

**Town of Wendell**  
**Selectboard Meeting Minutes**  
**June 5, 2024, 7:00 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; Katie Nolan, Moderator; Carolyn Hochard and Phoebe Walker, Age- and Dementia-Friendly Action Plan; Ruth Mazurka and Sylvia Wetherby, FRCOG; 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**

There were no Selectboard updates or comments.

**V. Selectboard Meeting and Warrant Schedule Review**

- Warrants and meetings align this month.
- When the Selectboard meets on Tuesday, June 18 (instead of Wednesday), the warrant will be ready.

**VI. Town Coordinator Report.** Glenn Johnson-Mussad

Tax Assessment Services

- The Request for Proposal Wendell issued for assessors' services got one response by today's deadline from Wendell's current assessor service, the Regional Resource Group (RRG).
- The assessors will meet to evaluate the application.
- If RRG is considered to be responsible and responsive, the company will be offered a new three-year contract, effective July 1.

Erving-Wendell Bridge Repair Project

- Today road Commissioner Phil Delorey submitted the online grant application to fund the repairs to the Erving-Wendell bridge. Thanks to him for all his work on it.
- The application for \$125,000 was sent to the state-run Community One Stop for Growth program.

**VII. Approval of Minutes of May 29, 2024**

**Gillian Budine moved to approve the May 29, 2024, Selectboard meeting minutes. Paul Doud seconded. No discussion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

### **VIII. Monitored Fire Alarm.** Glenn

A quote has been received from Northeast Security Solutions to install a 10-zone monitored fire alarm system at the Town Hall for \$8,410. Additional charges: \$675 for a cellular fire communicator, plus \$59.98 a month for monitoring.

- The fire department thinks it would be good to have a monitored fire alarm system there, but the Finance Committee (FinCom) has recommended against it.
- The Town Hall currently has unmonitored smoke alarms.

#### **Discussion**

- Glenn said he'd ask Wendell's insurance agent, the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA), if they could identify any available grants for a monitored fire alarm system.
- Laurie DiDonato wondered if a smart doorbell system could be connected to the smoke detectors and a phone.

### **IX. Tech1 Quote.** Glenn

The Selectboard considered retaining Entre Technologies for internet technology services or switching to Tech1.

- While Entre bills on a monthly basis, Tech1 bills by a block of hours (\$4,960 for 40 hours of support).
- Tech1 appears to offer significant savings.
- Tech1's responsiveness is about equal to Entre's, but Tech1 is more approachable and friendly.
- Tech1 has said it can't immediately provide support services for Microsoft services the way Entre does, which includes managing passwords and email addresses.

#### **Discussion**

- Glenn had the impression that Entre might agree to provide Microsoft services only.
  - a. As an alternative, Wendell might be able to transition to work with Microsoft directly.
- Gillian was concerned about how Wendell might manage the security Entre currently provides, and staff's ability to handle password management.
- In order to compare prices, it would be useful to know how many support hours Wendell is currently using with Entre, Laurie said.
- Glenn observed that Entre promised a two-hour response time but rarely can deliver, and that they've been spending a lot of time trying to fix stuff remotely when an in-person visit might be more efficient.
  - a. Glenn has discussed these and other problems with Entre.

#### **Next Steps**

- Gillian and Glenn will do more research into alternative IT management solutions.
- The board considered inviting Entre to meet with them and work through what's working and what isn't.
- An electrician referred by Tech1 has been asked to schedule an appointment to move the internet wires in the Town Office Building.
- The electrician has been asked to give an estimate on the outside out-of-order light poles.

### **X. Age- and Dementia-Friendly Action Plan.** Public Health Nurse Carolyn Hochard and Director of Community Services Phoebe Walker, Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)

Carolyn and Phoebe presented highlights of a printed report, "Age-Friendly Franklin County & North Quabbin Regional Action Plan 2024-2028," developed by FRCOG in partnership with LifePath.

- The report summarized the results of a three-year survey Wendell voted to be a part of, with data taken from a few thousand people from 30 towns. The goal was to determine what the towns' priorities should be in terms of making their communities more age friendly.

- Age-Friendly Action Plan Presentation Highlights follow.

The World Health Organization and AARP divide life into eight main domains:

### 1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- Goal: make indoor and outdoor public facilities more accessible.
- Steps toward this goal can involve the following:
  - a. An inventory of public spaces, identifying the barriers in them and coming up with a priority plan.
  - b. Producing Americans with Disabilities Act audits and transition plans.
  - c. For help with accessibility issues, Wendell was invited to contact Megan Rhodes, GIS Program Manager and Planning Coordinator at the FRCOG.

### 2. Transportation

- The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) has created a transit ambassador program that sends out people to talk to towns about what the FRTA can offer them.
- There are also a lot of organizations that help seniors drive to places.

### 3. Housing

- The goal is to create more housing options using the input of seniors.
- On the municipal level, housing mostly involves town zoning rules and what housing is allowed.
- The FRCOG is trying to get the state to do more to make housing development in places like Wendell possible.
  - a. Phoebe noted that the state-initiated Affordable Homes Act doesn't really work for rural communities.
  - b. Towns in Franklin County like Sunderland and Erving have had some success in recent years with identifying pieces of land where they'd like to build something for seniors and getting a non-profit developer to bid on it.
- The survey reveals that people want some sort of pre-approved handyman because they're afraid of strangers coming into their homes.

*Paul Doud noted that there is a volunteer group in Wendell that will do projects for seniors in the spring and fall that range from stacking wood to installing staircases.*

### 4. Social Participation

- This is about reducing isolation for the most vulnerable people.
- The plan includes trying to have more intergenerational activities and getting more people involved in the Senior Center and Council on Aging activities.
- Carolyn noted that because the library is a place where intergenerational meetings occur, any health and wellness activities she holds would be at the library.
  - a. Carolyn is working with the American Heart Association to get libraries to lend out blood pressure cuffs like a book. She would appear at participating libraries and hold educational talks around their use. She would like to do so in Wendell.

## 5. Respect and Social Inclusion

- This category addresses the question of how people are treated as they age. The goal is to heighten dementia awareness. For example, as buildings are planned, are they easy to access? Are signs easy to read?
- They also offer anti-bias training regarding seniors.
- Carolyn will be offering Alzheimer's training in cooperation with the Alzheimer's Association.

## 6. Civic Participation and Employment

- This is about helping older people get work. For instance, the FRCOG can help Wendell develop a senior tax workoff program to help combat age bias in employment, just as they've done in Sudbury and Erving.
- This part of the plan makes it easier for seniors to participate in public meetings by making them more accessible. For example, are there enough microphones in public meetings so everyone can hear?

## 7. Communication and Information

- The big goal is to encourage the production of town newsletters.
- Carolyn was interested in being added to the Board of Health's email distribution list, which would put her in touch with the production schedule for Wendell's newsletter.

## 8. Health Services and Community Supports

- This is about digital equity work and digital literacy because so much of today's health care is online.
- The goal is to increase access to health care for seniors and especially get more home health aides trained.
  - a. A few years ago, LifePath had 200, 240 people on the waiting list for home health aides. Thanks to investments from MassHire, that list has been shortened to below 50.
- This category also looks at compiling lists of who needs what in an emergency.

*Gillian offered Nurse Carolyn a paragraph in the Town newsletter, maybe just introducing herself. Submission deadline: June 15.*

## **XI. Library Parking Lot Safety.** Ruth Mazurka, Sylvia Wetherby, Library Board of Trustees

Ruth and Sylvia appeared on behalf of the library trustees, who are concerned about the safety of its parking lot because of incidents involving Andy Hamilton and his pit bull.

- Andy has been parking in front of the library, usually after hours, in the closest spot to the entrance. Because he lets the dog out of the car while he's parked and it's on a very long leash, it can reach people entering and exiting the library.
- In their opinion, this has created unsafe conditions, as the following incidents illustrate:
  - a. When Maggie came out of the library one day, the dog knocked her over and she broke her wrist.
  - b. The trustees wrote a letter to the Selectboard about it, but now when Maggie comes out of the library after work, she feels unsafe because Andy and the dog are usually there.
  - c. Jim Slavas was knocked over by the dog recently, although it wasn't at the library.
  - d. Library Director Miriam Warner has said she also feels unsafe when she exits the library alone.
  - e. When Ruth knocked on the window one day to ask him to move his car because he was blocking the path, he opened the door, and the dog came at her. She interposed a canvas bag between her and the dog and wasn't physically harmed. When she asked if he could park further away, he said it's a public parking spot and he had every right to be there.
  - f. Gillian pulled up to the library one day near Andy's parking spot. It was outside of library hours. When she got out, the dog came out of the car and approached her. She got out of the way, but she was startled.

## Discussion

- The trustees might be able to solve the problem by using part of an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) grant to turn that spot nearest the entrance into a handicap-only parking.
- The Board of Health might be able to help if Andy is actually living in his car.
- Laurie considered having a conversation with the police and then holding a dog hearing.

## Next Steps

- Laurie encouraged the trustees to have people call the police if they have a concern about their safety with this man and his dog, even for past incidents, for documentation purposes.
- It was also suggested that people who are directly involved call the Leverett police at 413 548-4994 or email Chief Minckler at [policechief@leverett.ma.us](mailto:policechief@leverett.ma.us).

## XII. Economic Development Committee. Laurie

Because people are concerned about the taxes and about the things they don't want in Town, like the proposed battery storage facility, Laurie wanted to explore creating a committee to discuss the kinds of economic activities and projects Wendell's citizens would welcome.

## Discussion

- At this stage, the group could be unofficial and wouldn't have a budget.
- It might be useful for someone to attend a state-run workshop at the end of June about municipal branding.
- Laurie considered asking Nina Keller if she would be interested in forming a charter committee to define the committee's scope, tasks, and who should be on it.

## XIII. Acceptance of Town Crier Attire Donation. Glenn

Wendell's Town Crier, Kathy-Ann Becker, wants to know if the Town would like to accept a donation of her town crier costume whenever she no longer has that role.

**Laurie made a motion to accept the town crier attire donation from Kathy-Ann Becker. Gillian seconded. No discussion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

## XIV. FY25 Appointments. Gillian

The Selectboard reviewed and updated the list of Wendell town appointments for this year submitted by Town Clerk Anna Wetherby.

## Discussion

- The board eliminated some positions that were no longer active and added the names of people who didn't appear on the list.
- During the update, these questions came up:
  - a. Should people be reappointed if they hadn't yet come forward to be sworn in?
  - b. Does the constable need three assistant constables?
- There was a question about the reappointment of Plumbing Inspector Casey Bashaw, who hasn't turned over any plumbing inspection fees to Wendell for the past two years, according to Treasurer Carolyn Manley.
  - a. Casey told Paul he'd get the information the Selectboard wanted by Friday.
  - b. Carolyn Manley said that she didn't support his reappointment.
- The board made a note to delete the names of people who are paid, permanent employees—like the fire chief, town coordinator, and town building inspector—and confirm that with Town Clerk Anna Wetherby.

*The marked-up list was given to Glenn to update.*

**XV. MIT Letter of Engagement—Wendell Energy Storage Project.** Laurie

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Renewable Energy Clinic has offered to work with Wendell in the matter of New Leaf Energy’s proposal to site its battery storage facility in an environmentally sensitive, forested area in Wendell.

- They will meet with Laurie, who is willing to act as the Town’s representative, and Bill Stubblefield, who represents the No Assault & Batteries (NAB) citizens’ group, at no charge.
- The Letter of Engagement in the meeting folder has already been signed by a professor and a lecturer from MIT and has a place for Laurie’s signature.
  - a. According to the letter, the Clinic aims to “jointly brainstorm and try to build consensus on issues identified in a stakeholder assessment report” the Clinic will prepare.

**Discussion**

- Students are working on this project, which is teaching them about things like solar siting, policy, and mediation.
- The Clinic will be keeping an eye on legislation in process at the state level.
- It has carried out a similar project in Michigan.

**Laurie moved that “I can sign this Letter of Engagement with the MIT Renewable Energy Clinic and represent the Town with MIT as they proceed with their project.” Gillian seconded. No discussion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

**XVI. Country Store Water Hookup.** Laurie

Laurie gave an update on Wendell Country Store owner Patricia (Patti) Scutari’s recent request to hook up the store to the Town’s water system.

- Patti has been talking with the water operator and with Town Engineer Jim Slavas about the possibilities.
- Main impediment: There are different estimates about the Town’s water capacity
- Patti believes that the hookup would still be less expensive than digging a new well.

**Discussion**

- In Jim’s opinion, the hookup would work if the Country Store had a big water storage tank to alleviate stress on the pump during high-usage periods.
- Has Patti looked into the option of treating her well?
- The Meetinghouse was also given permission to hook up to Wendell’s water supply, but with the same water storage condition, according to Jim.
- Before the board approves the hookup, it would need to develop a policy about who is allowed to do it.
- Carolyn remarked that Wendell would probably also need to set a betterment fee (the annual cost of putting a water or sewer line in your neighborhood) plus a fee for water usage over time. Patti is willing to do both.

**XVII. Review of Old Business.** Glenn

The board reviewed the list of old business.

**Discussion**

- The RFP assessors contract and Town Meeting warrant can be removed.

- Annual Reports: The 2021 report needed to be proofed and commented on, which Glenn did recently and returned. 2022 was ready to print last month. As of today, neither has been printed.

## **XVIII. Annual Town Meeting Logistics. Glenn**

### Warrant Update

- There are two outstanding issues: the FinCom article and the one on broadband.
  1. The FinCom wanted to move the free cash into the Stabilization Fund, but no one wrote up the article because it's not normally on an Annual Town Meeting (ATM) warrant.
    - a. According to Carolyn, this has been resolved; there's enough in the Town Building Repairs line to cover it.
    - b. As a result, \$109,000 will roll over into next year's free cash and the Stabilization Fund will be \$109,000 less than the FinCom wanted.
  2. CaF2 funds are expected to be received around June 14, after the ATM.
    - a. Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II is the federal subsidy that helps Wendell pay down its broadband debt.
    - b. The funds have to be received before the Town Meeting, in order for a vote to be held, according to Springfield Bureau of Accounts Field Representative David Guzman.
    - c. The other Municipal Light Plant article on the warrant is specifically for debt services, for \$25,097, which is less than the \$137,138 that the debt service actually is. This affects the calculation for the tax rate.
- Carolyn recommends to the FinCom that the two articles about repurposing funds be voted on before Article 4. If they're voted on and pass after Article 4 is considered, the Town have to take up Article 4 again to change its amount.

### **Next Steps**

- The broadband article will be moved to the end of the meeting. Then a date can be set for a continuance. ATM Moderator Katie Nolan will check to make sure that the broadband article can then be picked up at the continued meeting.
- Since Anna will be out of the country at that time, appoint an assistant Town clerk for the meeting, if that's okay with Anna.
- The FinCom would have preferred to do an override, but that would have required two budgets: one within the debt limit and a separate one with additional, specific items listed.

### Friday Afternoon Tech Rehearsal

- Glenn recommends that the board not do a Zoom meeting; just a video recording using a laptop and the Owl.
- Test the wireless microphones to make sure they're working. Assign two people to bring them to people.
- The board will meet Friday at the Town Hall at 12:30 p.m. to set things up.

### 2023 Annual Report

The published book won't be ready, but the Selectboard can choose to print the minimal report that's required by law and provide a stapled, printed packet for the Town meeting.

### Paper Copies for the ATM

- Glenn will print 100 copies of the warrant and maybe 10 large-print ones.
- Glen will create a QR code for the individual reports and put them in OneDrive online, in a big pdf or in a folder.

- A QR code will be available so people can sign up for the final copy of the Annual Report online.
  - a. Twenty copies of a draft of the Annual Report can be printed for the meeting.
  - b. The final, printed Annual Report copies go to the library, the clerk, the state, the selectboard's office, and citizens who want a copy.
  - c. Maybe next year Selectboard Clerk Su Hoyle will be able to start in January and take over production and printing of the Annual Report.

#### Meeting Announcement

Gillian will send out a CodeRed tomorrow about the ATM, which will be held Saturday, June 8, at 10 a.m. in the Town Hall.

#### **XIX. Items Not Anticipated**

- Someone is preparing a float for the Mystic prom and has the Selectboard's okay to leave it at the Town Office building. People can also park in the parking lot the day of the prom.
- The newsletter will be printed, but Gillian will ask that it be printed on lower-quality paper.

#### **XX. Adjournment**

**Gillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:58 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion.**

**The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **Documents**

1-s2.0-S2949 ... - main, CellPress Article on Sustainability, May 31, 2023

Appointments List, May 29, 2024

Selectboard Meeting Minutes, May 29, 2024

Selectboard Posting and Agenda, June 5, 2024

Old Business, June 6, 2024

Q-1842, Tech1 Quote, May 16, 2024

Re Clinic LoA x MIT, May 9, 2024, MIT Letter of Engagement May 31, 2024

Service Coverage, Tech1, May 16, 2024

Wendell Town Hall, Fire Alarm System, May 6, 2024