr. Dowling noted current requests for funding

- \$27,000 appropriated to residual CARES act expenditures.
- \$120,000 for public safety building and police trailer rental
- \$10,000 for food pantry
- \$36,000 for design work on the Public Safety Complex

Total of \$193,000.

Adding the two requested items would add about \$100,000 to the ARPA funding.

Ms. Anderson asked whether a Town Meeting vote would be required to purchase the

truck using free cash. Answer: yes.

Mr. Jablonski expressed concern that, if the town waited until after Town Meeting to order the truck, the cost would increase, and the truck would likely not be delivered until CY2023.

There was discussion related to the \$120,000 proposed to satisfy cost overages relative to the Public Safety Complex building project.

Mr. Dowling stated that he was not prepared to vote in favor of the truck or the compactor, but would like to discuss the matter.

The scope of use of ARPA was discussed.

The scope of use of Free Cash was discussed.

The timing of ARPA expenditures was discussed.

Mr. Dowling noted that it took upwards of nine months to purchase the 2021 F550 one year before.

It was MOVED by Dowling SECONDED by Dempsey

To appropriate up to \$74,000 from ARPA funding to purchase the highway truck.

Ms. Anderson expressed her interest in understanding whether an appropriation of ARPA funding could be reversed, if funding for the truck from free cash were approved at Town Meeting, and requested that action be delayed until more information could be received from Town Accountant, or MassDOR.

Mr Finn suggested that the appropriation from ARPA could likely be reversed provided that the funds have not been committed. However, if the funds are expended, the appropriation would NOT be able to be reversed.

Ms. Anderson asked whether the appropriation could be put off two weeks. Mr. Jablonski noted that it would delay the order and delivery of the truck.

There was considerable discussion as to ARPA funds versus free cash as a funding source, and the implications of waiting to a Town Meeting approval for the requested appropriation on the delivery date of the equipment.

Ms. Anderson requested that the Board request an opinion from the Town Accountant, or other authorities, as to what options the board had relative to each funding source, and possible transfer of funds from free cash to reimburse ARPA account.

The board agreed to conduct another meeting on February 17, 2022, in order to consider input from the Town Accountant, and to determine the next steps at that point.

There was discussion relative to acceptable uses for ARPA.

There was discussion as to how funding could be appropriated, when or how free cash could be appropriated to cover an ARPA expense, and whether free cash could be used to reimburse the ARPA account after the fact, if an appropriation was expended.

MS. DEMPSEY WITHDREW HER SECOND,
AND MR. DOWLING WITHDREW THE ORIGINAL MOTION.

Mr. Finn clarified the questions to be asked to the Accountant.

Next Meeting

Mr. Dowling noted that the board would have a short meeting on February 17, 2022, 5:30 PM, to consider the Town Accountant's opinion relative to the Highway Department requests. The next regular meeting would be on Monday, February 28, 2022, 7 PM

Adjourn

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

WITHOUT OBJECTION

Adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas C. Finn.

APPROVED by a vote of the Westhampton Selectboard, on February 28, 2022. Certified:



Douglas Finn, Administrative Assistant