

Town of Wendell
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
February 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, Selectboard Clerk; Treasurer Carolyn Manley; Anna Gyorgy and Laurel Facey from the No Assault & Batteries in Wendell citizens' group; members of the public and press.

I. Roll Call/Call to Order

With Vice Chair Gillian Budine and Selectboard member Paul Doud present, the meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

II. Announcements

There were no announcements.

III. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

IV. Selectboard Updates and Comments

Gillian Budine on Road Closures

According to Road Commissioner Phil Delorey and Leverett Police Chief Scott Minckler, there will be road closures for line work on Friday, Feb. 9 on Lockes Village Road, from the intersection of Lockes Hill to West Street, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- Phil and Chief Minckler anticipate two or three more days of road closures the following week.
- Gillian will put out a Code Red notice tomorrow.
- Chief Minckler will contact the school regarding bus issues.

V. Selectboard Meeting and Warrant Schedule Review

The meeting and warrant schedules are on alternating weeks this month.

Discussion

Town Clerk Anna Wetherby has completed web training and has asked for meeting notices to be submitted a week before the meeting.

- Starting next week, Town Coordinator Glenn Johnson-Mussad will begin to test out a new workflow schedule for the Selectboard.
 - a. A draft of the agenda for the Feb. 21 meeting will be posted the Wednesday before the meeting instead of 48 hours in advance.
 - b. Consequently, the list of Items not Anticipated may grow longer.

VI. Project Coordinator Report. Phil Delorey

Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station (WRATS) Landfill Capping Project

- While Phil is still waiting for the results of the well tests, there's no indication that there's any significant pollution.
- The landfill project will need additional funding.
- The state has asked that a three-to-one slope be put in on the downhill side of the landfill, but that will cost a lot more money, so Phil will try to convince them to allow the Town to put in a lesser slope.
- The additional topsoil required will be in the \$100,000 range.

Community One Stop for Growth Program

The state runs the One Stop program through an online portal that gives applicants information about grants available for municipal Infrastructure and community development projects.

- On Monday, Phil, Glenn, and Treasurer Carolyn Manley attended a webinar about it.
- They'll meet again Friday to discuss what projects might be good matches for the program. Prospective projects might include:
 - a. Farley Road, an old road that will require a deep excavation.
 - b. A senior housing development for the Town.
- The next step will be to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI), a short form that will let applicants know what funding is available.

The Erving-Wendell Bridge Project

- Due to some financial issues, Erving hasn't signed the interlocal agreement yet.
- Phil estimates repairs won't begin for another three or four years, given the funding and engineering issues involved.

Discussion

- Glenn and Phil agreed that the Erving-Wendell bridge project might be a good candidate for the One Stop program, especially because the state favors such regionalization projects.
- Glenn considered getting Erving Town Administrator Bryan Smith's approval on an EOI for the bridge repair, listing Erving as a partner in the project.
- The application deadline for One Stop is May 6.

VII. Consent Agenda

The Selectboard considered the consent agenda.

- A. Approve the Selectboard meeting minutes of January 17, 2024
- B. Appoint Jan Stiefel to the Council on Aging
- C. Appoint Linda Hickman to the Council on Aging

Paul moved to approve the consent agenda as written. Gillian seconded. No discussion.

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

The appointment slips will be signed and put in Anna's box.

VIII. Audubon Campership Program. Glenn

As a nonprofit, the Massachusetts Audubon Society doesn't pay taxes but had agreed to commit some of its resources to Wendell instead, in the form of a campership (a scholarship) to one of its camps.

- In past years, kids were invited to enter an essay contest, with the campership going to the winner.
- However, that camp is no longer in operation. Also, lately the number of applicants for the contest has been as low as one or even none.
- Should the Selectboard disband the campership program and ask Audubon to put the funds into educational activities for all students instead?
- When Glenn discussed this proposal with Audubon earlier, they thought it was a good idea.

Discussion

According to Gillian, the Swift River School is in favor of having Audubon conduct an educational program but is trying to figure out if Audubon staff should come to the school or if the program should take place at an Audubon location.

Gillian moved to disband the Audubon campership program at this point in time and to redirect that program's resources to support programming at the Swift River School in New Salem, until a change is made. Paul seconded. No discussion.

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

IX. Inspection Program. Glenn

Phil Delorey has announced his resignation as Wendell's building inspector effective April 30. Glenn reviewed the options for his replacement.

- Hire the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), which runs an inspection program.
 - a. The Finance Committee is in favor of doing this.
- Hire an individual.
 - a. A few days ago, Phil sent Glenn an email about an individual who comes highly recommended. He is interested in working for the towns of Wendell, Warwick, and New Salem.
- Does the Selectboard want to use the FRCOG program or post the job, review the applicants, and hire an individual?

Discussion

- Phil worked for the FRCOG's inspection program before he became Wendell's building inspector in 1988 and highly recommended it for its steady, experienced staff and cost, which seems to be comparable to employing an individual.
- According to a document supplied by FRCOG Director of Municipal Services Bob Dean, the fee for a building inspector for Wendell would be \$4,600 for fiscal year (FY) 24, prorated if the Town joins mid-fiscal year.
 - a. This includes collecting fees and issuing permits for electrical, gas, and plumbing.
 - b. There's an additional one-time fee of \$3,000 to convert Wendell's assessing data to the FRCOG's software.
- Paul noted that he appreciated the personal attention Phil has given to Wendell residents since he took on the job.
- Currently, the wiring and plumbing inspectors get paid from the fees they collect. The Town gets \$10 for each permit they issue.
- The building inspector is currently paid a salary, however; the fees he collects go to the Town.
 - a. Carolyn noted that the building inspector's salary is about \$10,000. Phil is also separately paid about \$7,000 as project manager.

- b. The FRCOG staff retains the fees they collect.
- c. The following building permit fees went into Wendell's General Fund: In FY 21, \$7,730; in FY 22, \$6,299, and \$8,498 in FY 23.
- d. Building permit fees are generally \$150 per square ft. for a new house for Wendell vs. \$200/sq. ft. for comparable construction with the FRCOG.
- e. Phil noted that he only charges a straight \$25 building permit fee for minor do-it-yourself owner projects, while the FRCOG might charge a few hundred dollars for that (at the high end).
- Glenn noted that if the board wanted to hire an individual, if the position were posted right away, they would still have a few weeks to find applicants before the board's March 6 meeting.
 - a. At that time, applicants could be interviewed, which would still leave enough time to go with the FRCOG if the board couldn't find an individual for the position.
- When considering the performance of the current electrical, plumbing, and gas inspectors, Carolyn noted that she hasn't received any turnovers from Wendell Plumbing Inspector Casey Bashaw since 2022, so she doesn't know if building permits are being collected.
 - a. Phil noted that his paperwork shows that the inspections are taking place, however.
 - b. This is an appointed position, so the Selectboard is technically the supervisor.
- The FRCOG program uses an online application process.
 - a. The program is based in Greenfield, so applicants who can't file online might have to go there.
- Wendell can pick which of the FRCOG plumbing, electrical, and building inspection services it wants to use.

Next Steps

- Gillian suggested that the Selectboard send a note to Casey Bashaw about the lack of paperwork.
- The Selectboard will draft a building inspector job description that makes it clear that it's a part-time, unbenefited position, and that the person must also be the zoning enforcement officer.
- Phil will work with the Selectboard to figure out the salary and put together a job description by the end of the week.

Gillian moved to appoint Paul Doud to approve the job description for the Wendell building inspector position. Paul seconded.

Discussion

Once the job description has been finalized, Paul will send it around for review and get it posted.

The motion was amended to add the new wording as written above.

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

X. Incident Command System Training. Glenn

Fire Chief Joe Cuneo has asked that Glenn and the Selectboard take ICS training via a PowerPoint presentation.

- The goal of the ICS is to provide an operational guide for emergency responders, with an emphasis on a clear chain of command.
- Glenn thinks that the training would be more effective if it were an interactive experience, with everyone attending at the same time.

The Selectboard agreed to pencil in a session for the morning of Feb. 22 or find another time slot if Chair Laurie DiDonato can't make that date.

XI. Battery Storage Bylaw. Glenn

The No Assault & Batteries in Wendell (NAB) citizens' group has submitted an update to the bylaw they've been working on since October, which opposes the proposed Borrego/New Leah Energy lithium-ion battery storage facility in a forested, environmentally sensitive area of Wendell.

- Options: The Selectboard can submit the bylaw to Town Counsel for review first or just put it on a warrant for a Special Town Meeting.

Discussion

- Anna Gyorgy from the NAB reported that this updated version addresses Laurie's concern about whether the bylaw presented at the last meeting would be considered a zoning bylaw rather than a general bylaw.
 - a. The new version has one major change that makes it a general bylaw: It establishes the creation of a licensing board composed of members from different Town boards as well as the Planning Board.

Gillian made a motion to send the most recent battery storage bylaw to Town Counsel to be reviewed and to gather any feedback that Town Counsel has. Paul seconded. No discussion.

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

XII. Items Not Anticipated

FY 24 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant

Glenn asked the Selectboard to approve the \$6,762.47 grant that Joe Cuneo got for the Wendell Fire Department to purchase firefighter safety equipment.

Gillian made a motion to approve the grant for the fire department as presented. Paul seconded. No discussion.

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

Wendell Country Store and Deja Brew Licenses

The Selectboard approved the licenses previously. Glenn asked the Selectboard to sign one additional document.

Town Hall Rental

A group is renting the Town Hall for a celebration of life and requests a fee waiver.

Gillian made a motion to accept the fee waiver for the memorial services at the Town Hall. Paul seconded. No discussion.

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

XIII. Adjournment

Gillian moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:09 p.m. Paul seconded. No discussion.

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

Documents

Selectboard Meeting Minutes, Jan. 17, 2024

Selectboard Posting and Agenda, Feb. 7, 2024

Inspection Services Specs, Jan. 25, 2024

A&B Bylaw, Jan. 26, 2024

Finance Committee Recommendation, Feb. 6, 2024
Audubon Camp Cancellation Notice, Jan. 19, 2024
Department of Fire Services Award Letters, Merged, Part291, Feb. 7
FY 2024 Merged Contracts, Part 291, Feb. 7, 2024
Grant Agreement Scope of Work and Budget, Merged, Part291, Feb. 7, 2024
Wendell 1 Contractor Authorized Signature, Feb. 7, 2024
Wendell Battery Energy Storage System General Bylaw, Feb. 7, 2024