

Town of Wendell
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
April 17, 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, Recording Secretary; Treasurer Carolyn Manley, Bill Stubblefield, Anna Gyorgy, Laurel Facey, Nina Keller, NAB group; Wendell Country Store owner Patricia Scutari; members of the public and press.

I. Roll Call/Call to Order

With all members present, the meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

Glenn Johnson-Mussad reported that he hasn't received any comments about the Selectboard Annual Report he sent out.

V. Selectboard Meeting and Warrant Schedule Review

- Note was taken of the schedule as printed in the meeting agenda.
- The May 1 Special Town Meeting (STM) will take place in the Town Hall.

VI. Town Coordinator Report. Glenn

MWRA Quabbin Watershed Feasibility Study Meeting

Glenn attended the meeting that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority held regarding the study they want to launch to assess the feasibility of supplying drinking water to communities in the Quabbin Reservoir watershed area.

- MWRA provides water from the Quabbin Reservoir to Boston.
- Over the years, water usage has dropped significantly, so now the agency has excess capacity and is looking to some of it to nearby towns.
- Glenn gave MWRA the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and asked Wendell's water operator, Housatonic Sampling and Testing, for the data MWRA wanted about its water supply system.
- Later in the meeting, Gillian noted that the Swift River Elementary School would benefit enormously from having an alternate water supply; then they wouldn't have to spend money on the ongoing PFAS remediation.

2021 and 2022 Annual Reports

- Highland Press said the 2022 Annual Report is ready to print and Glenn has asked them to go ahead.

- The press sent back the 2021 Annual Report due to issues with the pdf, which Selectboard (SB) Clerk Su Hoyle is handling.
- Glenn will consider using a different printer for the 2023 Annual Report.

Amending a Posted Agenda

- Laurie asked that a process be put in place for amending a Selectboard meeting agenda that has already been posted online.
- Glenn suggested putting it in a shared folder so that any Selectboard member could make a change and then repost it.

VII. Approve minutes of April 3, 2024

Laurie made a motion to approve the April 3, 2024, Selectboard meeting minutes. Gillian Budine seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Anelex Settlement Remaining Funds Proposal. Treasurer Carolyn Manley

In April 2003 the Town of Wendell received \$15,000 to put up a gate, take away a trailer, and remove vehicles from an old landfill on Mormon Hollow Road.

- Dan Keller confirmed that all the requirements had been met, so Carolyn is asking that the \$,4,459.19 remaining in the account be transferred to the General Fund. It will then become Free Cash.

Gillian moved to transfer the remaining funds in the Anelex account to the General Fund. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Senior Center Ramp Proposal. Glenn

- The Council on Aging has asked Wendell to approved funding to paint the ramp at the Senior Center.
- Tri-County Construction has submitted a bid of \$1,475 to do the work.

Laurie made a motion to approve \$1,475 to paint the Senior Center ramp using funds from the Town Building Repairs line. Paul seconded. No discussion.

The motion passed unanimously.

X. Wendell Country Store Water

The Country Store is having problems with its well and owner Patricia (Patti) Scutari has asked the Selectboard for permission to hook up to the Town's water system.

DEP Requirements. Laurie

Laurie spoke to Doug Paine from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection about how such a hookup might work and what would be required.

- Doug said that while adding one user to Wendell's water system wouldn't change the Town's current regulation requirements, the addition of a 12-bedroom residence would.
 - a. The Town doesn't supply water to private residences, so the bedroom limit is not an issue.
- Wendell's water output is limited to 2,000 gallons a day.
- The Town currently uses about 100 gallons a day.
- Doug was concerned that the Country Store's water usage might push the Town's capacity too close to its limit: at one time it was using 1,500 gallons a day in the summertime.

- If the hookup is approved, the DEP would charge \$500 for the permit, which the Selectboard might be able to waive.

Country Store Water Usage. Patti

- The Country Store did use 1,500 gallons a day in the summer when Patti was running Deja Brew five days a week, but now that the restaurant is closed, the store uses far less.
- The store does still host special events, but on those occasions water usage is limited to maybe supplying ice for drinks and running the dishwasher twice. Food is brought in rather than cooked in the kitchen.

Discussion

- The Meetinghouse has a contract with the Town that allows it to use the Town's water; it's the only nonmunicipal building that does so.
- When asked, Patti said her water is metered, so she could easily supply a record of the Country Store's water usage for the past few years.
- Patti is willing to pay for the entire cost of the hookup.
 - a. Since the Town's well is on Cooleyville Road, which is quite close to her property, she thought (but wasn't sure) the hookup might be as simple as installing a line from the well to the store and putting in a pump to pull it in.
- Wendell should consider whether it would charge a rate for water usage and if the rate might be based on gallons per minute.
 - a. Like any enterprise that serves 25 people a day, Patti said the Country Store is considered to be a public water supplier and thus must comply with all DEP regulations, including paying to have the water tested periodically.
- She has investigated the cost of drilling another well and has a quote of \$75,000.
 - a. This includes getting a trailer on her property and paying for it to be manned for 24 hours to monitor and test the well after it has been drilled.
- The Country Store has been struggling through the winter. Patti is currently using a \$45,000 equity loan just to pay her eight employees.
- Patti thought Anna Gyorgy's suggestion about getting a cistern to store water for possible high-water-usage times in the future was interesting.

Next Steps

- Laurie will talk to with Town Engineer Jim Slavas, who has worked on building wells and septic systems, about the requirements for such a hookup.
- Glenn will consult other town administrators about what contracts they may have with private users of their public water system and will gather data from Housatonic about what they charge Wendell.

XI. Battery Storage Project. Laurie and Glenn

Now that the petition from the No Assault & Batteries in Wendell (NAB) citizens' group has been successfully processed, its bylaw will appear on the warrant for the May 1 STM.

- The request for a failsafe review letter to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office has also been submitted.
- Still outstanding: The request for assistance letter to the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities regarding the unfair burden being placed on small towns in the fight against the siting of large-scale utility siting projects.

Discussion

- Nina Keller from NAB asked if the Selectboard intended to make a statement supporting NAB at the STM, or maybe if its members would state their opinions individually, about such things as the ecology of the area, sustainability, the fact that the Borrego/New Leaf Energy project is touted as being green but isn't, and the governor's support of this kind of alternative energy.
- In response to a question from NAB's Anna Gyorgy about the purchase of two large tracts of land by New England Power Co., Bill Stubblefield from NAB said that utility company is wholly owned by National Grid.
 - a. As National Grid's transmission branch, New England Power has the right to build a battery storage facility, but only to facilitate energy transmission; it can't use it as a source of income, which is what New Leaf is doing.
- When Bill asked about procedures at the May 1 STM, Town Moderator Katie Nolan advised NAB to clearly explain their purpose, prepare printed copies of the amendment they want to introduce as well as the bylaw, and publicize ahead of time as much as possible, so people become familiar with what they're voting on.

Glenn will print 50 copies of the six-page warrant for the STM and perhaps have a QR code available so people can access the warrant on their devices.

XII. Selectboard Budget Appropriations. Laurie

Laurie asked for a clarification of the accounts and possible amendments to the amounts listed on the Selectboard's Appropriations Request sheet for fiscal year (FY) 25.

Town Report

Since the Town Report account (\$1,400) is located on Glenn's list of appropriations, it was crossed off the Selectboard's sheet.

Bulk Mailings (Town newsletter)

- Gillian said the cost of the last Town newsletter was \$600 and recommended increasing the \$1,500 budgeted for FY 25 to \$2,400.
- She intends to ask the printer what it would cost to print this quarterly publication on less expensive paper.

Mediation Account

- This account is to be used in case someone files a complaint against an employee and it goes to mediation.
- Glenn observed that even though the \$490 in the account isn't likely to cover the cost of mediation, having it in place allows funds to be added if necessary.

Recreation Committee

Carolyn noted that the Recreation Committee had a revolving fund of its own, but in case the Selectboard wanted to support one of its activities, it made sense to let the \$250 appropriation for that committee stand.

Selectboard Expenses

No one objected to keeping the Selectboard Expenses account at \$4,500.

Clerks

- Carolyn recommended changing the SB Clerk Salary account name to Recording Secretary, since Cynthia's position is salaried rather than hourly.
- The separate account for SB Clerks includes money for Joy Gorzocoski and Su. These positions are hourly.
- The Shared Clerk serves three boards, but Carolyn included this position on the Selectboard's appropriations sheet because the board appoints her.

**Gillian made a motion to approve the FY 25 Appropriations Request sheet as amended on hard copy at the meeting. Paul seconded. No discussion.
The motion passed unanimously.**

Glenn scanned the amended hard copy and added it to the meeting folder.

XIII. Assistant Building Inspector. Glenn

- Justin Gale has been hired as Wendell's building inspector and Phil Delorey's alternate inspector, Roland Jean, is resigning.
- The alternate position, which pays \$400 a year, is for someone who probably needs to have the same credentials as the regular building inspector.
- If the Selectboard wants to hire a new alternate building inspector, a job description of the position must be posted.
 - a. Justin knows someone who might be interested.

Discussion

- Phil hasn't had to use Roland for the last couple of years.
- Carolyn didn't think it was mandatory to have an alternate and suggested that the Selectboard consider talking to another town about sharing their building inspector in an emergency, for a specific amount of money.
- Phil and Justin could be asked if they thought an alternate would be necessary.
- Carolyn noted that there's a policy provision that says if there's an emergency, Wendell can fill a position without going through the normal posting requirements.

Next Steps

- Glenn will find out if other Towns have assistant building inspectors.
- Paul has gathered data regarding the nonreporting issue with Wendell's current plumbing inspector and is ready to contact that individual.

XIV. Items Not Anticipated

Deadline for Annual Town Meeting Articles

Glenn will find out what the deadline is for submitting an article for the June 6 meeting and distribute it to all the boards.

Special Town Meeting

If the Selectboard meets for urgent matters following the May 1 STM, Cynthia can take the minutes using the video recording.

XV. Adjournment

**Gillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion.
The motion passed unanimously.**

Documents

Senior Center Ramp Proposal, rec., March 18, 2024
Selectboard Meeting Minutes, April 3, 2024
Selectboard Posting and Agenda, April 17, 2024

Anelex Backup Docs, April 11, 2003

Selectboard Accounts as Amended at Meeting, April 17, 2024

Selectboard Accounts, April 17, 2024

Town of Wendell Memo, Transfer Funds from Anelex 271 to GF 2024, March 29, 2024