

**TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2020
Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium
109 Front Street, Winchendon, Mass.**

Present:

Michael Barbaro, Chairman
Rick Ward, Vice-Chairman
Amy Salter
Barbara Anderson (remote participation)

Keith R. Hickey, Town Manager
Linda Daigle, Executive Assistant
Taylor Tower, Admin. Assistant

Absent:

Audrey LaBrie

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- September 20, 2020 Letter of Interest from Linsey Laserte Seeking Appointment to Cultural Council (filed)
 - Email of Approval from Cultural Council Chair (filed)
- September 29, 2020 Email of Resignation from Recreation Commission from Lindsay Kuchta (filed)
- October 5, 2020 Notice of Vacancies (attached)
- Permit Application for Christmas Tree Permit from Willie's Trees (filed)
- September 11, 2020 Email from Mass. ABCC re: Extension of Allowance of Outdoor Table Service (filed)
 - September 18, 2020 Email from Snowbound Club Requesting Extension of Allowance of Outdoor Table Service (filed)
- Proposed Board of Selectmen License Fee Reduction Schedule for Calendar Year 2021 (attached)
- Schedule of Business License Renewals for 2021 (attached)
- September 2020 Summary Letter from Master Plan Committee re: Proposed Master Plan (filed)
 - Master Plan Committee Draft Overview (filed)
 - September 2020 Draft Community Master Plan (filed)
- October 1, 2020 Email from Board of Health Agent to Town Manager re: Trick or Treating / Safety Recommendations
 - Document Outlining CDC Guidance on Halloween Activities
- October 5, 2020 Town Manager's Report (attached)
- Minutes to be Approved:
 - September 2, 2020 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee Amendment
 - September 14, 2020 Regular Meeting
 - September 28, 2020 Regular Meeting
 - June 22, 2020 EXECUTIVE SESSION – Public Records Request
 - September 15, 2020 Letter from KP Law to Mellen Road Action Committee re: Records Request Dated August 31, 2020
 - Mass.gov Guidance on Release of Executive Session Minutes
 - September 14, 2020 Records Request from Mellen Road Action Committee re: June 22, 2020 Executive Session Minutes
 - Confidential and Unreleased Minutes of the June 22, 2020 Executive Session Meeting

Chairman Michael Barbaro called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

1. SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1.1. Early Voting Schedule for the November 3rd Presidential Primary - Ward announced that in-person early voting for the November 3rd Presidential Primary will be held at Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium (Pleasant Street entrance) beginning on Saturday, October 17th through Thursday, October 29th. He listed the dates and hours and noted that they could be found on the website. Those who applied for vote-by-mail and wish to drop off ballots may do so in the ballot drop-box just outside of the Pleasant Street entrance. He asked those voting by mail to be sure to read all instructions before dropping their ballots off.
- 1.2. Anderson thanked voters for their participation at Town Meeting and noted that their attendance was appreciated. She wished to speak to an item being discussed, the topic of Board of Selectmen meetings to resume in person, and said that she wishes to see a more consistent message coming from the Board.
- 1.3. Ceasing Zoom Meetings – Barbaro noted that the Board voted to cease Zoom meetings due to the consistently low COVID-19 cases in Winchendon. He noted that the Board voted unanimously at their September 28th meeting to resume in-person Selectmen meetings, and that as attendees could see, social distancing and sanitary precautions are being taken to ensure the safety of all those present at Selectmen's meetings. He also wished to thank those who showed up to Town Meeting; it went well and many articles passed.
- 1.4. Seeking Volunteers for Charter/Bylaw Review Committee – At the most recent Town Meeting, a vote was passed to establish a special committee of seven members to review the existing Charter and Bylaws of the Town to determine if any amendments or revisions may be necessary or desirable. The review will be conducted with consultation with Town Counsel and a report, with any recommendations, would be submitted to Town Meeting not more than ten months following the date the committee is appointed. This is a seven (7) member committee and appointments are made by our Town Moderator, Dr. Coral Grout. Please send any letters of interest to serve on this important committee by October 22nd to Dr. Coral Grout, Town Moderator, c/o Town Manager's office, 109 Front St., Winchendon, MA 01475.
- 1.5. Columbus Day Monday, October 12, 2020 - Town Buildings will be closed this day in observance of the holiday.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Inanna Arthen, reporter for the Winchendon Courier and a town resident, appealed to the Board to consider endorsing trick-or-treating. It was her favorite holiday as a child, and kids look forward to it and plan for it year-round. With the onset of the pandemic, children have been asked to give up a lot. Ms. Arthen noted the consistently low infection rate in Winchendon and believes that it is a low-risk activity. It's a fun community event that brings people together and is one of the safer holiday activities.

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS: There were no public hearings scheduled this evening.

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

4.1. Cultural Council Appointment – Linsey Laserte – Ms. Laserte has stepped forward with a letter of interest to fill a vacancy on the Cultural Council. Chair of the Council, Jill Sackett, endorses this appointment and is excited to have Ms. Laserte join. Ms. Laserte was unable to attend but Ms. Sackett was happy to speak on her behalf. She informed the Board that the Cultural Council has suffered many vacancies, and the addition of Ms. Laserte will make it three new members that have been added this year. The Council has sought people that have demonstrated an interest in culture, and they want to have members representing them from the schools. Ms. Laserte is an elementary art teacher for both elementary schools in Town and is passionate about introducing people to culture and brainstorming ways in which children could benefit. Ms. Sackett believes Ms. Laserte to be a great addition.

Ward moved to approve the appointment of Linsey Laserte to the Cultural Commission with her term to expire on June 30, 2023, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Ward, aye, Salter, aye, and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

4.2. Recreation Commission Resignation – Lindsay Kuchta - Ward moved to approve the resignation of Lindsay Kuchta from the Recreation Commission and to thank her for her service to the Town, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Ward, aye, Salter, aye, and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

4.3. Board of Selectmen Appointed Committees and Board's List of Vacancies – Barbaro read aloud a list of the current vacancies on Board of Selectmen appointed committees. He urged those interested in filling any vacancies to contact Town Hall.

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:

5.1. Christmas Tree Permit Application for William Lafrennie, location 231 Main St. – Mr. Lafrennie, d/b/a Willie's Trees, wishes to sell Christmas Trees in the parking lot of Lickity Splitz from November 27th through Christmas Day. Mr. Lafrennie has said that he will provide written permission from the owners of Lickity Splitz and plans to sell seven days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Social distancing will be observed and face masks will be required. Health Agent and Emergency Management Director, Jim Abare, stipulates that social distancing will be required and suggests having gloves available for employees for cash transactions. He encourages contactless transactions if possible and would like to see sanitizer made available for workers and customers. He also advised that any workers feeling ill should stay home.

Ward moved to approve the Christmas Tree Permit for William Lafrennie as presented this evening, seconded by Salter. With a roll call of Salter, aye, Ward, aye, Anderson, aye, and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

5.2. Expansion/Extension of Outdoor Table Service – Daigle explained to the Board that the ABCC has issued an advisory pertaining to Governor Charlie Baker's recent Order Making Certain Phase III Adjustments pertaining to COVID-19. The order extends the period for outdoor table service by licensees licensed for on-premises consumption. Pursuant to the order, local licensing authorities (LLA) may approve requests for expansions of the allowance of outdoor table service or extensions of earlier granted approvals issued until November 1, 2020 for any period up to and until sixty (60) days after the end of the state of emergency. The LLA may issue extensions automatically to all licensees, or may do so on request from individual licensees.

5.2.1. Snowbound Club, Inc., 130 Old Baldwinville Road - The Snowbound Club has expressed interest in extending their Outdoor Table Service as previously discussed. This request has been reviewed and approved by Department Heads.

Ward moved to approve the extension/allowance of Outdoor Table Service for all requests from on- premise consumption license holders that seek to extend the allowance for such service from November 1, 2020 up to and until sixty (60) days after the end of the state of emergency, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Ward, aye, Salter, aye, Anderson, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried unanimously.

5.3. Discussion on 2021 License Renewal Fees – Ms. Daigle presented to the Board a list of proposed reduced license renewal fees, in light of the effects local restaurants and bars have been burdened with during the pandemic. This list detailed the types of licenses and the cost and how many licenses, showing a 50% proposed reduction in cost. Salter wishes to support these businesses. Ward agreed, noting that they have suffered a great deal and that he wishes to see the Board do anything that it can to help them. Anderson also voiced her support for the proposed reductions. Barbaro asked Mr. Hickey if this will impact the budget, to which Hickey answered that the cost can be absorbed.

Barbaro moved to reduce the license fee schedule for calendar year 2021 by 50%, seconded by Ward. The type of licenses affected are beer and wine pouring, all alcohol pouring, all alcohol club, BYOB, common victualler, bowling lanes, solicitation/hawker/peddler annual permit, jukebox/video machines, flea market, live entertainment, lodging house, mobile vendor, pool table and taxi/livery. **With a roll call of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.**

5.4. Board of Selectmen License Renewal List for the Period beginning January 1, 2021 – The Board reviewed the schedule of Selectmen-issued licenses up for renewal in 2021. The Town Manager's Office has begun the license renewal process and will be contacting affected business shortly. The chair asked those with any questions on the licenses to reach out to Ms. Daigle.

6. **BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES/DEPARTMENT:** There were none scheduled for this evening.

7. **NEW BUSINESS:**

7.1. Review and Comment on Volume 1 of the Draft Master Plan – Tracy Murphy and Jill Sackett were in attendance to present to the Board their most recent revision to the draft Master Plan. Barbaro asked for the highlights of the draft; Sackett answered that their intent tonight is to acquaint the Board with the master plan; it is ambitious and the committee is seeking feedback from the Board. It has not been updated since 2001 and has remained largely unchanged over the past 19 years. The committee solicited public input, studied other towns' plans and used that information to form the scope and detail of the draft plan. Sackett described Winchendon as a town with great potential, and said that significant changes need to be made to meet the wishes of its residents. There are proposed new strategies which would require collaboration and increased public participation. She informed the Board that this is really a master plan of the public, the committee wishes to see the public as participants and supporters. She believes the Board is in a special position to help the community, and suggested establishing a new committee to be appointed by the Board with the goal of establishing priorities and schedules. She noted the potential of further changes to the draft, as public comment period is open until October 15th and further input is anticipated. The draft was reviewed extensively, with Sackett noting the excellent readability due to it being broken down by category and itemized. The committee felt that goals were planned in the past and did not come to fruition, as such, they addressed a plan to prevent that from happening again. New committees, reorganization, and subcommittees were discussed, with the committee being open to all sources and all levels of contribution. Members hope to see Winchendon become the vibrant, vital town that we all know it can be.

Barbaro thanked Murphy and Sackett for their hard work, and said the draft is very detail oriented. He hopes it garners much attention and input, as it is obvious the extreme level of thought that went into how to get people actively involved in the Town. He looks forward to hearing back when public input has been submitted and incorporated. Salter mentioned that one of the reasons she chose to live in Winchendon is due to it being a nice place to live with a sense of family. She noted it has always been an ambition to attract and retain more businesses in town. Ward thanked the committee for putting the draft together and urged all residents to read it. He read it thoroughly and felt it gave a real perspective on what we are dealing with in town. It is hard to do work and complete goals without public participation; and he fears that the plan will just be put back on the shelf unless residents read, endorse and participate in making it happen. He asked if there was a current vision on the structure of the committee proposed; to which Murphy answered it is in the very beginning stages of discussion. Anderson echoed the sentiment that she wishes to see this draft maintained and to avoid putting it on the shelf as has happened in the past. Sackett noted that is one of the strategies included in the plan, and it charges the Selectmen with holding periodic meetings with committees presenting how they are maintaining the master plan. Anderson noted that Zoom meetings were included in the plan and that she believes it to be in error that the Board resumed in-person meetings. She said residents wished to participate tonight and were disappointed to see that the meeting was live as opposed to being held on Zoom. Sackett referred to the back of the plan, which shows the members of the committee and the significant contributors and their assignments relative to the enacting of the master plan. She thanked her fellow contributors, in particular, Tracy Murphy. She informed the Board that Murphy has been an unbelievable anchor for the group, keeping them on point and performing several revisions for the Board. Hickey noted that Murphy is also responsible for obtaining several grants that have been and will be instrumental in moving this plan forward.

7.2. Discussion of Town Meeting Warrant Article Results - Based on the results from Town Meeting, the Town Manager is seeking guidance from the Selectmen on their expectations for future discussion on the Senior Center repairs and the proposed upgrade to the Central Street Fire Station. In addition, the Town Manager would like the Selectmen to discuss if they would like to hold a Special Town Meeting later this fall – he believes there may not be a need to hold one. The capital funding approved will meet the immediate needs of the Town. He asked the Board if they wish to see the Senior Center repairs put in the spring ballot or if they would like to wait to see what the impact of COVID-19 is on the economy. Anderson said she would like Hickey to work on making a comprehensive plan to address infrastructure, citing that going back to Town Meeting each time a repair is needed is not the solution. Barbaro sought Board opinion on not holding a Fall Special Town Meeting, to which the consensus was that if there is no need for a meeting, it can wait until the Annual Town Meeting in the spring. Ward said that the Senior Center needs to be addressed, and it will not get better. He would like to see it presented at the spring Town Meeting, and in the meantime, he advised Hickey to seek every grant opportunity or state/federal funding available. The essence from Town Meeting was that people would like to see the building repaired but they wish to see more money coming in. The article only lost by 12%. Barbaro noted that the pandemic has not helped the initiative of addressing infrastructure, but that the Board had been working toward a rotating schedule of addressing fire, police and DPW equipment. If citizens turned down a \$3.6 million article for the Senior Center, he does not see them wishing to fund \$12 million for the fire station. The Town must seek funding alternatives and he asked Anderson to reform the Infrastructure Committee to spearhead this initiative.

7.3 Discussion on Holding Halloween Trick or Treat – Board of Health Agent, Jim Abare, was present to provide input to the Board. He explained that the CDC recommends against traditional trick-or-treating where children approach doors and have to pass each other on narrow stairways, porches and walkways. They also discourage kids all reaching into bowls to get candy and they advise devising ways

to minimize the risk. One recommendation is to set up tables at the end of the driveway or the end of the yard and to have safely pre-packaged bags of candy available, or an adult to drop bags of candy into the kid's buckets (using safe precautions such as gloves and frequent use of hand sanitizer). It is also recommended that "one-ways" be set up to avoid children in close proximity to each other. Abare advised that there could be some type of trick-or-treating, with everyone trying to keep in mind social distancing and of course, masks. Hickey informed the Board that currently, Gardner is hosting trick or treating, Ashburnham and Athol have made no decision and Fitchburg has voted against it. He offered some ways in which trick-or-treating could be held safely and to allow children to enjoy the holiday, such as the homeowner handing out candy, parents attending to their kids and being mindful to keep distance, and to wear sanitizer and masks. Abare cautioned against using costume masks as a substitute, and to avoid wearing a costume mask in addition to a regular mask, as it could cause difficulty breathing. He suggested a Halloween-themed cloth mask instead. Salter voiced opposition, out of concern for the potential spread of the virus, and said she does not believe it to be worth it. Anderson supports safe, socially-distanced trick-or-treating with the contingency of a "Plan B" in the case of a resurgence of virus cases. She suggested having children register with the police and having candy delivered to their homes. Hickey understands where Anderson is coming from, and suggested something along the lines of what the High School did for their graduation this year when they lined kids up along the sidewalk and did a parade. He said he will come up with options if that is what the Board wants. Ward said he has been thinking about this topic for a couple of weeks, and said that there has been five weeks with no cases in Winchendon. He said that the residents listened and followed the guidelines, and he believes that we owe it to them to allow them to trick-or-treat. He would like to meet them halfway, and released guidelines for safety and trust the residents to use common sense. Being in a community with very low cases, he said, if we don't allow trick-or-treating, we will be sending everybody to Gardner which has more cases. He would like to keep it in Town where the cases are low. Barbaro said that trick-or-treating is one of the best holiday activities for kids, and he would like to put together a list of guidelines to be advertised to residents. Kids need an outlet from Zoom meetings and school, and Barbaro believes it can be done safely and smartly. He asked Hickey to devise "Plan B" options just in case.

Ward moved that trick-or-treat be conducted in Winchendon on Saturday, October 31st from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., seconded by Anderson. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Ward, aye, Salter, no and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried 3-1.

8. OLD BUSINESS: There is no Old Business scheduled this evening.

9. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:

1. Financial Updates-

- Fieldwork for the annual audit has been completed on the town's records. The School Department is working with the outside auditor to provide all of the information the auditors need to complete the audit.
- I anticipate asking to place the annual tax reclassification hearing on the Board's October 26th Board meeting.
- Town Clerk Wendy Stevens was made aware of a Center for Tech and Civic Life Grant funding from the State Elections Division. Wendy found out today that the grant was approved in the amount of \$5,000. The grant will supplement funding for election staffing for early voting as well as extra election workers on Election Day. Additionally, the grant will fund vote-by-mail/absentee voting equipment or supplies and election administration equipment.

Hickey thanked Stevens for a job well done.

2. Personnel Updates-

- There are no personnel updates this week.

3. Project Updates-

- Public Works Director Al Gallant has met with Mass Broken Stone to review and schedule the paving on the unaccepted portion of Mellen Road. Mass Broken Stone has committed to paving the road this fall. Tracy Murphy has contacted the surveyor to schedule the survey work for the metes and bounds once the paving is complete.
- Al Gallant and Tracy Murphy are scheduling meetings with property owners on the section of Central Street that will be reconstructed. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the temporary construction easements needed for the project. The meetings are tentatively scheduled for November 5th.

4. Miscellaneous Updates –

- I met with the Robinson Broadhurst trustees on Thursday, October 1st so the trustees could share their decision on increasing the Community Park funding. I will update the Board on the results shortly after the meeting concludes.
- As part of the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center's redevelopment of the Poland and Streeter schools, MVOC has applied for Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) for their proposed 44 apartments. At present, Department of Housing and Community Development shows the town of Winchendon housing stock at 4088 units. Of those units 331 qualify (accepted), resulting in 8.1% of the housing is recorded on the SHI. 77 additional units will help Winchendon meet the States' 10% goal of SHI units.

The Poland and Streeter School project will add 44 units to this inventory. As a result of this project, the town's SHI will reach 9% and now only be 33 units short of the State goal. This is significant. While the project with Poland and Streeter Schools is a collaborative effort between the town and MVOC, not all 40B developments are. As we near 10% and ultimately reach that mark, future 40B developments will not have benefit of the appeals process afforded when we are below that threshold.

There is a 30 day comment period on MVOC's 40B application. If you are interested in reviewing MVOC's application and submitting a comment, please visit the Town of Winchendon website at www.townofwinchendon.com.

- The Town has received and responded to nine Public Record Requests from the Mellen Road Action Committee.

Ward noted recent controversy on Facebook about the cost of the MVOC units. Hickey said commentary is open for comments to be brought forward. The property has been sold to MVOC and as such, the project will bear no cost to the Town. It is a great opportunity for the Town.

10. MINUTES:

10.1 Wednesday, September 2, 2020 Joint Meeting with Finance Committee (Amendment) – Ward moved to amend the minutes of Wednesday, September 2, 2020 to state on Page 3 under 4.2 the third line down “the Board’s next meeting” and to remove “Finance Committee Public Hearing”, seconded

by Salter. With a roll call vote of Anderson, aye, Ward, aye, Salter, abstain and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried 3-0-1.

10.2 Monday, September 14, 2020 Regular Meeting – Ward moved to approve the minutes of Monday, September 14, 2020 as presented this evening, seconded by Salter or Anderson. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

10.3 Monday, September 28, 2020 Regular Meeting prior to Annual Town Meeting – Ward moved to approve the minutes of Monday, September 28, 2020 as presented this evening, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session Public Records Request:

10.4 Monday, June 22, 2020 EXECUTIVE SESSION - Public Records Request for Release of Minutes

Ward moved the Executive Session Minutes of June 22, 2020 continues to warrant confidentiality, seconded by Salter. Anderson asked why, to which Barbaro said that until Mellen Road is accepted, these are confidential. **With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, no, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried 3 – 1.**

Ward moved that the Executive Session Minutes of June 22, 2020 continues to enjoy Executive Session privilege under the attorney-client privilege, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Anderson, no, Ward, aye, Salter, aye and Barbaro, aye, the motion carried 3-1.

11. COMMUNICATIONS:

12. AGENDA ITEMS: Barbaro noted that the next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 26th and will be conducted through Zoom Remote Meeting due to the auditorium at Town Hall being needed for Early Voting.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION: There is no Executive Session scheduled for this evening.

14. ADJOURNMENT: Ward motioned to adjourn, seconded by Salter. With a roll call vote of Salter, aye, Anderson, aye, Ward, aye and Barbaro, aye, the meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Taylor C. Tower

Taylor Tower
Administrative Assistant