

Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023
Town Hall, Douglas G. Willett Board of Selectmen's Chamber, First Floor

Present: Joseph DiRocco, Jr., Vice-Chairman, Jennifer Kopcinski, Clerk, Tony Archinski, Member, Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Member, Ann Vandal, Town Manager, Victor Garofalo, Assistant Town Manager, Attorney Peter Mello and Recording Secretary Shannon Rowe

Absent: Alison Genest, Chairman

Mr. DiRocco called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by a moment of silence being observed for those serving in our Military and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. Mr. DiRocco also called for a moment of silence for the family of Naval Petty Officer Matthew Capeless.

COMMUNITY INPUT:

* Allison Stilian, 19 Roosevelt Avenue – Ms. Stilian appeared before the Board and stated that she has a huge issue with the new proposed 40B housing development. Ms. Stilian stated that all of the schools are at capacity except for the High School and asked how do they stop the proposed development? Ms. Stilian stated that she was extremely concerned for the schools and asked who they go to regarding the concerns with the proposed development.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – Mrs. Vandal stated that the budget process is moving along and they are still waiting on the State for the local aid numbers. Mrs. Vandal discussed the Regional Emergency Communication Center's (RECC) FY24 budget and stated that the State would be providing 50% of the funding for FY24, which is \$560,000 for Dracut. Mrs. Vandal explained that both Dracut and Tewksbury would be responsible for 100% of the RECC budget for FY25. Mrs. Vandal stated that they are working with the School Department on a Solar Program and the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is looking at a possible re-build of the Campbell School. Mrs. Vandal explained that the new proposed 40B housing development would have a significant impact on the schools, public safety, etc. Mrs. Vandal stated that the IT Department is working on the new Town's Website and the Beaver Brook Farm (BBF) seedshed has been mothballed and stabilized. Mrs. Vandal thanked Dave Martin and all of the volunteers that have helped put together the ice-skating rink at BBF even though the weather has not been cooperating this season. Mrs. Vandal stated that there was a site visit at BBF to look at parking, a driveway and ADA trails. Mrs. Vandal discussed the workshop at BBF and the possible demolition of the workshop, mediation, etc. Mrs. Vandal discussed the need for engineered plans for all of the proposed work at BBF and the need to prioritize the work for the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Town. Mrs. Vandal discussed the Conservation Restrictions for areas in Town including BBF and explained that each Restriction could take up to one-year for State approval. Mrs. Vandal discussed the meeting with the Long Pond Beach Association to review concerns on memberships, keys being given out, no alcohol consumption on the premises, signage, etc.

(Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023)

Mrs. Vandal stated that there is a kick-off meeting scheduled for the Open Space and Recreation Plan and that NMCOC would be helping with the Plan. Mrs. Vandal introduced two of the three new recruits at the Fire Department.

Mr. Archinski stated that he has received complaints regarding there being no parking at Town Hall for customers. Mrs. Vandal explained where employees park and Mr. Garofalo stated that the Tax Collector's Office is currently accepting excise tax payments, which has a lot of residents coming in to pay their bill.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR: - Mr. DiRocco read the information in the Community Calendar.

AGENDA ITEM:

* Jayne Boissonneault, Town Clerk – Review, Discuss & Vote to Amend the Previous Authorization for In-Person Early Voting for the May 6, 2023 Town Election – Mrs. Jayne Boissonneault, Town Clerk, appeared before the Board and reviewed her memorandum to the Board dated February 9, 2023 and explained that In-Person Early Voting must end at least two business days before the Election. Mrs. Boissonneault explained that In-Person Early Voting would end on Wednesday, May, 3rd, 2023 and is requesting that the Board amend their vote from the previous meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Amend the Previous Authorization for In-Person Early Voting Dates and Location Indicated by the Town Clerk. Motion seconded by Mrs. Kopcinski. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING:

* 7:20 p.m. - 4LM, LLC d/b/a Back to the Boathouse, 294 Tyngsboro Road – Requesting Approval of the Change of LLC Manager and Members, Change of Ownership Interest (LLC Members) and Change of Manager on the Section 12, All Alcoholic Beverages License on premises described as: 9,228 sq. ft., first floor three rooms, cellar contains two rooms, banquet hall, two entrances/exits rear of building, one entrance/exit side of building, one entrance/exit in front of building and a 22x26x16 deck, occupancy capacity of 200 – Mr. DiRocco read the public hearing notice advertised in the Lowell Sun. Attorney George Malonis appeared before the Board and explained that this request is a transfer of membership interest to Tracy Nolan and Gerald Laroche with Tracy Nolan being the manager of the premises. Attorney Malonis explained that Ms. Nolan has worked at the Boathouse for many years and there would be no changes in the operation of the establishment. Attorney Malonis stated that Ms. Nolan is TIPS Certified.

Ms. Andrea Leaver, the property owner, appeared before the Board and stated that she is in favor of the transfer of the membership interest, Ms. Nolan has worked at the Boathouse for years and that it is a beautiful, safe, establishment.

(Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023)

No one spoke in opposition of the public hearing.

Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Close the Public Hearing. Motion seconded by Mrs. Kopcinski. Motion passed unanimously. Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Approve the Change of LLC Manager and Members, Change of Ownership Interest (LLC Members) and Change of Manager. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

AGENDA ITEMS (CONT'D):

* Alison Manugian, Community Development Director – Review and Discuss the Murphy’s Farm 40B Application, 5 Poppy Lane – Mrs. Alison Manugian, Community Development Director, appeared before the Board and reviewed her draft letter dated February 8, 2023 to Michael Busby, 40B Specialist, MassHousing Finance Agency, regarding the Murphy’s Farm 40B housing development. Mrs. Manugian stated that the application is in the beginning stages with the State for their approval. Mrs. Manugian discussed the eligibility letter and explained that stage two is when the applicant submits to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Mrs. Manugian reviewed her drafted response to the State with the Board regarding the Town’s concerns. Mrs. Manugian explained that the Town’s preliminary concerns are traffic, schools’ impact and public safety.

Mr. DiRocco asked if the number of bedrooms per unit could be limited? Mrs. Manugian discussed there being no local control over the number of bedrooms but that could be part of the conversations with the ZBA.

Mr. DiRocco discussed this proposed project being a hardship for the Town and asked where do they go from here? Mrs. Manugian discussed affordable housing numbers and State requirements for affordable housing.

Mrs. Kopcinski asked if having to provide the Town’s concerns and comments are just a formality? Mrs. Manugian explained that step one is the State’s review of the proposed project for eligibility, not impacts.

Mrs. Kopcinski discussed if the State approves the proposed project for eligibility, would the State be funding for schools, etc.

Mr. Archinski thanked Mrs. Manugian for the preparing the draft letter and explained to the audience that Mrs. Manugian has prepared a four-page letter to the State with the Town’s concerns.

Mr. Archinski suggested that the process for the neighbors is to write letters, etc., to the State and their State Legislatures. Mrs. Vandal stated that it may be best for the neighborhood to have a spokesperson.

(Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023)

Mr. Archinski discussed wanting to provide affordable housing, but the issue with this proposed project is the original plan was for twenty-two homes now it is being proposed for 300 units. Mr. Archinski discussed his past experience with having a 40B project stopped.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings stated that Mrs. Manugian did an excellent job on the letter and asked if the ZBA has the ability to alter the proposed plans? Mrs. Manugian stated that the ZBA would be representing the Community and discussed the need to find a middle ground.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings discussed the 40B projects already in process and the MBTA Communities compliance. Mrs. Manugian discussed the Town not having enough affordable housing to stop/pause any additional submittals.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked if the proposed 40B project on Broadway Road should be included in the comment letter to the State? Mrs. Manugian stated that she would look into if it could be included.

Mrs. Manugian discussed the current affordable housing numbers in Town and stated that all of the proposed units would be included with the affordable housing numbers.

Mrs. Kopcinski stated that it sounded as though this Board does not support the proposed project and discussed if the Board should write a letter to the ZBA for the record.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked Mrs. Manugian to keep the Board in the loop with the neighbor's concerns, etc. Mrs. Manugian stated that she would compile a list she receives from the neighbors and would share that list with the ZBA as well.

Mr. Archinski asked about an assessment of the infrastructure? Mrs. Manugian explained that the proposed plans are preliminary and they would need full plans to really look at the infrastructure. Mrs. Vandal stated that she has asked the Sewer Department to look at their capacity and that this proposed project was included in their capacity numbers. Mrs. Vandal discussed thresholds and capacity as a whole.

Mr. Roger Goudrav, 39 Herrick Dr, Methuen, MA, appeared before the Board and discussed how they ran into issues with traffic on Wheeler Street and their dealings with the City of Methuen, MA, the concerns with the roadway, traffic and sewer with this proposed project.

Mr. Archinski left the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Mr. Tim Crowley, 10 Garrison Road, appeared before the Board and discussed the Board looking at the concerns on a public safety standpoint along with the traffic, speed and distraction concerns.

Mr. Archinski returned to the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

(Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023)

Mrs. Manugian stated that a traffic study would be completed at the ZBA level.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked how long would it take for the State to respond to the eligibility request? Mrs. Manugian stated that the Town should hear within the next two months and then the Town waits until the applicant officially submits to the ZBA.

Mr. DiRocco thanked Mrs. Manugian for all of her hard work on Town's comment letter.

* Ann Vandal, Town Manager – Review of FY22/23 Goals – Mr. DiRocco stated that this would be continued until the next meeting.

* Peter Bartlett, Chief of Police – Requesting Approval for a Stop Sign at Frances Street and Varnum Road, North – Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Approve a Stop Sign at Frances Street and Varnum Road, North. Motion seconded by Mrs. Kopcinski. Motion passed unanimously.

* Peter Bartlett, Chief of Police – Requesting Acceptance of In-Kind Donations made to the Dracut Police Department – Motion made by Mrs. Kopcinski to Approve the In-Kind Donations made to the Dracut Police Department. Motion seconded by Mr. Archinski. Motion passed unanimously.

* Bethany Loveless, Council on Aging Director – Requesting Acceptance of a Donation from Dorothy Logan in Memory of Irene Mullin to be used to Provide Fun Activities for the Seniors – Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Accept the \$500.00 Donation from Dorothy Logan in Memory of Irene Mullin to be used to Provide Fun Activities for the Seniors. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

* Chairman Genest – Update on Annual Fireworks Event – Mr. DiRocco stated that this would be continued until the next meeting.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS:

* Economic Development Committee – Mrs. Kopcinski stated that the Committee would be starting the process of replacing the open At-Large Member position at their next meeting.

* Open Space Committee – Mr. Archinski stated that the Committee is hosting their Annual Dracut Birthday Walk at Yapp Farm on Saturday, February 25th, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked if the review of the FY22/23 Goals would be moved to the next meeting. Mr. DiRocco stated yes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings to Approve the Minutes of January 24, 2023. Motion seconded by Mr. Archinski. Motion passed unanimously.

(Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes of February 14, 2023)

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Adjourn the Meeting. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

ABSENT

Alison Genest, Chairman



Joseph DiRocco, Jr., Vice-Chairman



Jennifer Kopcinski, Clerk



Tony Archinski, Member



Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Member