

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

Present: Vice Chair Gillian Budine, Member Paul Doud

Also Present: Glenn Johnson-Mussad, Town Coordinator; Cynthia Bolling, Recording Secretary; Anna Gyorgy, Chris Queen, and Laurel Facey, NAB; Lance Wade, Faisal Ahmed, Katelyn Rioux, Robert Wilcox, Ryan Moe, and Bert Steward, National Grid; Treasurer Carolyn Manley; members of the public and press.

I. Roll Call/Call to Order

With Vice Chair Gillian Budine and Member Paul Doud present and forming a quorum, the meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

Anna Gyorgy and Chris Queen from the No Assault & Batteries (NAB) citizens' group thanked the Selectboard for its support following Barrego/New Leaf Energy's recent decision to withdraw its proposal to site a large lithium-ion battery storage facility in Wendell.

- In their opinion, the battery storage bylaw they drafted, which the Town adopted on May 1, 2024, influenced New Leaf's decision.
- Anna Gyorgy and Chris asked for a copy of the letter the Selectboard sent to the Massachusetts Attorney General (AG) when they submitted the bylaw to his office for review.
- The AG has extended the bylaw's review period until November 14, 2024.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

Gillian thanked Town Clerk Anna Wetherby for hosting a meeting of boards and committees about posting their meetings online. The website is now the official posting place.

V. Selectboard Meeting and Warrant Schedule Review

The meeting and warrant schedule alternate for the rest of the month.

VI. Town Coordinator Report. Glenn Johnson-Mussad

Glenn asked the Selectboard for feedback about a list of projects.

- Suggestions were made about ways to speed up some of them, including improvements in prioritization and document sharing.

VII. Consent Agenda

- A. Approve minutes of July 17, 2024
- B. Approve warrant for 2024 state primary
- C. Approve amended liquor license for Deja Brew.

Gillian made a motion to approve the consent agenda as written. Paul seconded. No discussion.

With Gillian and Paul voting aye, the motion passed 2-0.

VIII. National Grid Tree-Trimming Proposal. Lance Wade, National Grid Manager

Lance reviewed the tree-trimming and removal work National Grid has done in Wendell in response to past power line reliability issues following storms.

- National Grid removed Town-owned and private trees in the fall of 2022 and March of 2023. Currently, the company is trimming trees near power lines in Town.
- The company would like to do more trimming on three-phase (three-wire) lines.
- It would also like to do another assessment with an eye toward removing more trees in problem areas, after a hearing is held.

Discussion

- Gillian asked Lance to extend the company's current tree-trimming work to include a section of Farley Road.
- To make the tree-removal hearing go more smoothly this time around, and to resolve issues ahead of time, Lance would like to survey the sites of the company's proposed work with interested parties beforehand (maybe Tree Warden Cliff Dornbusch, a local forester, and inspector Ryan Kress).
- When it's time for the tree hearing, Glenn asked to be notified so he can coordinate it and ensure all Town requirements are met.

IX. Offer of Misfit Prom Dragon Decoration. Donna Horn and Alistair MacMartin

Donna and Alistair have asked the Town for permission to display the head of the dragon in the Town Office Building. Alistair has offered to make a plaque for it.

Discussion

- People talked about how and where to hang the dragon's head and about removing it occasionally for showings elsewhere.
- The dragon's head has a smoke machine inside. It also has six-foot wings that can be attached. Its body is stored in Donna's barn.
- The board was leaning toward displaying the dragon head for a year or two, then returning it to Donna.

Gillian will run the proposal by Anna Wetherby and the fire chief.

Old Home Day. Alistair

The board discussed the logistics of the September 21, 2024, event with Alistair.

X. Town Offices Yard Cleanup. Stephen Broll

Stephen and Anna Wetherby asked the Selectboard if they had any objections to their plan to remove the invasive Japanese knotweed plants from the west side of the building.

The Selectboard had no objections to the volunteer project.

XI. Fire Regionalization Study. Glenn

Shutesbury wants to know if Wendell's Selectboard is in favor of joining it when it applies for a Community Compact Cabinet (CCC) grant to study the feasibility of regionalizing fire services in Leverett, Wendell, New Salem, and Shutesbury.

- This would be the second application for a CCC on the subject. The first, led by Leverett, resulted in a report written by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management.

- This more detailed study would involve things like having experts visit the towns to gather information about such issues as call times and where it would be best to store the fire equipment.
- Glenn noted that the study would occasionally take more of his time.
- All the fire chiefs involved support the study.
 - a. While the chiefs may not necessarily think the proposed regionalization is feasible, they're very interested in obtaining the data.

The Selectboard was in favor of supporting Shutesbury's grant application.

XII. Review of Fees for Inspection Services

A. Electrical Inspection Fees. Glenn

The Selectboard reviewed inspector Gary Terroy's updated May 2024 electrical fee schedule, which he asked Wendell to adopt at a previous meeting.

Discussion

After reviewing the electrical fee schedules issued by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) in 2023 and one by New Salem in 2016, the Selectboard had further questions.

The board members will try to get answers to their particular questions and hopefully vote on the proposed fee schedule at the next meeting.

B. Plumbing and Gas Fees. Treasurer Carolyn Manley

Carolyn suggested that some of the Town's departments review their fees to determine if what's being charged is covering at least the lion's share of the expenses.

- The departments include the Board of Health, the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station, and gas and plumbing inspections.

Glenn will propose to inspectors and departments that a new fee schedule be based on the FRCOG's relevant fee schedule, plus a \$10 administrative fee and will ask for their feedback.

XIII. Review of Comp-time, Health Insurance Opt-Out and Overtime Sections from the Wendell Employment and Appointment Policy. Carolyn

After consulting with the Road Commission, Highway Crew, and Highway Clerk Joy Gorzocoski (regarding comp time and overtime), Carolyn recommended the following adjustments be made to the current policy, which was up for renewal on July 1.

- Health Insurance Opt-Out and Overtime: No changes.
- Highway Department Compensatory Time Policy: Change the way people bank their overtime as follows:
 - a. Employees should use their banked time by June 30 every year or it will be converted to regular pay.
 - b. They can't use more than 40 hours in any pay period.
 - c. Any hours worked over forty hours Monday through Friday will be paid at time and a half. Hours worked Saturday and Sunday will be paid at time and a half.

Gillian made a motion to approve the changes in the health insurance opt-out comp time and overtime review as recommended by Treasurer Carolyn Manley. Paul seconded. No discussion.

With Gillian and Paul voting aye, the motion passed 2-0.

XIV. Storm Response and Communications. Gillian

In response to Gillian's email about the need to improve communication between the Road Commission and the Fire Department, Road Commissioner Phil Delorey appears to have settled the issue at the Road Commission.

Gillian will follow up with Phil as to what the process is when there are issues with roads.

XV. Water at the Country Store. Paul

In the Selectboard's ongoing consideration of Country Store owner Patti Scutari's request to connect her business to the Town's public water supply, Town Engineer Jim Slavas suggested options that might be less expensive than digging a new well at the Country Store.

- According to Jim, connecting to the Town's water supply is still feasible, once the store meets certain requirements, like getting a water storage tank and regulating the water flow to prevent overuse.
- Research still needs to be done regarding private enterprises connecting to public water suppliers.

XVI. Location for WWII Memorial. Gillian

The Town Hall was mentioned as a possible location.

Paul will look into where and how, in consultation with Alistair and Jim if possible.

XVII. Hazard Tree. Gillian

The tree in question may be one that Cliff was reluctant to remove, due to its expense. It may also be the one that National Grid offered to remove at no charge.

Glenn will find out if Lance and Cliff are talking about the same tree. If it isn't the same tree, the Selectboard agreed that Wendell would need to get an estimate of the cost and then find the money to remove it.

XVIII. Coordination of August 21 Meeting in the Absence of the Town Coordinator. Glenn

Glenn will be on vacation from Aug. 19 to Aug. 26.

- Glenn will email the agenda by Aug. 14.
- Laurie will be asked to capture Items not Anticipated for the agenda.
- Gillian will coordinate the document folder.

XIX. Items Not Anticipated. Glenn

The Selectboard discussed the logistics of the evaluation process.

The Selectboard agreed to discuss it further at the next meeting.

XX. Executive Session to comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements (approval of executive session meeting minutes). The board will not return to open session.

Roll call vote: Paul Doud, Gillian Budine.

XXI. Adjournment

Gillian moved to adjourn the public meeting at 9:25 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion. With Gillian and Paul voting aye, the motion passed 2-0.

Documents

Current Electric Fees, Oct. 4, 2017

Proposed Electrical Fees, May 31, 2024
Selectboard Meeting Minutes, July 17, 2024
Selectboard Posting and Agenda, Aug. 7, 2024
Health Ins Opt-Out, Comp Time and Overtime Review, Aug. 7, 2024
Dept. Fee Review Info, July 19, 2024
Draft Interim Findings and Recommendations, Leverett Fire Study
FRCOG Electrical Fee Schedule, 2023
Img 4973 (Misfit Prom Dragon Decoration)
New Salem Wiring Permit Fees, March 2016