

Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes of January 10, 2023
Town Hall, Douglas G Willett Board of Selectmen's Chamber First Floor

Present: Alison Genest, Chairman, Joseph DiRocco, Jr. Vice-Chairman, Jennifer Kopcinski, Clerk, Tony Archinski, Member, and Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Member. Ann Vandal, Town Manager, Victor Garofalo, Assistant Town Manager, Town Counsel Dave Deluca and interim Recording Secretary Samantha Carver.

Mrs. Genest called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by a moment of silence being observed.

Citation

Devin Meek – Completion of Eagle Scout Project at the Council on Aging. Devin explained the steps he went through to complete the garden boxes at the Council on Aging. His brother showed the Board a short video of the construction process. The Board congratulated and thanked Devin for his project.

Community Input

Janice Dudevoir 107 Lexington Road – Subject: Conservation Restrictions

Philippe Thibault 45 Peabody Avenue – Clarification on reasons for resignation from Planning Board

Town Manager's Report

Mrs. Vandal began her report talking about the Capital Projects upcoming for the town. Lakeview Avenue Culvert, Tallyho Construction, Helen Drive, Beaverbrook mothballing, Annex DPW Sign Equipment, Nashua Road construction completion, Veteran's Park brickwork and park area maintenance. Also in the pipeline for capital projects was new outdoor exercise equipment to be installed at Veteran's Park, Safe Routes to Schools Phineas to Primrose and Old Rd to Primrose, Mammoth at Lakeview Av Intersection (3-4 years out) improvements; Dam removal (10-yr project); 144 Greenmont Avenue Housing Project, the project has been reduced in size due to costs down to 56 units and they have submitted their one-stop application; EV Charging stations staff has successfully received a grant for the installation of charging stations and IFB has been issued; the Zoning Bylaws rewrite is underway, the DPW Landfill Closing – conceptual planning is underway, \$500k has been received in State funding and is part of State bonding authorization. The Town also has received word from Lori Trahan's office of a grant approved of \$1.5 million in federal funding. Sewer lining project is ongoing, and the fire hydrant inspection and painting is ongoing.

Mrs. Vandal spoke about the mattress recycle program and explained to the Board the costs so far for this with the Town picking up the fee. She stated the Town may have to reconsider this because it could add up to be the salary of a police or firefighter per year.

The CPA surcharge given from the state was 38% for FY2022. The storm water catch basin cleaning is now being done in house and they do about four a day. The DPW even though there has not been any significant snow there has still been ice events and costs still occur with these events. The DPW will be having safety training classes beginning soon for their staff. The Fire Department has training sessions for the fire fighters emergency vehicle operations, hazardous materials and OSHA Blood borne pathogens and infection control. Town staff is developing a maintenance schedule for all the town buildings. The Sewer and Water Department the Methuen Pump Station had a fire, the station has just been finished. There have been 11 water main breaks, 5 of them were the responsibility of the resident. When a break occurs the Town does respond to assess and determine the fix. In some cases the leak is on the resident's property and it is their responsibility. The Town gives the homeowner time to get the repair done and offers a list of licensed contractors for them.

The library has their state aid approved. They have their hybrid technology up and running. The Town will take a look at this technology to see if it can be incorporated. The library will celebrate its 100th year anniversary in November so there will be different celebrations and events at the library. The foot traffic has increased at the library to before pandemic days.

The Board of Health has received a donation from Greater Lowell Health Alliance of sneakers and socks. These have been donated to Katie's Closet for distribution. The Board of Health continues to be pro-active with participation in regional programs that assist the Town such as substance abuse, immunizations, health fairs, septic system inspections, etc.

Recreation is prepping for spring sign-ups and the winter ski program has been hit hard due to no snow. Hammer Studios is partnering with the Recreation office to be able to offer programs at a discounted rate. The Recreation Office is also working on the Open Space Recreation Plan with NMCOG and received a \$45,000 grant.

The budget process for the Town is underway and they are meeting with department staff to review and refine the budgets. They had a meeting with Superintendent Stone today and will revisit that budget once they have a better understanding of the Chapter 70 funds. With the new administration in the Governor's office they anticipate a delay in these numbers being released. Tennis courts are being planned at the Parker Avenue School and will be jointly used with the town and school. The Town is working cooperatively with the Schools to complete a town-wide energy analysis to determine solar or other energy savings opportunities. They are also discussing the creation of tennis and pickle courts at the Parker Avenue School Field.

The town building will undergo interior lighting changes to LEDs, this is the same program they used for the library.

The seed shed at Beaverbrook Farm has been mothballed and they replaced the entire roof to keep the water out. The Friends of Beaverbrook Farm installed a temporary ice skating rink in the garden area, however the weather is not cooperating with that.

Town Engineer Mark Hamel is working with the committee to prepare a conceptual plan to install an ADA compliant trail. Once the proposal is submitted and approved they will move forward with final design and construction. All aspects of construction will be put out to bid.

Mr. DiRocco would like a thank you letter go out from the Selectmen to Congresswoman Lori Trahan for her assistance in getting the \$1.3 million grant money for Dracut.

Mr. DiRocco asked Mrs. Vandal a question on why the Kenwood Water District doesn't offer a repair program similar to what Dracut Water Supply District does. Mrs. Vandal responded that from her recollection it was due to the number of accounts only be 2,000 and not everyone signing up for it which would make it costly and the distances for the properties in east Dracut are longer. There may have been something that prevented the Town from offering such a program being a municipality. Mr. DiRocco would like staff to take another look into this. Mr. DiRocco asked what type of wall is planned for Helen Drive. Mrs. Vandal stated that it is pre-cast retaining wall. The residents had requested a certain design but that design is much too costly for the town. The town owns both sides of the street. Mr. DiRocco would like the mattress program to go a little longer and maybe it will level off. Mr. DiRocco asked about the different town seal logos on the DPW trucks. Mrs. Vandal stated that they are going to be changing them back to the original design. These were not authorized to be put on the trucks.

Mrs. Genest asked about the red x's on the buildings at Beaverbrook and if they would be staying on them. Mrs. Vandal stated these are put on by the Fire Department and maybe the Fire Chief could speak to that.

Mr. Archinski asked whether anyone has talked with Dracut Water Supply to take over Kenwood Water. Mrs. Vandal stated they have had discussions with the Superintendent for Dracut Water Supply and are working on a plan. They have some legal loopholes to go through and they would have to do a Home Rule Petition to Dracut Water Supply to allow the town to buy water. DWSD stepped up to assist the town on a water main break over one of the holiday weekends. They are developing a MOU so that both parties can address these issues and they would share the costs on these issues. The Kenwood District only has 2000 accounts and their budget is not very rich.

Mr. Archinski asked the Town Manager who pays for the EV stations. Mrs. Vandal stated they have received grants for these stations and are applying for another grant to National Grid. The cost to charge the vehicle is on the owner of the vehicle and it is through a third party vendor on a credit card. There is a maintenance surcharge which is minimal and there is minimal cost to the town. Mr. Archinski discussed the fee on the mattress collection and stated that he is not inclined to set a fee.

Ms. Santiago-Hutchings gave accolades to the Town staff applying for and getting the grants that have been discussed. She recognizes that the Town does not have a dedicated grant writer. Mrs. Vandal will put a chart together of the grants received.

Ms. Santiago-Hutchings was also in agreement with Mr. Archinski on not proposing a fee when in the goals for the Board it was determined not to recommend any new fees.

Mrs. Genest stated that she voted for the Town to not pick up the fee for our residents because the way she sees it, we all pay our taxes that get allocated to their respective line items in the budget and by the Town paying for the removal, residents are actually all paying for each other.

Ms. Santiago-Hutchings would also like to have this put on the agenda to review the goals. Mrs. Genest was in agreement with Ms. Santiago-Hutchings on revisiting the goals.

Fire Chief's Report

Fire Chief Rich Patterson was present to discuss some of his finishing statistics for the year. He said that this has been a very busy years with 4,454 calls. Most of these calls are for emergency services and there has been a slight increase in those calls of 12%. They have also seen a slight increase in fire activity. The windstorm that occurred around December 23rd the Town faired pretty good. There were two homes that had a tree fall on them. In the afternoon they had some power outages however National Grid was able to have everything restored by 1p.m. on December 24th. The Fire Department had received some small grant money. One grant in the amount of \$25,000 for fire equipment and hoses and equipment will be purchased, there has been a safety grant of \$4,081 and a senior grant of \$2,277. They have had \$8,600 in community equipment updated at the Fire Headquarters.

Chief Patterson mentioned the amazement in the community support they received for the toy drive and they were able to fill the classroom at the fire station headquarters with toys.

Chief Patterson followed up with Kevin Lessard on the calls to the dispatch center during the outage November 9th and relayed the numbers to the Board.

Chief Patterson addressed the x's on the buildings at Beaverbrook Farm and stated these x's indicate that the buildings are unsafe have strict deficits and no firefighting takes place at these buildings.

Department Presentations

Bethany Loveless Director of the Council on Aging was present with a PowerPoint handout for the committee on what takes place at the Council on Aging. She also had Frances Demaris present who is the Board President of the Council on Aging and she spoke of her participation at the Council.

Community Calendar

Mrs. Genest read the information in the Community Calendar.

Agenda Items

Kim Kelley, Irish Clover Road Race – Ms. Kelley was present to explain the layout for the road race which will take place from Owen and Ollie’s restaurant on Mill Street. She was also requesting that Mill St between Lakeview Avenue and Water Street be closed during the race. She explained that the race participants will be capped at 750.

Mr. DiRocco asked if she had received final approval from Sgt. Williams at the Police Department. There was a discussion on the emails provided in the packet but it didn’t show a final approval. Ms. Kelley believed the final approval was given to Shannon at the Selectmen’s office. Mr. DiRocco asked Ms. Kelley if they would reach out to the residents in the area to let them know the streets would be closed. Ms. Kelley stated she could reach out to them. The streets would only be closed until about 2p. Mrs. Kopcinski asked if there were dedicated areas for the runners to park. Ms. Kelley stated there is parking at and around Owen and Ollies and she also has volunteers that stand at CVS at Lakeview Avenue to discourage them from parking in their parking lot. Town Manager Vandal texted Sgt. Williams and he responded that he was okay with the plan for this event. The Board also asked Harry Gorman the owner of Owen and Ollies who was present for his input. He stated this is there fourth year doing this and they haven’t had any problems.

Mr. DiRocco made a motion to approve the request for the Irish Clover Road Race. Mrs. Kopcinski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

Discuss and vote on the 2023 Estimated Temporary Increased Resident Population as of July 10, 2023 for the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission

The Committee reviewed the email from the Town Clerk relative to the temporary increased resident population of 34,000.

Mr. DiRocco made a motion to approve the temporary increased population for the ABCC of 34,000. Mrs. Kopcinski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

Chief Bartlett - Requesting approval of a stop sign at Salisbury Street and Methuen Street – north

Mr. DiRocco made a motion to approve the request. Mrs. Kopcinski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

Warren Shaw – Requesting Appointment to the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee

The Chairman of the Zoning Bylaw Review Committee Scott Mallory was present. He stated they are requesting that Warren Shaw get appointed. He stated that given the nature of the project it’s good to have experience on the committee it’s a net positive to keep the project moving forward.

Mr. DiRocco asked why that decision wasn’t made first before the alternates. Mr. DiRocco asked why an alternate wasn’t moved to the at large.

Mr. Mallory stated they'd like to see someone with experience. Mr. Archinski agreed with Mr. Mallory about having experience, Mr. Shaw had been on the Planning Board five years, then a Selectmen for twenty-four years. Mrs. Kopcinski asked if someone down the road resigns from the committee if an alternate would move up. Mr. Mallory stated they could look at that in a different light. Mr. Mallory stated that the at large will complement the folks already sitting there. Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings stated these are three brand new positions and it was discussed to have someone with historical knowledge and also to allow robust community input. The request was moved to a roll call vote: Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings – yes, Mr. Archinski – yes, Mr. DiRocco – yes, Mrs. Kopcinski – yes, Mrs. Genest – yes.

Sub-Committee Reports

Zoning Bylaw Review Committee – Reorganization of the Committee took place, Mr. Mallory is the Chair and Mr. McKiel is the Vice Chair, the two alternates attended the meeting and there was discussion on community outreach avenues for input from the community.

Beaverbrook Farm Ad-Hoc – Mrs. Vandal stated the skate rink is up and the ADA trail is being worked on with Mark Hamel the Town's Engineer. There will be an 8a.m. site visit Monday on the site.

Economic Development Committee – Mrs. Genest stated they did not have a meeting in December however she had an update from Dan Phelps which she read into the record.

New Business

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked if the Eagle Scouts usually invite the Selectmen to their award ceremony. Mrs. Genest stated they do she has gotten invites in the past. Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked if those could be shared to the whole Board. Mrs. Genest was in agreement.

Minutes of December 13, 2022

Mr. DiRocco made a motion to accept the minutes of 12/13/2022 as presented. Mr. Archinski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.


Adjournment

Mr. DiRocco made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Mr. Archinski seconded the motion. The motion carried with all members voting in favor.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN



Alison Genest, Chairman


Joseph DiRocco, Jr., Vice Chair


Jennifer Kopcinski, Clerk


Tony Archinski, Member


Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Member