

Approved: April 12, 2021

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2021
Conducted by Remote Zoom Meeting**

Present:

Michael Barbaro, Chair
Rick Ward, Vice Chair
Barbara Anderson
Audrey LaBrie
Amy Salter

Stephen Delaney, Interim Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Admin. Assistant

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Introduction to Remote Meeting (filed)
- Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20 (filed)
- National Grid's North Street Pole Petition No. 30058241 (filed)
 - February 8, 2021 Memo from DPW Director to BOS Regarding Pole Petition (filed)
 - February 22, 2021 Abutter's Notice (filed)
- National Grid's North Street Pole Petition No. 30249058 (filed)
 - February 16, 2021 Memo from DPW Director to BOS Regarding Pole Petition (filed)
 - February 22, 2021 Abutter's Notice (filed)
- February 1, 2021 Letter of Interest to Serve on Communications Committee from Patrick Moon (filed)
- February 23, 2021 Letter of Interest to Serve on Communications Committee from Bill Clinton (filed)
- February 19, 2021 Letter of Resignation from Winchendon Community Park Programming Committee (filed)
- March 8, 2021 Police Department Annual Update PowerPoint Presentation (attached)
- 2021 Charter / Bylaw Review Committee Proposed Changes
 - Cheat Sheet – Description of Changes (attached)
 - Proposed Charter Revisions (attached)
 - Proposed Bylaw Revisions (attached)
- February 16, 2021 Email from DPW Director to Town Manager Request for Funding From Converse 100 Fund (filed)
 - February 5, 2021 Quotes from John Deere for Equipment (filed)
- March 3, 2021 Email from BOH Agent to Executive Assistant re: Auditorium Capacity (attached)
- Printout from Mass.gov Providing Updated Guidance on Holding Meetings During COVID-19 State of Emergency (attached)
- February 18, 2021 Attorney General Determination re: Open Meeting Law Complaint (filed)
 - August 11, 2020 Response from Town Counsel re: Open Meeting Law Complaint (filed)
- Email Chain from Marc Dorwart Requesting to be on BOS Agenda (attached)
- March 8, 2021 Town Manager's Report (attached)
- Minutes to be Approved:
 - February 22, 2021 Regular Meeting
 - June 1, 2020 Executive Session
 - June 22, 2020 Executive Session
 - July 13, 2020 Executive Session

Due to Governor Baker's recent Executive Order and state of emergency declaration with the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), this meeting was conducted remotely through Zoom Meeting. The public was notified how to join the meeting through instructions noted on the agenda.

Chairman Michael Barbaro called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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Barbaro confirmed members present and persons anticipating to speak by calling their name and asking for a response in the affirmative: Ward, yes, LaBrie, yes, Anderson, yes, and Barbaro, yes. Staff members present and responding in the affirmative were Stephen Delaney, Interim Town Manager, Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant, Taylor Tower, Administrative Assistant, David Walsh, Chief of Police, and Brian Croteau, Director of Public Works.

Barbaro read the "Introduction for Remotely Conducted Open Meetings" which noted Governor Baker's Executive order of March 12, 2020 and outlined the guidelines and ground rules for the meeting this evening.

Barbaro advised all participants that the meeting was being recorded and cautioned screen sharing. When asked if anyone besides the Town was video or audio recording the meeting, there was no response.

Salter joined the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. **SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Anderson reminded all those listening that burn permits are now available on the Winchendon Fire Department webpage. Folks wishing to obtain a burn permit may download all the forms and get their permit, which is good until May 1st. She also announced, with great sadness, the passing of Stephen Lafrennie. She wished to acknowledge everything he did in the many years that he worked for the Town and noted that he was also a resident. In addition, Anderson extended her thoughts and prayers to the family on Spring Street that experienced significant damage to their home in a fire, and to the firefighters still fighting the fire as we speak.

LaBrie said it is great to see the warmer weather and asked motorists to use caution when driving. There are still snowbanks narrowing the road, and there will be more pedestrians out and about.

Ward reminded everyone that there is still a little less than a week to take out papers and obtain 34 signatures to run for office. There are a couple seats up for grabs with no nomination papers pulled to fill those positions. He also thanked Scout Troop 193 for cleaning up quite a mess at the Winchendon Community Park.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** David Watkins of 235 Mellen Road, referring to the upcoming agenda item regarding holding meetings in Zoom or in person, wished to briefly discuss his opinion on why Zoom meetings should remain. He explained that Winchendon is a commuter town and eliminating Zoom eliminates much needed public participation. From what he read of the Master Plan, on page 30 it states that they wish for officials to continue to utilize Zoom to allow public participation.

Marc Dorwart of 245 Mellen Road seconded Mr. Watkin's opinion, saying that the Master Plan was applauded as the best one brought to Winchendon yet. He told the Selectmen that they represent the people and the people want Zoom to continue as the platform for which meetings are held. He said there are avenues out there to obtain the equipment necessary to hold meetings in person while still allowing remote access.

Tina Santos of 117 Mill Street also voiced her support of having meetings in person, with a screen to allow residents to attend and participate virtually. She also wanted to know why the Charter Bylaw Committee has a Town employee who does not live in Winchendon serving as a member.

3. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- 3.1. National Grid Pole Petition – North St. – Plan No. 30058241 – Ward read the public hearing pole petition into the record. Ms. Laura Napolitano was present to represent the pole petition on behalf of National Grid.

LaBrie moved to open the Pole Petition Public Hearing for North Street, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the public hearing was opened.

Napolitano informed the Board that the Fire Department has a storage facility at the corner of North Street and Central Street, and due to work being done at that station, National Grid will need to install a pole that is jointly owned with Verizon. It was asked if any abutters wished to be heard; there was no response.

Ward moved to close the Pole Petition Public Hearing for North Street, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

LaBrie moved to approve the Pole Petition to install one (1) Single Owned pole on North Street as presented this evening and authorize the Interim Town Manager to execute the Order on behalf of the Selectboard, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- 3.2. National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc. Pole Petition – High Street – Plan No. 30249058 - LaBrie read the public hearing pole petition into the record. Ms. Laura Napolitano was present to represent the pole petition on behalf of National Grid.

Ward moved to open the Pole Petition Public Hearing for High Street, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Napolitano explained that National Grid will be replacing an existing pole, 63-3, near 30 High Street. Yvonne Harrington of 40 Old Center reminded the Board that this pole is located in the National Historic District, and the Historical Commission has made an effort to have all of the wires in the vicinity buried. She said they will need to be consulted before any decision is made. Mary Harrington of 60 Old Center said that the Historical Commission will have to post a meeting to discuss this matter, and hopefully, access some funding to bury the lines. Napolitano said there is a safety aspect to consider, as trucks could clip the low-hanging line if this petition is not approved, placing liability on the Town. It was asked if any abutters wished to be heard; there was no response.

LaBrie moved to close the Pole Petition Public Hearing for High Street, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Anderson expressed concern with this pole petition being located within the Historic District. Yvonne Harrington detailed the process that the Historical Commission will need to complete in order to obtain funding to bury the lines and be comfortable with the National Grid pole petition. Ward asked if it was possible to tighten the lines, to which Napolitano answered that the tables are very heavy. Tightening the tension enough to keep the wires from interfering with passing trucks could potentially cause the poles to become unstable. Barbaro told Napolitano he understands the safety issue, but where this is within the Historical District, he asked National Grid to consider alternatives. LaBrie wished to make the Board aware that should this pole petition fail to pass, and a truck hits the low-hanging wire, the Town could face some culpability.

LaBrie moved to approve the Pole Petition to install one (1) Joint Owned pole on High Street as presented this evening and authorize the Interim Town Manager to execute the Order on behalf of the Selectboard. There was no second, as such, the motion failed. Barbaro moved to disapprove the Pole Petition, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of LaBrie, no, Ward, yes, Salter, yes, Anderson, yes and Barbaro, yes, the motion carried 4-1.

LaBrie asked the National Historic District to reach out for help, if needed, to obtain the resources needed to move forward with the steps they need to take in a timely manner.

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

- 4.1. Communications Committee Appointment – Patrick Moon – The Communications Committee consists of seven members and currently, there are three vacancies. The Committee's charge is to assist in expanding local access programming and the communications with the residents of the community. The Committee has discussed and is in favor of Mr. Moon's appointment. Moon explained to the Board that he is a retired teacher with experience in television production and negotiating contracts. He feels that he has a background to help the Town with the upcoming negotiations with Comcast.

Anderson moved to appoint Patrick Moon to the Communications Committee with a term to expire on June 30, 2023 and to authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign the appointment slip on behalf of the Selectboard, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- 4.2. Communications Committee Appointment – Bill Clinton – The Committee has discussed and is in favor of Mr. Clinton's appointment. Clinton explained that he was approached by Anderson with questions about the School portion of Communications, and they discussed the school involvement with Communications as well as Comcast negotiations. He would like to join the Committee to offer the perspective of the school department.

Ward moved to appoint Bill Clinton to the Communications Committee with a term to expire on June 30, 2023 and to authorize the Interim Town Manager to sign the appointment slip on behalf of the Selectboard, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- 4.3. Winchendon Community Park Programming Committee Resignation - Marcia McDonald – LaBrie moved to accept the resignation of Marcia McDonald from the Winchendon Community Park Programming Committee and to thank her for her service, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of Ward, aye, Anderson, aye, Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS: There were none scheduled tonight.

6. BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENTS

- 6.1. Department Update from Police Chief David Walsh - Chief Walsh addressed the Board, telling them that 2020 was a challenging year. A grant from the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation allowed the Department to purchase cameras, providing an unbiased depiction of events and increased transparency. With the assistance of the DPW, the cruisers are in very good shape. A Green Communities Grant was obtained, which allowed the Department to replace four oil burners with two high-efficiency, wall-hung propane fired combustion boilers. They are currently considering tech improvements, such as license plate readers and body cameras, and will be applying for funding through the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation. Due to COVID-19, community outreach and education had to be suspended. K9 Clyde and his handler continued to be very valuable assets to the WPD and surrounding towns. Clyde had a cancer relapse but is thankfully now in remission. As is the case with most Police Departments, call volume decreased. Citations were down due to reluctance to pull people over. Chief Walsh then provided a PowerPoint presentation which broke down the nature and volume of calls received over the past year.

- 6.2. Amendments Recommended to Town Charter – In compliance with the Town Charter that states every five years a Charter Bylaw Committee must be formed, Dr. Moe Ward and Chief Walsh of the Charter/Bylaw Review Committee were before the Board to present the recommended changes to the Town Charter and Bylaw. A copy of these proposed changes is available in the Town Manager's Office. Both the Charter and Bylaw recommended changes will go before the voters at the Annual Town Meeting for final approval.

- 6.3. Amendments Recommended to Town Bylaws – Dr. Ward detailed the proposed changes to the Bylaw, most of which are straightforward and self-explanatory. One substantial change is the procedure of which the warrant for Town Meetings is made available. Currently, the Bylaw states that a copy of the warrant will be

mailed to every residence in the Town. This is quite costly and wasteful, as many residents do not participate in Town governance and simply throw away the warrant. It is proposed that a postcard will be mailed to each house in Town explaining how to obtain a copy of the warrant. This will significantly reduce waste and save money, while still making the warrant readily available to all residents and meeting all State requirements. Watercraft regulations were completely updated at the request of the Police Chief. Animal Control Bylaws, specifically addressing public nuisances and the fines that may be levied, were also updated. There was discussion surrounding the Right to Farm Bylaw, specifically, a section of it that states a disclosure will be mailed to the entire Town each year. This is not currently done and has not been done for years, so it was suggested by the Agricultural Commission that this requirement be stricken. Dr. Ward asked the Town Manager's Office staff to investigate the legal implications of this, if any, to make sure it is not required by MGL before striking that sentence.

Dr. Ward noted that copies of these proposed changes will be made available on the Town website. They will be sent to Town Counsel for review and then presented at Annual Town Meeting, if the motion is so made by the Board.

Barbaro thanked all those involved in this project, noting that there are quite a few changes and this was no easy task.

LaBrie moved the amendments to the Town Charter and Town Bylaws as presented be placed on the Special and Annual Town Meeting warrant for May 17, 2021, seconded by Anderson, for discussion. Anderson said due to some changes being made, she wonders if we should wait until after the final Charter Bylaw meeting and after review by Town Counsel. **LaBrie amended her motion to include "as amended", seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

7. NEW BUSINESS:

- 7.1. Converse 100 Year Fund Request - Brian Croteau, DPW Director, has submitted a request seeking funding through the Converse 100 Year Fund for two pieces of equipment for service to our cemetery and parks. Delaney noted that this request is consistent with past requests from this fund, it's an appropriate request and he supports it. Barbaro noted that Mr. Croteau did approach those responsible for managing this fund and they also believe it to be an appropriate use of those funds. Ward noted that this money is being used for the purpose directed by Mr. Converse in his will in 1917. LaBrie noted the balance of about \$54,000.

Ward moved to approve the request from our DPW Director for the amount of \$18,322.92 to be granted from the Converse 100 Year Fund to purchase equipment presented this evening for the Town's Cemetery and Parks Department, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

LaBrie motioned for a five minute recess, seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the Board entered recess at 8:21 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 8:26 p.m.

- 7.2. Discussion on Holding Future Selectmen's Meetings In Person or Remotely Using Zoom - With the Governor announcing the state will be moving into Phase 3, Step 2 of its re-opening plan, Chairman Barbaro has asked to have this placed on the Board's agenda for discussion. Jim Abare, our Emergency Management Director, was consulted on the number of people allowed in the auditorium and can only give an estimate at this time as the updated regulations for indoor gatherings to begin on March 22nd has yet to be written and approved. With the numbers going down, Barbaro would like to meet in person and broadcast the meetings as we always have done. By April, more guidance will be provided regarding capacity. Barbaro noted that we have never had twenty four people in the auditorium attending a regular meeting. Once the Governor's order regarding virtual meetings expires, it will not be legal to host meetings virtually unless the Open Meeting Laws are revised. LaBrie said that based on the size of the auditorium, current capacity with

COVID-19 guidelines is twenty four people. With five board members, the Town Manager's Office staff, and the broadcaster, that is nine people already required to be there. That leaves sixteen seats for people in the audience. She said Zoom is great, it allows people to join and be a part of the process; however, she thinks we do need to go back in in-person meetings. She would like to explore a way to meet in person while still allowing residents to Zoom in and participate that way. She would like this option to be looked into. Ward started off by saying that the job of the Board of Selectmen is to do the business of the Town. He does not find Zoom difficult to deal with, but the equipment is not dependable. Several Selectmen have been cut off from meetings multiple times. He would also like to resume in-person meetings, while allowing residents to Zoom in. Barbaro agreed that initiative is not impossible, but technology will need to be upgraded in order to make it happen. The Communications Committee will need to look into the feasibility of making this happen. In regards to the upcoming interviews for the Town Manager search, Barbaro expressed that he will not interview someone to represent this Town without being able to meet them face-to-face. Salter said she is ready to resume in-person meetings. Anderson said the added citizen participation is positive and she does not understand why we cannot meet in person and allow virtual participation.

Ward moved the Board continue to hold their Board meetings in person beginning on April 5th, seconded by Salter. Anderson asked if that can be done, considering we do not know what guidance and requirements will be provided by the State. Barbaro asked to amend the motion to say tentatively, if the numbers allow. **Ward moved the Board continue to hold their Board meetings in person beginning on April 5th, if the numbers from the state allow, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, LaBrie, no, Anderson, no, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried 3-2.** LaBrie offered clarification on her vote, explaining that she thinks we need to research alternatives to enable people to virtually attend meetings. If that had been part of the motion, she may have been more apt to change her vote. Barbaro asked Mr. Delaney to look into incorporating virtual participation with in-person meetings.

- 7.3. Discussion on Zoom Chat Feature – With members of the public questioning the Zoom Chat feature not being available, the Board asked at their last meeting to have this item on the agenda to discuss. The Chat feature has been disabled as it has been a disturbance to the meeting proceedings and comments have been disrespectful to Board/Staff members. Presented to the Selectmen was guidance from the State Division of Open Government pertaining to conducting meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there is no specific mention of the Zoom Chat feature, it does give guidance on public participation. Barbaro said that the Open Meeting Law (OML) does not require public bodies to allow public comment or public participation. To the contrary, OML specifies nobody shall address the Board without permission of the chair. The Board is elected to make decisions without allowing public comment. As far as the chat feature goes, in a lot of cases, it has been detrimental to people on the board. If meetings were held in person, whispering, interrupting and chatting would not be allowed while the Board is in session. Barbaro further noted that past comments made by residents have oftentimes been disparaging and not appropriate to be broadcast on live TV. LaBrie read from the OML guide, saying “while the public is permitted to attend an open meeting, an individual may not address the public body without permission of the chair and may not disrupt the meeting. If after clear warning, a person continues to be disruptive, the chair may remove them from the meeting”. She explained that’s the way these meetings are run per the verbiage of the OML. Per her interpretation, allowing the chat is a violation of the OML. She reviewed past meetings and the chats sent by residents, noting that at the August 10th meeting, there were 7 individual chats, noting these are times when people were speaking when not recognized by chair. One meeting, there was 11 chats interruption. She said it’s not suppressing citizen input - unless you have permission from the chair, you should not be speaking. Working public input into our meetings is important but it has to be done correctly.

Anderson said she understands the hesitation to allow chat, with some people feeling emboldened to type whatever they want to. She reminded the Board that they are elected to represent the people of Winchendon, which can be hard to do without actually hearing what they have to say. Salter expressed that she is willing to try turning it back on and see what happens, but if people are going to use it to make inappropriate comments, then we’ll have to shut it down. She said she would personally like to see the Board more receptive of public comment within meetings.

LaBrie suggested moving forward, residents ask the Chair to speak when appropriate, rather than using chat. Ward agreed with allowing more public participation when able, and noted that the chat is not official. They are not included in the minutes and it is essentially a private discussion that people on TV don't have access to. We are allowing segment of the population to have a private chat. It could never be entered into record, and he sees no need for resurrecting chat. He advised looking for opportunities to increase chances for public discussion. Barbaro thanked the Board for their discussion and said we can address public comment a little differently than we have. Chat is not a good tool to use, not everyone sees it, and some of the comments on there are not appropriate. Once we go back to live meetings, there will be no chat. **Ward moved that the Board of Selectmen not open the chat element of the Zoom meetings, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Anderson, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

- 7.4. Communication from the Office of the Attorney General Regarding Open Meeting Law Complaint which Includes the Directive to Release the Executive Session Minutes of July 13, 2020 – Barbaro read aloud a determination from the Attorney General's Office regarding the recent Open Meeting Law Complaint. The Board will be releasing the July 13, 2020 minutes as directed and in the interest of transparency, will also be releasing two additional sets of minutes relating to the same topic. LaBrie began by speaking for herself, and apologized to everyone for this violation. It was not done on purpose on her part, and looking through the complete letter from the Attorney General's Office, the violation came from a timing requirement of the exemption that was used. At the time that we had the meeting, the Town did not have a negotiation position because the public way had not yet been brought forward to Town Meeting to be considered for acceptance. She explained that it's a nuance to the exemption that she was not aware of. She again extended her apologies. Barbaro said he understands the complaint, and going into Executive Session, he was being told by legal counsel that we were on good ground. He apologized for the mistake and said that the Board hopes to better in the future.

LaBrie moved the Board release the minutes of the Executive Session of July 13, 2020, as directed by the Office of the Attorney General; and also to release the related minutes of the Executive Session of June 1, 2020 and June 22, 2020, seconded by Ward. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Anderson, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

- 7.5. Request by Marc Dorwart to Address the Board – Dorwart told the Board that they are in dire need of a paradigm shift. He described the Mellen Road and Converse Road debacles as scapegoats to not increase the insurance premium of the Town. He said that past attempts to provide laws and facts to the Board have not been heard, and he wished to explain how he got to this point and why he pushes so hard. He reminded the Board that he represents the Mellen Road Action Committee. Dorwart explained that he felt the Mellen Road residents were treated in an adversarial manner by the Board and by Town staff, due to what he described as bad advice from legal counsel. He expressed his opinion that the Town is responsible for a nefarious cover up, and that meeting minutes describing his interactions at Board meetings have been written with an adversarial tone. He chronicled the Town and their legal counsel as shameful, careless and negligent, and said the Board acts as if they are in a private club. He provided the Board with a list of questions pertaining to Open Meeting Law, transparency, accountability and asked them to apologize.

Anderson apologized for the OML violation. She said the Board does their best to honor every OML as it applies. She described the legal advice provided to the Board as poor, and said she'd like to discuss that further. She does her best to read all information provided to the Board and speak when appropriate. LaBrie noted she apologized earlier for her part in any OML violations. She has been on the board for six or seven years, and her intent when she first ran for office was to help, not hinder or damage. She agreed with Ms. Anderson, saying it is important to look at the big picture regarding the Town's attorney. She is pleased that a resolution was reached with the Mellen Road residents, noting the road to get there was uncomfortable and painful for everyone involved. She hopes the residents are satisfied with where we ended up. In regards to Dorwart's question of holding the Town Manager accountable, she reminded him that the Town Manager works for the Board. The Bylaw prohibits the Board from becoming involved in the day-to-day

administration of the Town. She does the best she can to provide her due diligence and do her research.

With regard to the decision of the Attorney General's Office, Ward said that naturally, he regrets that. When he became a member of the Board of Selectmen, he took an oath. With that said, he told Dorwart he does not need to address all his questions.

Barbaro said as volunteers elected by citizens, all members are trying to do best by the Town. They try to always be transparent and keep the best interest of the town in the forefront.

8. **OLD BUSINESS:** There was none before the Board tonight.

9. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:**

9.1 Financial Updates; Personnel Updates; Project Updates; Miscellaneous Updates

Veterans' Services

We have been able to secure interim assistance from a veterans' agent from another community. She will be able to access our accounts and will be working with our local veterans to make sure that they continue to receive necessary services and benefits.

We will continue to explore options for filling the position on a longer term basis, including establishing or joining a regional veterans' service plan.

FY 22 Budget Preparation

Budget preparation/finalization continues with the goal of submission of the updated plan at the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee on March 22nd.

Other Items of Interest from Planning

Baker-Polito Administration Announces \$34 Million in Community Development Block Grants to 41 Communities

WINCHENDON will receive \$715,510 for Railroad Street infrastructure improvements and to provide fuel assistance.

The **Railroad Street Project** will repair the infrastructure of Railroad Street, 610 LF roadway in Downtown Winchendon. Reconstruction includes a total reconstruction of sub-surface drainage and storm water management system and sewer lines and total surface reconstruction including and the installation of 9 new shade trees and 1 metal outdoor bench. Water lines were not included in the project as the maximum dollar amount allowed would have been exceeded. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2021. The **Fuel Assistance** program will supplement the existing LIHEAP program by providing an additional one-time tank of oil to those qualifying under the LMI guidelines.

Trails assessment: MRPC has included Winchendon's request into their Unified Planning Work Program (UPWU) to assess the potential connection of the North Central Pathway to New Hampshire as well as the Ware River Trail and Worcester County Rail Trail systems. New Hampshire officials are actively pursuing the connection to Winchendon.

ROW acquisition Central Street TIP Project. All but 5 property owners have donated a temporary easement to the Town. Two property owners of the 5 outstanding easements have requested an appraisal, The US Post Office, 160 Central St. and the Unitarian Church, 128 Central St. The three property owners, Soultana Panagiotidis, 51 Central, Win Mass Realty, LLC (Walgreens) 250 Central

& CVS, 301 Central have either been non responsive or not followed through with the town. It is expected that appraisals will begin within the next few weeks to keep the project on track.

10. **MINUTES:**

10.1 Monday, February 22, 2021 Regular Meeting: - Ward moved to approve the Board of Selectmen minutes of Monday, February 22, 2021 as presented this evening, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Anderson, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

10.2 Monday, June 1, 2020 EXECUTIVE SESSION for Release – These minutes were approved to be released in agenda item 7.4.

10.3 Monday, June 22, 2020 EXECUTIVE SESSION for Release - These minutes were approved to be released in agenda item 7.4.

10.4 Monday, July 13, 2020 EXECUTIVE SESSION for Release - These minutes were approved to be released in agenda item 7.4.

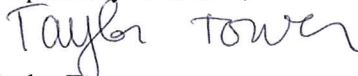
11. **COMMUNICATIONS:** Barbaro noted that the Board has a meeting with the Finance Committee on March 22nd to discuss the Town budget. March 29th is a possible date for the Town Manager Search Committee to present their selected candidates to the Board. The following Monday would be interviews with finalists, if all goes according to plans. He asked the Board to keep April 5th open to begin interviews.

12. **AGENDA ITEMS:**

13. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

14. **ADJOURNMENT:** Ward moved to adjourn, seconded by LaBrie. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, LaBrie, aye, Anderson, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Taylor Tower
Administrative Assistant