

Board of Selectmen
Meeting Minutes of March 21, 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 Dave Deluca and Recording Secretary Shannon Rowe

Absent: Alison Genest, Chairman

Mr. DiRocco called the meeting to order at 7:02 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.

SPECIAL PERMIT SUBMITTAL:

* Allan Kouba d/b/a Northeast Cars, 744 Merrimack Avenue – Requesting an Amendment to Special Permit #20-2 from a 5 Car Dealership to a 31 Car Dealership and a Change of Name from Northeast Cars to Kouba Auto Group – Mrs. Vandal reviewed the Special Permit Amendment submittal and stated that all appears to be in order.

Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Accept the Special Permit Amendment Submittal. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNITY INPUT:

* Janice Dudevoir, 107 Lexington Road – Ms. Dudevoir appeared before the Board and stated that she was strictly representing herself and not as a Committee Member of the Beaver Brook Farm Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee. Ms. Dudevoir discussed the seed shed building at Beaver Brook Farm and being denied access to the seed shed due to insurance reasons. Ms. Dudevoir discussed the letter from the Building Inspector and Fire Chief stating that the building was unsafe to access but the building has been accessed by Town employees and the Chairman of the Beaver Brook Farm Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee. Ms. Dudevoir explained that site visits make a difference and asked if a separate insurance policy for the seed shed could be obtained for access to the building. Ms. Dudevoir discussed the need to be best informed on the seed shed for any decisions to be made in regards to the seed sheds future uses.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT – Mrs. Vandal stated that she and Mr. Garofalo are meeting monthly with the Police Chief and they have been very good and productive meetings. Mrs. Vandal stated that they would be presenting a balanced budget to the Board tonight and discussed working together with Superintendent Stone. Mrs. Vandal stated that they would be re-looking at charge backs with Superintendent Stone. Mrs. Vandal stated that the School Department and Town are looking into Solar options and that there is a Tri-Board Meeting scheduled for next Monday. Mrs. Vandal stated that Lori Cahill, Conservation Agent/Recreation Director and Mark Hamel, Town Engineer would be retiring in July.

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Mrs. Vandal discussed struggling to fill open positions and combing the Conservation/Assistant Planning Director positions and hiring a Recreation Director. Mrs. Vandal discussed looking into regional opportunities with other Communities. Mrs. Vandal discussed the Opioid funding coming and working with the Police Chief on how the funding should be allocated. Mrs. Vandal discussed the land fill closing at the Department of Public Works, the population of East Dracut increasing with proposed developments and increasing projections due to the population increase. Mrs. Vandal discussed the new Town's website being user-friendly and being run by the IT Department. Mrs. Vandal discussed the monument work and landscaping at Veteran's Memorial Park and the Long Pond Beach Association only giving out 100 keys for the beach area with priority to Dracut residents. Mrs. Vandal discussed the paving of Municipal areas and listed the streets that would be paved this spring. Mrs. Vandal explained that the line paving is scheduled but is subject to weather conditions.

Mr. Archinski discussed the drop off lane in front of the School Complex and asked if cones could be put at the drop off lane? Mrs. Vandal stated that she would ask Superintendent Stone to discuss that area with the Board.

Mr. Archinski discussed the renovating at Veteran's Memorial Park and the outside exercise facility. Mr. Garofalo stated that he has discussed the location of the exercise facility with Rob Sheppard and that they are looking at shifting the exercise equipment away from the monument. Mr. Archinski suggested that they invite someone from the American Legion to be involved in that discussion. Mrs. Vandal explained that the money for the exercise equipment is from a grant.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT:

Chief Bartlett discussed the swearing in ceremony for the new recruits and the training for the new recruits. Chief Bartlett explained that one officer made the NEMLEC Swat Team and two officers and our K-9 is on the NEMLEC Team. Chief Bartlett discussed attending the Community Events of Coffee with a Cop and the Veteran's Breakfast at the Council on Aging and the Read Across America Campaign. Chief Bartlett stated that he read to two 4th grade classes.

Mr. DiRocco discussed the four way stop at Cross and Colburn Road's and the number of accidents in that location. Chief Bartlett discussed changing the yield signs to stop signs. Mr. DiRocco discussed possibly putting up stop sign ahead signage. Chief Bartlett stated that he can have advisory signs put up.

Mr. DiRocco stated that he has received complaints regarding the kids on bikes driving in the roadways, etc. Chief Bartlett stated that the day and night shifts have been working on identifying the kids and contacting their parents. Chief Bartlett discussed possibly seizing their bikes.

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Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings stated that it was nice to see that all four new recruits are from Dracut, that all of the recruits were very comfortable with going to the Academy and was glad to hear all of the positive feedback from them.

Mr. Archinski discussed the Swat Team being called to Dracut over the weekend. Chief Bartlett discussed the call for service due to an altercation between neighbors.

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

AGENDA ITEMS:

* Superintendent Stone – Review, Discuss & Vote on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Statement of Interest for the Greenmont Avenue School – Superintendent Stone appeared before the Board and explained that this is the annual MSBA approval process. Superintendent Stone explained that the Campbell School has finally been picked-up and the MSBA encouraged them to file again for the Greenmont Avenue School. Superintendent Stone stated that the School Committee has approved the Statement of Interest.

Motion made by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings to authorize the Town Manager to sign the Statement of Interest for the Greenmont Avenue School. Motion seconded by Mr. Archinski.

Mrs. Kopcinski, Clerk of the Board of Selectmen, read the following motion:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Dracut, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated February 9, 2023 for the Greenmont Avenue School, located at 37 Greenmont Avenue, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future: [#5 Replacement, renovation or modernization of school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility]; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Dracut to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Stone discussed the traffic at the School Complex and the no stoppings signs along the roadway into the Englesby School. Superintendent Stone discussed parents parking at the Lokai and High School parking lots and walking their children to the Schools within the Complex.

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* Lazy River Products, 149 Broadway Road – Requesting (3) One-Day Beer & Wine Licenses on Saturday, April 22nd, Saturday, June 24th and Saturday, September 16th, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. – Attorney George Malonis appeared before the Board representing the applicant to request three one-day beer & wine licenses for upcoming events at Lazy River Products. Attorney Malonis explained that the applicant has scaled back their events from previous years.

Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Approve the (3) One-Day Beer & Wine Licenses on Saturday, April 22nd, Saturday, June 24th and Saturday, September 16th, 2023 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Motion seconded by Mrs. Kopcinski. Motion passed unanimously.

* Selectman Archinski - Discuss the Feasibility of Hiring or Dedicating a Special Legal Counsel to Protect Dracut's Interests in all 40B Projects – Mr. Archinski stated that he asked for this to be on the agenda to have a discussion with the Board not because he is against 40B Housing. Mr. Archinski stated that there are several 40B proposed developments at various stages being presented to the Town and that the Board should explore all of their avenues.

Mrs. Kopcinski stated that she agreed, has researched 40B's and the uphill battle with the State. Mrs. Kopcinski asked if they could combine efforts with other Communities to fight 40B projects?

Mrs. Vandal stated that this is a little premature as the Town has not seen any official filings as of yet.

Mr. DiRocco explained that Alison Manugian, Community Development Director, is trying to work something out with the builder in regards to the Murphy Farm's project.

Mrs. Vandal explained that Mrs. Manugian is working with the developer and Town Counsel Karis North.

Attorney Deluca explained that Attorney North has twenty years of experience and represents several Town's on 40B projects.

Mr. Archinski stated that a group has been formed to look at the options available to abutting residents, etc. Mr. Archinski stated that he does not believe that nothing can be done and would like to review every avenue available.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings stated that she was a past member of the Zoning Board of Appeals, discussed the 10% affordable housing threshold and questioned what is the Town really going to lose if they do not make the 10% requirement?

* Ann Vandal, Town Manager – Review of FY22/23 Goals - Mr. DiRocco stated that this would be reviewed at a later date when the entire Board is present.

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* Ann Vandal, Town Manager & Victor Garofalo, Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director – FY24 Preliminary Budget Presentation – Mr. Garofalo presented and reviewed with the Board the FY2024 Budget and Capital Plan. Mr. Garofalo’s PowerPoint Presentation reviewed the FY2024 Budget Overview, Revenue & Transfers, Local Receipts, Revenue Highlights. Other Transfers & Retained Earnings, Other Transfers, Free Cash Usage & Balance, Enterprise Funds Retained Earnings, General Fund Expenditures, Enterprise & CPA Funds Expenditures, Other Expenditures & Transfers, Budget Expenditures, Expenditure Highlights, Expenditure Highlights – Schools, School’s Estimated Chargebacks, Expenditure Highlights, Health Insurance, Expenditure Highlights, Enterprise Funds, Capital Plan FY2024, Capital Plan FY24 – Department and FY2024 Capital Funding – Funding Source.

Mr. DiRocco discussed the Proposition 2 ½ % increase in taxes. Mr. Garofalo discussed new growth with additions, etc., and the tax base.

Mr. Archinski discussed Free Cash going down. Mrs. Vandal stated that they like to see Free Cash at approximately \$6 million. Mr. Garofalo discussed taxes, levy’s, etc.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked about the \$1.3 million in Cannabis revenue and there not being a placeholder anywhere within the budget? Mr. Garofalo explained that the Cannabis revenue is a Free Cash item.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings asked if health insurance is shared with the employees? Mr. Garofalo stated yes, it is a 25/75 split.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings confirmed that the School Department would be funding the two School Resource Officer’s salaries this fiscal year and asked what the Economic Development Grant was being used for? Mr. Garofalo explained that the Grant would be used to help offset two years of salary for the Economic Development Project Planner. Mr. Garofalo stated that he confirmed with the State that the Grant could be used that way.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings discussed the replacement of the Deputy Fire Chief’s car being very expensive. Mr. Garofalo explained that they are not adding to the fleet they are just replacing and it would need to be fully equipped.

Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings discussed the decrease in Human Resource advertisements. Mr. Garofalo discussed using LinkedIn, social media, DATV and free advertising services. Mr. Garofalo discussed using the MMA for professional job postings. Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings stated that it is good to see thinking outside of the box.

Mrs. Kopcinski discussed the Jones Avenue Fire Station needing a roof replacement. Mrs. Vandal stated that the Fire Station is already twenty-three years old.

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* Ann Vandal, Town Manager – Review and Discuss the Use of 1990 Lakeview Avenue (former Fire Station) – Mrs. Vandal reviewed her memorandum to the Board dated February 2, 2023. Mrs. Vandal discussed brainstorming for uses of the building, which is still being used for storage by the Department of Public Works. Mrs. Vandal stated that they will hold off until she finds out what happens with the storage in the building and asked if the Board has any thoughts on uses of the building to let her know.

Mr. Garofalo discussed the time frame for the landfill work at the Department of Public Works.

* Ann Vandal, Town Manager – Review, Discuss & Vote on the Adoption of Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2022 to Make a One-Time Cost of Living Adjustment for Retirees – Mrs. Vandal explained that this would be a one-time catch up for retirees. Mr. DiRocco stated that this would be reviewed at a later date when the entire Board is present.

* Peter Bartlett, Chief of Police – Requesting Approval for a Stop Sign at Greenlawn Avenue and Davis Road, South – Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Approve a Stop Sign at Greenlawn Avenue and Davis Road, South. Motion seconded by Mrs. Kopcinski. Motion passed unanimously.

* Bethany Loveless, Council on Aging Director – Requesting Acceptance of a Donation from the Greater Lowell Senior Citizen Trust aka Helen Connerton Trust to Promote the Well-Being and Needs for the Dracut Senior Citizens – Motion made by Mrs. Kopcinski to Accept the \$7,500.00 Donation from the Greater Lowell Senior Citizen Trust aka Helen Connerton Trust to Promote the Well-Being and Needs for the Dracut Senior Citizens. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

* Thomas Tzimos – Requesting Appointment as a Bonded Constable – Motion made by Mrs. Kopcinski to Appoint Thomas Tzimos as a Bonded Constable. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

* Chairman Genest – Update on Annual Fireworks Event – Mr. DiRocco asked if the letters were sent to the abutters near Veteran’s Park about the fireworks? Ms. Rowe stated yes, the letters were mailed out on March 3, 2023.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS:

* Open Space Committee – Mr. Archinski stated that the Committee’s Annual Birthday Walk was snowed out twice and they would be hosting a Bird Walk on April 29, 2023, location to be determined.

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by Mrs. Kopcinski to Approve the Minutes of February 14, 2023. Motion seconded by Mr. Archinski. Motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. DiRocco sent the Board's best wishes to Chairman Genest for a speedy recovery.

Mr. Archinski congratulated Mrs. Genest and Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings on their re-election since their race is uncontested.

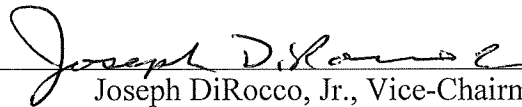
Motion made by Mr. Archinski to Adjourn the Meeting. Motion seconded by Mrs. Santiago-Hutchings. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

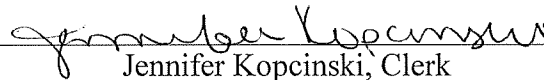
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

ABSENT

Alison Genest, Chairman



Joseph DiRocco, Jr., Vice-Chairman



Jennifer Kopcinski, Clerk

Tony Archinski, Member



Heather Santiago-Hutchings, Member