

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2021
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 109 Front St., Winchendon, Mass.**

Present –

Audrey LaBrie, Chair
Rick Ward, Vice Chair
Amy Salter

Justin Sultzbach, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Administrative Asst.
(virtual attendance)

Absent -

Barbara Anderson
Danielle LaPointe

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- October 25, 2021 Notice of Vacancies (attached)
- Entertainment Permit Application from Immaculate Heart of Mary for “Paint Night” to be Held October 29, 2021 (filed)
- October 25, 2021 Memo from Town Manager re: Fire Station Redesign (filed)
 - February 25, 2020 Fire Station Site Plan by Schwartz/Silver Architects, Inc. (filed)
- October 25, 2021 Memo from Town Manager re: Joint Water Authority Update (filed)
 - October 20, 2021 Joint Water Authority Meeting Materials (filed)
- Final Special Town Meeting Warrant for November 8, 2021 (attached)
 - Draft Meeting Motions (filed)
- October 25, 2021 Town Manager’s Report (attached)
- Minutes to Approve
 - Regular Meeting September 13, 2021
 - Regular Meeting September 27, 2021
 - Special Meeting October 12, 2021
 - Regular Meeting October 18, 2021

LaBrie called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. LaBrie asked if anyone in the audience was video or audio recording, to which there was no response.

1. SELECTMEN’S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.1. Ward corrected the record regarding a statement he had made at the prior meeting about voting on the water rate in FY’22.
- 1.2. Halloween Trick or Treat – LaBrie reminded the public that trick or treat will be held on Halloween, October 31st from 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. She read aloud the current recommendations from the Health Department to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure.

She also reminded the public of the Fire Department trick or treat on Halloween night from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: None were heard.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS: There are no public hearings this evening.

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

- 4.1. Board of Selectmen Appointed Committees and Board's List of Vacancies – LaBrie read aloud a list of current vacancies on Selectmen-appointed Boards and Committees and asked anyone that might be interested to please reach out to the Town Manager's office.

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:

- 5.1. Entertainment Permit / BYOB – Immaculate Heart of Mary Church Paint Night – Denise Fitzmaurice and Deirdre Holt were present on their application for an Entertainment Permit and BYOB permit for the Paint Night to be held in the Church hall on October 29th from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. There were no issues from Department Heads. The paint stations will be socially distanced.

Ward moved the Board approve the Entertainment and BYOB permit for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church for their Paint Night on Friday, October 29th from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. as presented this evening, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

6. BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENTS:

- 6.1. Department Update from Jim Abare, Board of Health Agent – Jim Abare was present on his annual Department Update for the Board. He described this past year as the most challenging of his 24 years with the Town of Winchendon. For the past twenty months, he has provided guidance on State regulations to members of the public, businesses and Town staff while still conducting his normal daily activities such as food safety, housing issues and usual public health inspections. The building industry has not slowed down and as such, the Health Department was busy with soil testing and septic system inspections. COVID-19 cases in Town have been on a slight decline lately with 38 active cases in Town currently. He encouraged the public to continue their vigilance in avoiding transmitting and spreading the virus. He introduced Susan Avallone, Montachusett Public Health Network Nurse, who overviewed the process of contact tracing and their current work on booster clinics. She discussed the fairly low vaccination rate and said that not enough people were vaccinated for herd immunity, so there is now a highly contagious variant being transmitted.

- 6.1.1. Recognition of Montachusett Public Health Network Nurses – Keith Kent, Chair of the Board of Health, came forward to discuss the hard work done by nurses Sandy Knipe (who was unable to attend) and Susan Avallone. Kent explained that two have been responsible for contact tracing and reaching out to those affected and helping them sort through the process. They have done outstanding work for the Town through this ongoing pandemic with their kindness, professionalism and expertise. Kent invited Representative Jon Zlotnik to present Sandy Knipe and Susan Avallone with a citation recognizing them and thanking them for their services to the Town of Winchendon during this current COVID-19 pandemic.

At Mr. Kent's request, **Ward moved for a three minute recess, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the Board entered into recess at 7:02 p.m.**

The Board reconvened at 7:05 p.m.

Kent praised Abare for his hard work juggling multiple, high-importance tasks with less than forty hours a week. He discussed vaccination rates and COVID infection rates and said the longer people avoid the vaccination, the longer we allow the virus to mutate.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- 7.1. Fire Station Design Update – The Town Manager presented the following memorandum to the Board.

As you are aware, one of the many projects currently running concurrently in town is the potential expansion and redesign of our Fire Station. Early drafts included a probable build cost of over \$16,000,000. At the October 28, 2019 Special Town Meeting a proposal was rejected that would have resulted in a nearly \$12,000,000 construction cost. With this in

mind, it has been one of my goals to work with the community to identify a solution they feel would be a good fit for Winchendon while still meeting the needs of those that serve our Fire Department.

This is a two-fold process. With rising construction costs, this project could see a nearly half a million increase in cost year over year through inaction. As component one, Chief Smith and I have met on several occasions with the architects in an effort to reduce costs while still providing a space that will be functional for decades to come. We have been working together closely to “go back to the drawing board” in an effort to beat the clock on these increases. We have instructed the architectural firm to proceed with a schematic design that will accurately determine probable construction cost. These efforts were implemented utilizing funds already in hand. It is our goal to bring the total construction cost under \$10,000,000 – a reduction of nearly 25% when accounting for inflating construction costs.

The second component involves community input. This process will include an open door public input session to better understand the needs and desires of the community. Once a baseline design is established, we will be bringing the plans before the Capital Planning Committee to ensure design and construction run in conjunction with the timing of other Capital needs in town. With their support, the project will come before the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen. If we hold to our schedule, I would anticipate a request for design fees at the Annual Town Meeting of May 2022, with a request for full construction funding in May 2023. We will update the board as we move through this process.

Fire Chief Tom Smith thanked Sultzbach for his support in moving forward with new ideas on how to address these much needed repairs. He said this will benefit not only the Fire Department but the entire community. Ward stressed the importance of changing the approach as Town Meeting has already voted down one request to renovate the Fire Station.

- 7.2. Winchendon/Ashburnham Joint Water Authority Meeting Update - The Town Manager attended a JWA meeting this past week with DPW Director, Brian Croteau and provided the Board with the following memorandum.

As requested, I am updating the board on our most recent Joint Water Authority Meeting held this past Wednesday, October 20th. Discussion included the Veolia operations summary report, a review of the lake level, and an overview of our ongoing efforts to devise a functioning Capital Plan for the Water Plant. A draft of this plan is attached, and includes 135 individual needs. These repairs and updates are spread out over 10 years at a total cost of \$1,731,518.37. It is our goal to implement these repairs starting no later than 2023, with the burden of cost to be split between Winchendon and the Town of Ashburnham.

As discussed before this board previously, an accurate Capital Plan is a key component needed to devise an equitable and functioning water rate study. In addition, we also need data regarding Capital needs outside of the plant – specifically pipes in the road and other equipment. A study is currently underway to map out that data. Lastly, a Capital Plan for our Sewer plant is ongoing – all repairs for that system would be owned exclusively by the Town of Winchendon. We will provide an update once available. Materials from this meeting are attached to the memo.

Ward asked how the scan of all the miles of water mains in Town is going; Sultzbach said ongoing with the conclusion hopefully obtained by the end of December. Salter asked if Ashburnham has expressed any issues with Veolia, to which Justin said they do not seem to be as concerned with the performance of Veolia.

7.3. Special Town Meeting Warrant of Nov. 8, 2021 – A copy of the final warrant posted by the Constable was presented and will be available in the Town Manager’s Office as well as on the Town’s website.

7.3.1. Draft Motions – The draft Motions for Special Town Meeting were presented to the Board.

7.3.2. Assignment of Warrant Articles – The Board discussed and assigned which members will present each article at the Special Town Meeting.

8. **OLD BUSINESS:** There was no old business.

9. **TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT:**

1. Financial Updates-

- As a reminder, Quarter 2 tax bills are due on Monday, November 1st.
- Financial reporting is required from all Veterans currently receiving payments from the Veterans Services Office. Currently 10 individuals are at risk of a lapse in status. The deadline for filing is November 10th.
- The deadline to expend our CARES funding is quickly approaching. We are working to put these funds to the best use possible. Beyond stocking up on PPE, we are also looking to add air exchange units to the third floor of the Library and Senior Center dining room, as well as all touchless soap, paper towel dispensers, and sink faucets throughout Town Hall, the Senior Center, as well as the Police and Fire Stations. Thank you to Kevin Cormier for helping spearhead this effort.

2. Personnel Updates-

- We are re-posting for our Planning/Conservation agent positions. We are also looking at the possibility of an agreement with neighboring communities for a shared role – should there be an opportunity to provide better services at a lower cost.

3. Project Updates-

- The house cleanup from the training exercise at Ingleside Park is complete, with plans to plant grass in the near future. Thank you to our DPW team for all of their help.
- The Amphitheater project is moving along. There was a delay to inspect an old, larger tree. If able to be saved, the architects were looking into the possibility of designing the project around it to incorporate the natural landscape. The arborist determined it was not salvageable.
- Sidewalks have been framed out for Lake Street and the Gateway Park.

4. Miscellaneous Updates –

- I have met with our Town Moderator in advance of the Special Town Meeting to discuss logistics.

10. **MINUTES:**

10.1. Monday, Sept. 13, 2021 Regular Meeting – LaBrie asked to pass over these minutes until Selectwoman Anderson could be in attendance.

10.2. Monday, Sept. 27, 2021 Regular Meeting - LaBrie asked to pass over these minutes until Selectwoman Anderson could be in attendance.

10.3. Tuesday, October 12, 2021 Special Meeting – **Ward moved to approve the Board of Selectmen Special Meeting minutes of October 12, 2021 as presented this evening, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

10.4. Monday, October 18, 2021 Regular Meeting - **Ward moved to approve the Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting minutes of October 18, 2021 as presented this evening, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

11. COMMUNICATIONS:

12. AGENDA ITEMS:

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION: There is no Executive Session being held this evening.

14. ADJOURNMENT: Ward moved to adjourn, seconded by Salter. With a vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Taylor Tower
Administrative Assistant