

Town of Wendell
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
April 3, 2024, 7 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting: Selectboard Offices and by Zoom

Present:

Chair Laurie DiDonato, Vice Chair Gillian Budine, Member Paul Doud

Also Present: Glenn Johnson-Mussad, Town Coordinator; Cynthia Bolling, Selectboard Clerk; Treasurer Carolyn Manley, Project Coordinator Phil Delorey; Anna Gyorgy, NAB group; Miriam Warner, Library Director; members of the public and press.

I. Roll Call/Call to Order

With all members present, the meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

There were no Selectboard updates or comments.

V. Selectboard Meeting and Warrant Schedule Review

The meeting and warrant schedule won't align in April.

VI. Project Coordinator Report. Phil Delorey

Change to WRATS Open-Topped Containers

The containers behind the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station office will be elevated to allow people to drive up to them and simply dump in their trash rather than having to climb stairs to do so.

Funds for WRATS Landfill Capping Project

- The last of the money earmarked by the state is being used to do some of the mandated landfill capping.
- More funds will be needed to finish the project.
- Phil will also seek state funding to finish the project through the Community One Stop for Growth program, which puts applicants in touch with likely agencies.
 - a. He thinks the chance of finding the right agency for this particular project isn't very good, though.

Discussion

Within about a week to 10 days, Phil will know how much more money will be needed to finish; fortunately, the state is being very patient about that, so there's no rush.

Wendell-Erving Bridge Repair

- A major repair is underway on the Erving side that will shut down the bridge for about four months.
- Signs about the repair will go up next Monday.
- The report from Larry Laclaire at L & F Construction is almost ready.

- a. The report, which estimates the repair's final cost, will be used to apply for state funding through the One Stop program.
- a. The program's filing deadline for the Expression of Interest form is April 30.

Discussion

- The fire chief and police have been notified.
- If the project starts on April 8, the contractors will have until August 5 to finish.
- Signs about the bridge closure will go up Monday.
 - a. Phil will confirm the actual date the bridge will be closed.
 - b. Gillian Budine can send a Code Red message about that date when she gets it.

Highway Crew Wages

- One of Wendell's highway crew drivers was hired as a supervisor in New Salem, for a pay raise of \$8 per hour.
 - a. Phil noted that Wendell's highway supervisor, who is remaining, could have gotten a \$4/hr. pay raise if he had been hired for the same position.

Paving on Wendell Depot Road

The work will be done in June.

Building Inspector Retirement

- In preparation for his retirement as building inspector at the end of the month, last week Phil met with his successor in Warwick, Justin Gale (who also has been hired for the same position in Wendell).
- Phil gave Justin access to forms he has developed over the years, will meet with him again next week about Wendell, and is putting together a list of zoning issues that Justin needs to know about.

VII. Consent Agenda

- A. Approve Selectboard meeting minutes of March 20, 2024
- B. Declaration of two Hughesnet satellite dishes from the library as surplus

Chair Laurie DiDonato made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Gillian seconded.

Discussion

The Selectboard approved the following amendments to the March 20 Selectboard minutes:

- a. On page 4, under the Finance Committee (FinCom) salary discussion, change Meagan Sylva to Meagan Sylvia.
- b. On page 5, under item XIII, Prioritization of Potential Projects, change "submit items a through c" to "submit items 1 through 3."

The amended motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Town Hall Furniture Purchase. Gillian

Gillian recommended buying 28 more chairs and a dolly to replace the old ones that were removed, as long as there's enough money in the budget this fiscal year.

- a. The Uline Products invoice shows the cost: 1 dolly: \$315. Chairs: \$756. Total: \$1,071.

Discussion

The Selectboard considered the following possible funding sources:

- a. Town Hall Window Replacement (\$1,500). This may require a Special Town Meeting (STM)
- b. Town Hall General Expenses (\$674.99)
- c. Town Building Repairs (\$27,000)
- d. Town Building General Expenses (\$1,500)

The Selectboard is leaning toward making the purchase this fiscal year but will wait until Carolyn and Laurie look into the suitability of these funding sources and report back to the Selectboard.

IX. Kitchen and Town Hall Rental. Glenn

- Glenn met with Kitchen Coordinator Sarah Wilson and Laurie to discuss his proposal to use a single person and one fund to manage rentals of the Town Hall, its furniture, maintenance, and kitchen.
- Sarah is open to having the same person manage the Town Hall and kitchen.
- Currently, Glenn manages rentals for the Town Hall. He asked the Selectboard to also consider the cost of the hours the coordinator spends answering phones, sending people policies, receiving their applications and processing their checks, versus having one person do this.
- The single revolving fund could be used to pay Sarah for managing the rentals as well as for other things like purchasing chairs and making upgrades to kitchen equipment and the reservation system.
- According to a draft bylaw in the meeting folder, that fund could also be used to cover such expenses as hall maintenance, kitchen maintenance, cleaning, equipment and furniture repair and upgrades, and administrative services, including paying part-time employees and contractors.
- The Selectboard would authorize the fund's expenditures.

Discussion

- Laurie noted that the Kitchen Committee has already said they don't want to be in charge of the entire Town Hall rental program.
- Gillian would like to see a breakdown of the expenses and fees for all Town Hall rentals, including the chairs and tables, Town Hall, and kitchen.

The Selectboard will do more research and revisit this item at its next meeting, after the Kitchen Committee meets.

X. Acceptance of WWII Memorial. Jim Gillio

Jim gave some background on his discovery of this item and asked the Selectboard's permission to restore it and donate it to Wendell.

- Jim introduced himself as a retired police officer and city council member who lives in California.
- He saw the WWII memorial on Facebook Marketplace. It was inscribed with the names of WWII soldiers in Wendell, but the memorial didn't include a state (there are five Wendells in the U.S.).
- Research led him to the actual memorial, which is at Moffett Field, a former military base in central California. Pictures in the meeting folder show that it's in disrepair, appears to be wood with glass on the front, and it looks like a grandfather clock.
- After further digging, Jim found Wendell through a historic society in Wendell, NC, which identified Wendell, MA, as the town it came from.
- From conversations with the memorial's current owner, Jim learned it's 48" tall and that the owner is now willing to donate it to Wendell instead of selling it.
- Jim has found someone to restore the memorial: a local Vietnam veteran who is also the head of the local VFW chapter and a woodworker. The restoration will take a few months and there won't be any charge.

Discussion

- Pictures of the memorial showing close-ups of the names allowed Gillian to identify some of the people as Wendell residents.
- Gillian will ask around to find who might want to take charge of it and where it might be sited in Wendell.
- When Gillian asked for more pictures, Jim said the local press would like to cover the restoration and the VFW's involvement, so he will send Wendell a video and photos of the process.

Gillian made a motion to accept this WWII memorial gift from Jim Gillio. Laurie seconded. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

XI. MWRA Quabbin Watershed Feasibility Study. Glenn

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) asked if Wendell's staff can attend one of four proposed meeting dates to talk about MWRA's launch of a study to assess the feasibility of supplying drinking water to communities in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed area.

Discussion

- Gillian is working during the times proposed. Laurie might be able to do Monday in the early afternoon. Paul can do either of two Fridays.
- MWRA is also asking Wendell to submit the following documents by April 5:
 - a. Town-wide master planning documents
 - b. Identify buildings served by public groundwater wells, if any
 - c. Water quality data for wells in Town-owned buildings and water quality data for private wells with issues, if any
 - d. 2022 and 2023 (if available) Annual Statistical Reports for public wells, if any
 - e. Latest copy of Sanitary Survey for public wells, if any
 - f. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program report and/or Hazard Mitigation Plan
 - g. Source Water Assessment & Protection Report
- Glenn can get the water testing results and perhaps reach out to the Board of Health for some of the other information. He already has the Hazard Mitigation Plan and can coordinate with Laurie if he needs further information.

Glenn will let MWRA know that a Selectboard member can attend either the Monday meeting, preferably in the afternoon, or one of the proposed Fridays.

XII. Restored Mural. Glenn

A Wendell resident wants to donate a restored mural that used to hang at the back of the Town Hall stage.

Discussion

- An email describes it as a "lovely, floral, dappled, pleasant piece of art," but no picture was attached.
- A few people worked on the restoration of a mural that was supposed to hang in the Town Hall, but Laurie wasn't sure if this was the same one.

Laurie and Glenn will find out more about the mural, including what material it's made of.

XIII. One-Day Liquor License Applications. Glenn

Glenn proposed removing language from the one-day liquor license application that discusses money changing hands during the event, which implies that the license is required any time this occurs.

- According to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission, a one-day liquor license is needed whenever alcohol is being served to the public.

Discussion

- The Selectboard can request it, but the current liquor license doesn't require that servers undergo TIPS training.
- The Meetinghouse has applied for a license for an event that raises money and has asked the Selectboard to waive the fee.
 - a. Glenn pointed out that before it grants the fee waiver request, the Selectboard would need to create a fee-waiver policy like the one that was drawn up for building inspections.
- Glenn noted that the purpose of charging a fee is to make people think twice about serving alcohol to the public.

Laurie moved that the Selectboard not create a fee-waiver policy for one-day liquor licenses and to accept the revised application form for such licenses as presented. Gillian seconded.

Discussion

- The strikeouts in the presented draft will be removed from the final application.
- The duplicate phrase on the last page that begins, "Special Licensees must purchase alcoholic beverages from a package store. . . ." will be removed. Glenn will check for other duplicates.

The motion passed unanimously.

XIV. Building Inspector. Glenn

Justin Gale has been offered the position of building inspector and has accepted.

- At a previous meeting the Selectboard approved appointing Justin to the position of building inspector, pending the receipt of positive references, which Glenn has now received.
- Phil Delorey advised the Selectboard he would be resigning from the position some months ago and has now formally confirmed that with an email to Town Clerk Anna Wetherby.

Gillian moved to appoint Justin Gale to the position of building inspector in Wendell, effective May 1, 2024, until June 30, 2025. Laurie seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Phil has sent an email to the alternate building inspector, Roland Jean, to ask if he still wants to continue in that position. Glenn will follow up with next steps if Roland declines or doesn't respond.

XV. Battery Storage. Laurie

Bylaw Proposal

Town Counsel David Doneski has submitted the changes he made to the bylaw that the No Assault and Batteries in Wendell (NAB) citizens' group drafted.

- The Selectboard had decided at a previous meeting to wait for Attorney Doneski's changes, since in his opinion the corrected bylaw would have a better chance of being accepted by the Massachusetts attorney general (AG) than the NAB's original one.
- Laurie invited Anna Gyorgy from NAB to share her thoughts on the changes.

Discussion

- Anna said that at first glance, NAB's legal group thought Attorney Doneski's corrections watered down their bylaw too much, wouldn't stop the building of any battery storage facility over 1 megawatt, and didn't address their concerns about health and safety as well as size.
- The lithium-ion battery storage facility that Borrego/New Leaf proposes to build in Wendell is 105 megawatts; the NAB bylaw would limit the size to 10 megawatts.
- Anna has talked to Anna Wetherby about what's needed for NAB to act without the Selectboard and get their bylaw on a warrant for an STM.
 - a. NAB aims to collect 100 signatures for the petition that's required for an STM. The petition will then go to Anna Wetherby for certification.
- The town of Athol's Energy Committee wrote a bylaw that was accepted by the AG; however, NAB doesn't think Athol's bylaw will prevent the siting of a large-scale lithium-ion battery facility.
- Anna noted that a separate, state-wide citizens' petition addressed to Governor Healey already has 500 local signatures.
 - a. It asks for a pause on the permitting of large battery storage facilities until health and safety issues have been addressed.
 - b. Gillian noted that Sen. Comerford's office said it's urgent that this petition be submitted and recommended that NAB contact Sen. Comerford's office about their thoughts on a specific deadline.
- The Selectboard discussed the pros and cons of putting Attorney Doneski's version of the bylaw on the warrant for the May 1 STM along with the NAB's bylaw and decided that presenting two, possibly contradictory bylaws would be too confusing.
 - a. Laurie encouraged the NAB to proceed with its own citizens' petition to hold an STM on May 1.

Next Steps

- Anna will send a copy of Athol's bylaw to Laurie.
- The NAB will meet tomorrow, review Attorney Doneski's changes in more detail, then start collecting signatures for its own petition for an STM.

Fail-Safe Review Request

The Selectboard has already asked state Senator Jo Comerford's office to check a final draft of the letter, which is addressed to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office.

- a. The letter, which requires a minimum of 10 signatures, asks for a review of Borrego/New Leaf's proposal.

Gillian moved to approve the fail-safe review request to MEPA as written. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps

- Board members signed a printed copy of the corrected letter.
- Glenn will call Sen. Comerford's office to find out if the signatures need to be certified and if people are required to print their names below their signatures.
- Gillian will gather signatures at a meeting on Friday and bring it to the office to be sent out Monday.

Request for Assistance in the DPU Docket

Glenn and Laurie will schedule some time to meet to draft this letter to the Department of Public Utilities.

XVI. FY25 Budget Lines. Glenn

Glenn asked the Selectboard to consider his budget proposals for the Appropriations Request sheets he received from the FinCom.

- Glenn has submitted all of them except for the one for insurance, which he needs to review further, and the one for Broadband Debt Service, which he's leaving for Municipal Light Plant Manager Ray DiDonato and Carolyn.
- The budget appropriation sheets were due to the FinCom on March 31.

Discussion

- After Glenn provided details about some of the budget lines when asked, the Selectboard recommended one change:
 - a. For the Town Building Repairs (outside) line, instead of reducing the FY 24 amount from \$33,503.33 (not listed on the sheet but verified) to \$13,000 for FY 25, increase the FY 25 amount to \$33,000, to accommodate the list of repairs that still need to be made to Town buildings, according to Phil.
- The insurance line needs work because it is actually composed of multiple lines, which Glenn will need to figure out; that may be why the line is overdrawn. He is also waiting for a quote from the insurance company for the upcoming fiscal year.

Laurie moved to authorize Glenn to work with Gillian to figure out the insurance budget line and then submit the final amounts to the FinCom for FY 25. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Gillian made a motion to accept the FY 25 Appropriations Requests sheets as presented with the changes as discussed. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps

- Glenn will order Memorial Day flags.
- At the Money Managers meeting, Gillian will discuss the cost of painting the inside of the Town Hall.

XVII. Items Not Anticipated.

New Library Garden. Library Director Miriam Warner

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

The library wanted to notify the Selectboard that they're having a garden party on Patriots' Day, April 15, at 10 a.m., to redevelop an area where plants were inadvertently removed during the recent tree removal project.

- The plants will be low growing and low maintenance.
- There won't be any lawn there, so there's no danger plants will be mowed down.
- When Miriam asked her if there was anything she'd like to add, Rosie said that the idea is restore the garden, bring it back better than it was before, and make it into a beautiful play space using all-natural materials.
 - a. Anchor plants will go in as a first step.

Locking the Town Office Building. Glenn

In response to concerns about the use of the building by unknown persons the previous Friday, the Selectboard considered locking the entrance to the Town Office Building.

Gillian made a motion to return to the practice of locking the entrance to the Town Office Building for the time being. Laurie seconded.

Discussion

To accommodate the people who rely on being able to post meetings on the bulletin board, on Monday Gillian will affix a sticky hook to its side and hang a key on it.

The motion passed unanimously.

Glenn will use a new, more inclusive All Users email address to send out the announcement.

Town Newsletter. Gillian

It was picked up from the printer's office today and Gillian will get it to the post office tomorrow or Friday.

XVIII. Adjournment

Gillian made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Documents

General Law Part I, Title VII, Chapter 44, Section 53E1, 2, April 3, 2024
Fail Safe Review Request v3 LD, April 3, 2024
Processed-F631DB3B . . .6E52 (new Dolly and chairs picture), March 13, 2024
Processed-99CB366F . . . 0851 (old dolly and chairs picture), March 13, 2024
Processed-91D63658 . . . 2D28 (old? dolly and chairs picture), March 13, 2024
MWRA Data Request, Quabbin Communities Study, March 20, 2024
MWRA Quabbin Watershed Feasibility Study Email, March 22, 2024
KP-#908047-v2-WNDL, Dry Hydrant Easement, March 26, 2024
KP-#908047-v1-WNDL, Dry Hydrant Easement, March 6, 2024
Dry Hydrant Survey, McAvoy Pond, March 6, 2024
WWII Memorial Email, March 20, 2024
Selectboard Meeting Minutes, March 20, 2024
Selectboard Posting and Agenda, April 3, 2024
Chairs and Rack Cost, March 18, 2024
Gillian Chairs and Rack Proposal, March 13, 2024
Proposed New One-Day Liquor License Application, April 3, 2024
Town Hall, Kitchen, and Furniture Rental Revolving Fund, April 3, 2024
Coordinator Appropriations Sheets, April 3, 2024
KP-#913345-v1-WNDL, Battery Energy Storage License Bylaw, April 3, 2024
Thumbnail_cid16253 (WWII Memorial, whole plaque), April 3, 2024
Thumbnail_image0 (WWII Memorial, close-up of names, 1 column), April 3, 2024
Thumbnail_image 1 (WWII Memorial, close-up of names 1 column), April 3, 2024
Thumbnail_image3 ((WWII Memorial, close-up of names, 3 columns), April 3, 2024