

Approved: 11-25-2024

TOWN OF WINCHENDON
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024

WINCHENDON TOWN CLERK
ROUD NOV 26 2024 AM 11:26

Town Hall, 2nd Floor Auditorium, 109 Front St., Winchendon, Mass

Present: Rick Ward, Chair
Andrew Beauvais, Vice Chair
Audrey LaBrie
Melissa Blanchard
Erika Eitland

William McKinney, Town Manager

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Road Race Application-Harper Grace Memorial Scholarship Fund 5K Run/Walk Race November 2nd @ 9am
 - Three (3) One Day Special Wine and Malt Only Liquor Licenses and Entertainment Permit Application- Lickity Splitz October 19th and 20th from noon-8pm and October 18th from 5pm-8pm
 - Special One Day Wine and Malt Only Liquor License Application-Mark Hagemeyer Fall Fest October 12th from 10am-5pm
 - Warrant for 2024 State Election
 - Draft September 16, 2024 Executive Session Meeting Minutes
 - Draft September 23, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes
-

6:30 PM Chair Ward called the meeting to order at 6:30P.M. All rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Ward asked if anyone would be audio or video recording this meeting tonight to which there was no response heard.

1. **SELECTMEN'S COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Selectwoman Eitland said hosting the carnival was great. Commended Chief Wolski and others in his department. Selectwoman Blanchard said great fireworks display. YMCA is doing a fantastic job on the playground. Selectman Beauvais commented it was fun to see the carnival again. Thanked first responders for everything they do. He said he attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the Veterans Center. Chair Ward said he attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Veterans Housing and thanked the public employees who showed up, the Veterans Center people were impressed at the attendance. On Saturday Retired Captain Johnson who had retired after 30 years passed. We appreciate everything he did for the town.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Chair Ward gave guidelines. You have 2 to 3 minutes. This is for comments not a dialogue with the Board.

School Committee Chair Karen Kast-McBride Ash Street and Mike Barbaro 275 Brown Street came forward. School Committee Chair Karen Kast-McBride read the letter addressed to the Board of Selectmen.

Mark Dorwart came forward. He said he recently asked for a document handed by the Chair of Board of Selectmen and handed to the Finance Committee Vice Chair. He read the response he was given pertaining to his public records request.

Joe Sackett following United Sovereign based on misinformation. Asked to consider poll workers.

Jill Sackett said she is concerned with resident speaking about United Sovereign Americans Resolution. 1. If passed by # of towns it will implement additional controls which will cost more money. 2. People staff/poll workers high integrity. Support past and future work. 3. Should be looking at who is voting.

Jeff Cohen-volunteer United Sovereign Americans Resolutions. He read the letter he submitted.

Darlene Rossi-volunteer United Sovereign Americans Resolutions. She continued to read the letter that Mr. Cohen submitted. She asked that the Board vote on this.

Jennifer Hutchins-Co-Manager Farmers Market. Received 1,000 grant. Funded music events. \$500 grant also received would like to promote and grow the market. Enjoying new location. Some vendors receive WIC. Ends Saturday October 26th. Have a fun dog event on that day.

Dani Cutler-Chair Cultural Council said the Grant cycle closes Wednesday the 16th of October. Cultural Council funding comes from the state. The town was awarded \$15,000.

Selectwoman Eitland moved to take agenda item #10 Town Manager Financial Update out of order. Selectwoman LaBrie seconded. Vote: All aye.

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

4. APPOINTMENTS/RESIGNATIONS:

4.1 Appointment of Jessie Fitzmaurice-Parks & Recreation Commission –Ms. Fitzmaurice submitted a letter of interest to join the Parks & Recreation Commission but withdrew it after agenda was posted.

4.2 Discussion/Appointment to Digital Equity Plan-Previously Board of Selectwoman Barbara Anderson was involved with the Digital Equity Plan. They are requesting to know who is taking her place. Chair Ward said the draft digital equity plan has been completed and they will present at the October 28th meeting. Looking for someone to look over the draft pages. He said he will do it until October 28th and if on we will vote then. **Selectwoman Labrie moved to have Chair Ward be the representative from the Board pertaining to the Digital Equity Plan. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.**

5. PERMIT/LICENSE APPLICATIONS:

5.1 Harper Grace Memorial Scholarship Fund 5K Run/Walk Race November 2nd @ 9am-Amanda Lawler came forward and said this is where we host our annual event. We will be having two police details on Glenallen per a discussion with the Police Chief. **Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the Road Race Permit for Harper Grace Memorial Scholarship Fund 5K Run/Walk on November 2nd at 9am to 11am and waive the permit fee. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.**

5.2 Three (3) One Day Special Wine and Malt Only Liquor Licenses and Entertainment Permit-Lickity Splitz October 19th and 20th from noon-8pm and October 18th from 5pm-8pm-

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the three Special One Day Wine and Malt only Liquor Licenses for Shawn Case for October 19th and 20th from noon-8pm and October 18th from 5pm-8pm. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the Entertainment Permit for Lickity Splitz for October 19th and 20th from noon-8pm and October 18th from 5pm-8pm. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

- 5.3 Special One Day Wine and Malt Only Liquor License-Mark Hagemeyer Fall Fest October 12th from 10am-5pm. Mark Hagemeyer came forward and talked about the Fall Fest. **Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the Special One Day Wine and Malt Only Liquor License for Mark Hagemeyer for Fall Fest on October 12th.** Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote: All aye.

6. **BOARDS/COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS:-**There are no boards/committees/commissions presenting to the Board this evening.

7. **NEW BUSINESS:**

7.1 Warrant for 2024 State Election- Chair Ward said we have received the warrant and we need to sign the warrant.

7.2 Presentation by the Election Warden on the Election process in Winchendon-Dr. Maureen Ward and Town Clerk Wendy Stevens came forward. Chair Ward stated he is married to Dr. Maureen Ward. Dr. Ward went discussed the process. She said **when ballots are received from the state, they are recounted at the Town Clerks Office to double check the number sent.** (This is an important number to have for checks when the polls close)

BALLOT TESTING:

- All machines are calibrated to read and record each ballot prior to ballot testing
- At least 4 days prior to any election the machines (Precincts 1, 2, & 3 along with 3 spare machines) are tested with a minimum of 50 marked ballots composed of ballots from the democrat and republican parties plus 5 from the libertarian party (IF it's an election that requires different ballots). Ballot testing time and date IS posted on the Town Website and is open to the public for observation.
- All marked ballots are hand counted and entered onto a spreadsheet – it is imperative that each machine tested matches the hand count spreadsheet.

MAIL IN BALLOTS:

- Any registered voter can request a mail in ballot. (To date we have received requests for over 1300 mailed ballots)
- The ballot arrives in a large envelope which contains a ballot, a return envelope, and a Bar Coded ballot envelope that is sealed and signed after you deposit your completed ballot and instructions on how to complete the ballot. EVERY return ballot envelope MUST be signed by the registered voter. These signatures are compared to the signature on file for the voter.
- Each mailed envelope is scanned into the computer;
 - Each returned envelope is also scanned into the computer to indicate the day and time it was received by the Town Clerks office.
 - These mailed ballots are stored in the safe before being transported to the Senior Center by WPD on Election Day.

- People CAN track their ballot from the date mailed to them, Received by Town Clerk, and Processed. Go to MA.Gov Track Your Ballot

EARLY VOTING:

- The state mandates early voting for both state and federal elections
- The state is usually one week and the Federal elections are usually 2 weeks – all done at the Town Hall on the second floor.
 - Early voting for this Presidential Election starts on Sat. Oct. 19th from 9 am – 3 pm and continues until Thursday, Oct. 31st. Mon, Tues, Wed and Thurs hours are the same as the Town Hall.
- Early voters are signed in on the Poll Pads (HUGE thank you to Robinson Broadhurst)
 - The Poll Pad logs the date and time, which ballot (if applicable) they choose and then a label is created with a bar code, the voters name, address, precinct and party.
 - This label is affixed to an envelope.
 - The voter completes the ballot, seals it in the envelope provided, signs the envelope, and deposits it in the ballot box.
 - These completed ballots are scanned when transported downstairs to the Town Clerks Office before being secured in the safe until Election Day when they are transported to the Official Voting Site (The Senior Center) by the Winchendon Police Department.
 - The same process is used for mail in ballots; both early voters and mail in voters can track their ballot using the website MA.Gov Track my ballot.
- At the senior center the envelope bar code is scanned into the appropriate precinct Poll Pad, the envelope is opened and ballot is deposited into the voting machine.
- The BONUS to early voting is NO LINES! AND you can go online to check the progress of your ballot i.e.: received and cast.
 - With the upcoming Presidential Election we do expect longer lines and some waiting. If you use a wheel chair, a walker or have difficulty standing I strongly recommend early voting here at Town Hall on the second floor.

ELECTION DAY:

- Again, all official ballots, mailed in ballots, and early voter ballots are brought to the Senior Center by the Winchendon Police Department in SEALED containers.
- Winchendon has 3 precincts. Each check in station is covered by two people from different political parties – one to check in voters on the Poll Pad and one to hand out ballots.
 - Using your Driver's License to check in is much faster than typing all of your information into the Poll Pad but it is NOT required.
- Polling stations are opened from 7 am to 8 pm for state and federal elections and from 8 am to 8 pm for local elections
- If a voter makes an error on their ballot they may request a new ballot. The SPOILED ballot is marked in RED SPOILED and placed in a collection envelope for spoiled ballots. Voters are permitted 2 spoiled ballots. The 3rd ballot must be cast.
- There is NO campaigning or polling or any political activity permitted within 150 feet of polling stations – for the Senior Center all campaigning must be done on the road – NOT in the parking lot.
 - There WILL be a police officer on duty outside as well as inside.
- A police officer is on duty from the transporting of ballots to the Senior Center to the transporting of ballots back to the safe at the end of the day.

CLOSE OF ELECTION RECORDING:

- The voting machines have 3 different compartments:

1. for all correctly completed ballots that the machine has recorded;
 2. for all ballots that have a WRITE IN candidate;
 3. for all ballots that need to be hand counted because the machine could not read them – possibly used a pencil instead of a marker, or put an X instead of filling in the circle.
- At the end of the evening the machine prints a tape with the number of votes for each listed candidate, the number of write in votes for each position, and the number of blank votes for each position
 - The Counters/Tellers are responsible for tallying the results from the machine tape and the hand counts and recording all write in candidates.
 - There are two counters for each precinct – they are from different parties.
 - The hand count tallies are added to the machine count tally for a total number of ballots cast = this number must correspond to the number of voters the Check in Poll Pads have.
 - ALL counts and tallies are done in RED PENCIL. Rarely, if ever, are ballots marked in red therefore this was the logical choice for counting at the end of the night – no perception that ballots are being altered when the pencils used are RED.
 - Some people are creative and write in things like Mickey Mouse, Pluto, and Tom Cruise – etc. These are counted under “OTHER” or “BLANK” as they are not viable candidates.
 - Depending on the number of hand count ballots and the number of write in candidates determines how long it takes to finalize the numbers at the end of the evening.
 - We stay on the job until the tapes plus hand counts match the check in counts.
 - A Police Officer stays as well.
 - When all counting is completed: all completed ballots, machines tapes, mail in/early voting envelopes are sealed into either a rolling bag or a large water proof carrier.
 - The Winchendon Police Department takes the ballots to the town safe. At NO time are ballots – blank or cast left in cars, in closets, or on desks. Security is paramount.
 - Unused ballots, cast ballots, spoiled ballots MUST total the number of ballots that we originally received from state – that’s why we count them when they first arrive.

OBSERVERS:

- An observation area is marked off at the front of the hall
- The observation area is located so that observers can both hear and see real time voters and hear and watch the process for mail in and early voter ballots.
- Observers may NOT have any interaction with poll workers OR voters
- Video and photographs are permitted from behind the observation barrier but NOT audio.

KEY DATES:

- Deadline to register to vote is Sat., Oct. 26 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm at the Town Clerk’s Office, Town Hall
- Deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot is Tues., Oct. 29th by 5 PM
- Deadline to return a ballot – postmark MUST be Nov. 5th and received by Nov. 8th

We currently have 8,179 Registered voters.

She said the number of ballots get counted-ballot testing of the machines-mail in ballots-just under 1600 requests for mail in ballots. Selectwoman LaBrie asked if there is observer space. Dr. Maureen Ward said if they notify us they will have a space if it is full they will have to wait. Selectwoman Eitland commented this gives me a lot of confidence in what we have and do. She thanked Robinson Broadhurst who gave us the technology to make it easier. Selectman Beauvais asked how often are voter rolls updated? Ms. Wendy Stevens said every

day. Dr. Ward explained that said there are appropriate political hats/shirts when you go to vote. She read the prohibited saying. Selectwoman LaBrie asked about what percent of residents don't have transportation. Dr. Ward said they can mail the ballot in.

Chair Ward stressed the School Committee is looking for volunteers to serve on the School Committee Superintendent Search Committee. If you want to get involved to help pick the next Superintendent.

8. OLD BUSINESS:

8.3 United Sovereign Americans' "Resolution for a Legally Valid 2024 General Election"- This was a carryover from the last meeting. Chair Ward asked the Board if they have any questions or concerns. Selectwoman Eitland said she personally feels we shouldn't be signing. I don't see this is in the best interest of Winchendon. Selectwoman Blanchard agreed with Selectwoman Eitland. Selectman Beauvais asked where is the information and figures come from. Jeffery Cohen, Representing the United Sovereign Americans said the numbers came from the Secretary of the Commonwealths Office. Selectman Beauvais asked what a trained citizen is. Jeffery Cohen said someone who received training or would be provided, he said there would need to be some instruction. Selectwoman LaBrie said we don't lower the standards we live by in the country. I have gone over the resolution again. She said she believes that when you apply what we are talking about in a national level she see the need but not on the local level. Chair Ward agreed with Selectwoman LaBrie. We need a solid voter id to vote in this country. He said he will not take any action on this. The Board took no action on this.

Darlene Rossi thanked the Board taking the time to hear these concerns. Jeffrey Cohen thanked the Board also.

9. **TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT:** Bill McKinney discussed the carnival and also trunk or treat. He said Fall Fest is coming up this Saturday. On Sunday the public safety fire and police took on Templeton in a softball game. They won 15-7. On the town website we have a department schedules. As we get that information we post to this section so you can see who's in or out. We are trying to be more public service friendly. **Selectman Beauvais moved the BOS hire a consultant to rectify the Treasurer/Collector department. Selectwoman Eitland seconded for discussion.** Chair Ward said we think we owe it to the town to be very fiscally responsible at this time. If Bill McKinney and Donna Spellman who are currently working on this can solve it without bringing in a consultant in we need to give them the time. **Vote: Selectman Beauvais aye, Selectwoman Eitland nay, Selectwoman LaBrie nay, Selectwoman Blanchard nay, and Chair Ward nay.** Selectwoman LaBrie discussed the School Committee encumbered funds.

10. **TOWN MANAGER FINANCIAL UPDATE:** Bill McKinney, Town Manager said Donna Spellman is back. Big help as well as Kayleigh and Tara. He said he is working on the bank reconciliation. He said once completed it is turned over to the Accountant. When complete we will move on to the receivables. Tax possession auction was held today. It sold for \$60,000.

Selectman Beauvais said at the last meeting it was stated that Mr. Roselli recommended in the audit letter hiring an outside company. With the help from Donna Spellman, where are we finding the funds to pay for her? Bill McKinney said we are using the funds from the vacant position. He said there is no funding source for the outside company. He said he hasn't started the search yet. Selectman Beauvais said in the management letter it said we have \$54,000 in tailings to use. Bill McKinney said they are checks we sent out and have not been cashed. It would need to get certified before we can use it. Selectman Beauvais said we should consider hiring somebody to come in and clean up our books. This shouldn't fall directly on your shoulders.

Selectwoman Eitland said we want to support you. There are taxes that haven't been paid. Bill McKinney said the receivables would not be available.

Selectwoman LaBrie asked moving forward can we get a spreadsheet with written updates. She said she would like you to find the \$50,000 somewhere to hire a consultant. She said she supports him. She said she was expecting the letter from the School Committee tonight. There was comments made at the last School Committee meeting-attacking the Town Manager and also some discussion of mismanagement of finances. We need to work together in a professional level.

Chair Ward asked what are the benefits having Donna Spellman in the Treasurer/Collectors office. Mr. McKinney said an agency would take time getting up to speed. Ms. Spellman was the previous Collector/Treasurer and knows the process. Chair Ward said he told the Town Manager if he feels it's too much work for him just then let us know. If he needs time I'm going to back him. Chair Ward said at the School Committee meeting, the Superintendent and Business Manager said they are working with the town to get this cleared up. Statements about the Town Manager are uncalled for. The override we will be looking at in the near future has nothing to do with what happened in the Treasurer's office.

11. MINUTES:

11.1 September 9, 2024 Regular Meeting-This was tabled until the next meeting.

11.2 September 10, 2024 Tri-Board Meeting-This was tabled until the next meeting.

11.3 September 16, 2024 Executive Session

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the meeting minutes of September 16, 2024 but not release as presented this evening. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Roll Call Vote: Selectwoman Labrie, Selectwoman Blanchard, Selectwoman Eitland, Selectman Beauvais and Chair Ward aye.

11.6 September 23, 2024 Regular Meeting

Selectwoman LaBrie moved the Board approve the meeting minutes of September 23, 2024 as presented this evening. Selectwoman Eitland seconded. Vote: All aye.

12. COMMUNICATIONS:

13. AGENDA ITEMS:

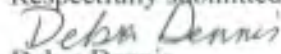
14. EXECUTIVE SESSION: There are no scheduled executive sessions this evening.

15. ADJOURNMENT:

Selectwoman LaBrie moved to adjourn. Selectman Beauvais seconded. Vote: All aye.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully submitted



Debra Dennis

Executive Assistant