

Selectboard Meeting Minutes July 31, 2023 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm

Call to Order: Bob Manners called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Rick LaPierre, Andrew Baker, and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Rick to approve the minutes of July 13th July 17. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Department Liaison Reports:

Pratt Library Committee – Andrew met with the committee and reported that they are prioritizing building improvements. Repairing or upgrading the library lift and replacing several large windows are high on the list. The front steps of the building were repaired in conjunction with Bridge Street Phase 2 project.

Town Hall – Rick has met with the Treasurer and will schedule a subsequent meeting to review tax delinquencies in the coming months. Town Clerk Joe Judd will be hosting an election training class on August 23. All election workers will be invited.

Terry reported that the elevator work is complete and the state inspector will be coming tomorrow. The handicap ramp is expected to be completed next week.

Veterans Services – Rick reported that a new veteran's service officer is needed.

Police Department – The merger of the two departments has been "seamless," according to Chief Greg Bardwell. Officer Pettengill has started work. Officer Belanger will be starting on August 5. Department morale is high.

Senior Center – Bob displayed a t-shirt that is available for staff members and volunteers. Volunteers are needed and would be welcomed. The annual picnic will be held at Buckland Rec on August 18. The Adventure Club's first adventure, a mountain coaster ride, was rescheduled due to the extreme heat last week.

Highway Department – The crew is still at work repairing washouts. Brook Road has been reopened as a one-lane road. The repair work on that road will be a major project.

Energy Committee – Cynthia Boettner said MassSave will be in town the last two weeks of August to assist small businesses. A postcard announcing this has been sent to business and soon a joint letter, promoting the program, will be sent from the town and Eversource.

Appointments:

6:00 pm Chief Greg Bardwell RE: Adoption of Three New Department Policies – Body Worn Camera; Detective; Electrical Weapons - TASER – Greg explained that the body worn camera and electrical weapons policies were simply updates of existing policies. The detective policy is new and simply spells out the responsibilities of that position. This would be the first step in implementing that position. If the policy were to be approved a job description for detective could be created. Andrew suggested that creating a new position, with perhaps a salary increase, would need to go before Town Meeting. Greg said he saw the detective position not as an upward move, but more of a sideways move, making a full-time officer a detective. The detective work would be done, as needed, during regular patrol hours. All that is asked now is to create a framework for the position. Andrew noted that the use of TASERS was not without risk. Greg said that Buckland has TASERS as do 90% of police departments. TASERS fall between the use of pepper spray and firearms, about at the level of using a baton. They are a useful tool. Officers would be trained in the use and would be required to follow all the rules. A motion was

made by Andrew to adopt the three new police policies regarding body worn camera, detective, and electrical weapons – TASER. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Old Business:

Streetlights – The Energy Committee’s report will be delivered tomorrow.

Cowell Gym HVAC Project (John Walsh) – John Walsh was not present but an email he had sent indicated that while work is progressing, it may not be completed by the planned date of August 15. John later arrived at the meeting and said that the back ordered materials have supposedly been shipped and should be arriving this week. The project is close to completion.

Pocket Park Project, 19 Bridge Street – Nothing new to report.

West County Senior Services District Board of Managers Appointees – Postcards are being sent out urging people in the three towns to volunteer for the Board of Managers.

Relocation of Veteran’s Memorial – Nothing new to report, except that the accompanying flag pole will be relocated to the police station on Route 2.

Newsletter Guidelines – Rick felt the town would be remiss if it had no guidelines and had sent a list of eight suggested guidelines to the Board. He felt a new editor might want to know the guidelines. Discussion followed on where the list of subscribers was kept. Andrew said everyone who had subscribed since the town became involved was on the town server. Terry has access to the newsletter email account. One of the guidelines was that the newsletter would be reviewed by the Selectboard. Andrew said if he continued to be involved with the newsletter, any review by the Selectboard would require a posted meeting. Rick said he had intended the review to be done by each Selectboard member individually, not as a group in a meeting. He did not want the newsletter to be a political mouthpiece. It was suggested that perhaps Terry could review the newsletter. Andrew said if the editing was simply typos and dates, he saw no need for posted meetings, but if content were to be discussed, meetings should be posted. Rick was agreeable to that. Andrew pointed out that one of the guidelines appears to authorize events from non-profits and other groups. It was agreed that the wording would be changed to allow events only from Town Hall, municipal boards, commissions, committees, and regional partners. It was agreed that Rick would make the amendments and bring them to the next meeting.

New Business:

Andrew Baker RE: Disclosure of Appearance of Conflict of Interest – Andrew had contacted the State Ethics Commission concerning working as a liaison with the Memorial Hall Association and was told to complete a disclosure form, which he has done. He is now connected with three committees as liaison. Rick said that the word liaison comes with the implication of an official capacity but the Board has not appointed anyone as liaison to the Memorial Hall Association. Rick objected to Andrew calling himself liaison in the disclosure document. Bob said no action was needed as the disclosure has been filed.

Highway Pole Barn Bid Award – The second round of bidding resulted in five bids. Maple Row Farm was the low bidder. References have been checked. The bid was for \$82,125. As the cost of materials for the project came in higher than expected, some funds from Chapter 90 will be needed to pay for the construction. A motion was put forth by Andrew to accept the bid of Maple Row Farm or the construction of the pole barn at the highway department site. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

A motion was made by Rick to use up to \$40,000 from Chapter 90 funds for the construction of the highway department pole barn. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

During the course of the meeting it was learned that the amount of money needed from Chapter 90 was higher than estimated. A motion was made by Rick to use up to \$72,000 from Chapter 90 funds for the construction of the pole barn at the highway department. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Community Preservation Act Committee – The Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Open Space Committee have chosen their representatives to the committee. The Recreation Committee will be choosing a member next week. No one has been selected from the Agricultural Commission. Those five positions are required. Two residents are still need to serve on the committee.

Selectboard Representation on Town Boards & Committees MGL Chapter 268A, section 21A – Selectboard members cannot serve on boards and committees whose members fall under the purview of the Selectboard in regard to being appointed. Selectboard members may attend committee meetings, but not as members of the committees. Rick felt committees should be left alone. Terry explained that a mistake had been made in appointing Andrew as a member of the Energy Committee. Andrew said he was engaged in a fairly substantial amount of work with the Energy Committee, the Memorial Hall Association (MHA), and the pocket park. He said he could continue as a citizen, not as a member. Bob felt the MHA needed some form of official communication with the Board. Rick was fine with appointing Andrew as representative to the MHA but Andrew couldn't simply declare himself as the liaison. Bob said it all came down to wording, representative vs liaison, and that it was common for committees to ask for information to be relayed back to the Selectboard. Rick thought committee chairs should, instead, ask to be on the Board agenda. A motion was made by Rick to rescind the vote appointing Andrew to the Energy Committee. This was seconded by Bob. Roll call vote: Bob – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – abstain. Motion passed 2-0-1. A motion was put forth by Andrew to rescind the vote appointing Bob to the Emergency Management Committee. This was seconded by Rick. Roll call vote: Bob – abstain; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 2-0-1.

Any Other Business:

Representatives to Boards and Committees – The Board realized it had not finished the previous discussion. Rick thought the topic would be closed as long as the Board realized that the votes taken to appoint liaisons to departments, and representatives to committees were the only official ones. Andrew had recently been appointed as Chair of the Pratt Building Committee. Terry said the composition of that committee is detailed in the Pratt Memorial Building Committee by-laws, and that the Chair or designee of the Selectboard is a required member. Andrew said he would serve at his own pleasure on the MHA and the Energy Committee and would not necessarily report on those groups. The Village Task Force requires a representative from each town. Andrew said he would resign from that group. The resignation was not accepted.

It was noted that the Iron Bridge sidewalk repairs have begun.

There has recently been a lot of publicity concerning the closure of the Bridge of Flowers in 2024. Bob made it clear that the Fire District, not the town, is in charge of that project.

Next Meeting – The next Board meeting will be on August 14 at 5:30 pm in conjunction with a Special Town Meeting, which will begin at 6:30 pm.

Correspondence:

Mass DOT's Municipal Pavement Program RE: State Route 2A – South Maple Street – South Maple is technically Route 2A, and therefore is a state highway. The state has agreed to pave it from Route 2 to bridge Street. This will save the town money.

Public Comment:

Cynthia Boettner said the insert in the tax bills regarding signing up for the town newsletter was written by her and approved by the Board. It stated that the newsletter would be including items from non-profits, the Village Task Force, etc. She said she had enjoyed being able to learn about events happening in town and hoped the newsletter could be more than just municipal news. John Walsh commented that the town already has liaisons to the committees in the person of committee chairs. A representative would have a vote. Anyone can attend any meeting as a private citizen.

Adjournment: At 7:20 a motion was made by Rick to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Andrew – yes; Rick – yes; Bob – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary