

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
December 14, 2023

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in regular session on Thursday, December 14, 2023, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Present: William Sayre, Denise Banister (also Assessor) and Paul Wetzel

Also present: Tariq Abu-Jaber (MVP Public Safety Complex grant administrator), Bev Bullock (Library Director), Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jonathan Flagg (Building Inspector), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

Assessors: Robin Everett, Glen Everett

Mill River Greenway: Nick Dines, Gaby Immerman

South Main Street residents and others: Mark Albright, Amy Bisbee, Madelyn Breen, Michael Bullock, Cora Lee Drew, Libby Jalbert, Ned Jalbert, George Linscott. Mary Moriarty, Joe Pasternak, Mia Pasternak, Gerry Shattuck, Patrick Sumner, Jim Weigang

1. Tax Classification hearing – The public hearing to determine whether all classes of property would be taxed at the same rate opened at 4:04 p.m. This hearing is held every year to see if commercial, industrial, residential and personal property would all be taxed at the same rate. Assessor Robin Everett explained that a previous hearing, held on December 5, was based on a form that contained an error and so was invalid, but the numbers are still the same. If there were a split rate and the commercial rate were increased by the maximum allowable, the residential rate would go down only minimally and the commercial rate would go up by a large amount – a burden on the businesses for only minor savings for residential taxpayers. The Assessors recommended keeping a single tax rate, so as not to create an undue burden. The public hearing closed at 4:06 p.m. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to maintain a single tax rate for all classes of property for Fiscal 2024. **So voted** (3-0).

2. Building Inspector – Building Inspector Jonathan Flagg made his regular report and presented the permit listing for building permits and electrical permits for the quarter just ending. Fees totalled \$12,575 for just over \$4 million of construction. The Public Safety Complex was completed and received its Certificate of Occupancy. He followed up on the properties mentioned at the last meeting. At the one on Ashfield Road, he had them secure a couple of walls so it is now stable. Regarding the one with the pool, he has sent a letter and hasn't heard anything. He will be up again in the next few days.

3. Haydenville Library, M.J. Moran donation – The Library Director and Trustees have been working on reinvigorating the Haydenville Library, and Jim Moran offered to donate HVAC equipment and supply the labor to install it, in order to deal with the buildup of moisture and to improve ventilation. He will be ready to start next week. The Board gratefully accepted his generous offer and commented that Jim Moran always has the best interests of town at heart. Library Director Bev Bullock noted that while there is no visible mold in the basement, the floor is dirt and retains moisture. A suggestion was made to put plastic on the floor, with gravel on top.

4. Mill River Greenway and South Main Street –

MassDOT Bridges Project memo – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo read the memo from MassDOT about the Bridges Project (project number 607675), the replacement of the Bridge Street Bridge and the Haydenville Library Bridge and the improvements on South Main Street. It said they had received communication from property and business owners expressing objection to the current design, and it requested a formal position from the Select Board specifically concerning the cross-section details of South Main Street. The project is on pause until they hear from the town. Nick noted that when they announced the 25% design hearing, the Bridge Street bridge was still open; it is now closed.

Substantive comments – The neighbors would like to see a two-lane two-way bridge on Bridge Street, as soon as possible, leaving the bridge at the library end unchanged, adding a 10-foot shared-use path between the library bridge and Route 9 for pedestrian and bicycle use, and leaving the rest of South Main Street between the bridges unchanged, except for “sharrow” markings, arrows indicating sharing the road the bicycles. The telephone pole in the middle of Bridge Street could be moved. They were opposed to having South Main Street be a one-way street and to closing the library bridge. VHB engineers developed a bicycle matrix with four options and the advantages and disadvantages of each (off-road: Shared Use Path, Separated Bicycle Lane; on-road: Bicycle Lanes, Sharrows). A comment noted that a one-way street would force the large trucks and buses coming down Walpole hill to make an awkward left turn on South Main Street toward the library bridge.

Procedural (Bridges project and Lower South Main Street project) – Mill River Greenway recommended a 30-day comment period, soliciting and collecting feedback from all the players, including Highway and Police, and then at the January 11 Select Board meeting signing a memo to MassDOT. Another suggestion was to allow MassDOT to hear from everyone, do a process that would work out something that would align with most people. Some information is still needed, especially from MassDOT: how wide the Bridge Street bridge is and whether the project is federally funded so that there is a minimum width; whether Transportation bond funds can be used for sharrows – specifically whether sharrows can be considered off-road bicycle accommodation – and what other restrictions there are. One suggestion was to write several letters to MassDOT, using this one if this information is received, using that one if that information is received. Another suggestion was to have one or two or three intense meetings with representatives of the various groups to hammer out a choice. A related suggestion was to find out what all agree on and then address the rest; identify the remaining unknowns and get answers. It was noted that on the Mountain Street project, MassDOT shifted its position with input from residents, and that there are still years to go before ground is broken on the South Main Street and Bridges projects.

South Main Street field visit with VHB – There was a site visit on December 2 and VHB engineers came and marked what would be a shared use path, and provided notes on the discussion. Concerning the \$2.39 million funding for the lower South Main Street project, the town is waiting for information from MassDOT about limitations on the funding.

5. Hazard Mitigation Plan funding – Emergency Management Director Denise Banister reported that the town was awarded a grant from FEMA to update the town’s Hazard Mitigation Plan, which will pave the way for grants for fixing the hazards identified. The town has worked with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on the plan in the past. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the contract for the grant for Hazardous Mitigation Plan update for \$19,800. **So voted** (3-0).

6. Senior Volunteer Tax Relief Program – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to authorize the chair to approve the candidate for the Senior Volunteer Tax workoff program. **So voted** (3-0).

7. Appointment – Zoning Board of Appeals – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to appoint Dean Acheson as alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals, term to expire the end of June 2024. **So voted** (3-0).

8. Licenses –

Annual renewal – The Administrative Assistant presented the list of licenses for renewal. All the paperwork is in order. One of the licensees is not caught up on taxes but has a payment plan with the Collector. If by any chance they don't pay, a lien could be placed on the property and the license could be suspended. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to approve the following licenses:

Liquor Licenses –

Restaurants – All Alcohol

Dot's Golf LLC

Restaurants – Wine and Malt

A-1 Hilltown Pizza, LLC

LLL Restaurant, LLC, dba Panda Garden

Retail Package Stores – All Alcohol

Ambika, Inc., dba Main Street Package Store

Caroline Smith and Micheline Champagne, dba Pat's

Retail Package Stores – Wine and Malt

Williamsburg Market, Inc.

Farmer Brewery Pouring Permit

Brewmasters Brewing Services, LLC, dba Burgy Brews

General-On-Premises

The Yellow Barn, Inc.

Clubs

American Legion Post 236

Burgy Bullets Snowmobile Club, Inc.

Common Victuallers

A-1 Hilltown Pizza, LLC

Bread Euphoria, Inc.

Brewmasters Brewing Services LLC, dba Burgy Brews

Dot's Golf, LLC

Melissa Krueger dba Elbow Room Café and Roasters

Pleasant St. Donuts LLC, dba Dunkin Donuts

Local Burger, Inc., dba Local Burgy

LLL Restaurant, LLC, dba Panda Garden

Williamsburg Snack Bar, LLC

Class II Used Car Dealers

Cichy's Garage, Inc.

Lorin DeLisle, dba DeLisle's Auto Body

Depot Motor Sales, LLC

Robert Ross, dba Ross Bros

Worthington Air Automotive, Inc.

Juke Box

American Legion Post 236

Dot's Golf, LLC

So voted (3-0).

Live entertainment – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) for Brewmasters Brewing Service and Dot’s Golf (Brewmasters – Live Music, January 1 thru June 30, seven days a week, Monday thru Saturday 10 a.m. to 12 midnight, Sunday 12 noon to 12 midnight, indoors or outdoors, weather permitting, outdoor entertainment by 10 p.m.) (Dot’s Golf – Band or D.J., 1-10 p.m. January 1 thru June 30, seven days a week), and state Sunday permits. **So voted** (3-0).

9. Public Safety Complex Solar PV agreement with Solect Energy – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the latest version of the agreement with Solect Energy for a solar PV system at the Public Safety Complex. Lawyers for the two sides have not come to complete agreement. Tariz Abu-Jaber, the town’s administrator for the MVP grant funding the project, described one area of disagreement, a markup of Solect’s costs if the town should cancel, saying the risk was minuscule. Other discussion included some items excluded by the contract (charges for interconnection and upgrading, and providing temporary power) and things not mentioned in the contract (e.g., drainage from the panels, and state and federal reimbursements). It was also pointed out that the town is the first to use this method of procurement and other towns are waiting to see our experience. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the contract with Solect Energy as received. **So voted** (3-0).

10. Highway surplus – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to declare the 1983 International Plow Truck and the 2023 Chevy Silverado 8 foot truck bed as surplus. **So voted** (3-0). They will be listed on Municibid. The truck bed was replaced by a flatbed on the new truck.

11. Broadband letter of support – Comcast is applying for a Mass. Broadband Institute Broadband Infrastructure Gap Networks grant to bring existing lines to doorsteps, at no cost to the town. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to sign the letter of support to the MBI Infrastructure Grant program. **So voted** (3-0).

12. Mass Save Incentive Application Closeout – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo explained that there are Mass Save reimbursements for installing energy saving devices at the Public Safety Complex. They will go to the town’s general revenue. **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to authorize the chair to sign the closeout documents. **So voted** (3-0).

13. Liaisons with department heads – The updated list of liaisons was distributed. It was noted that some Board members have a close relationship with the department heads and check in all the time. For others it’s a way to reach out and get to know individual ones.

14. Finance Committee vacancy – Paul Wetzel expects to resign from Finance at the end of December. Two people so far have expressed interest. A joint meeting with Finance is needed for making an appointment. Other topics can be addressed at the same meeting – e.g., a six-month check-in about operations, how to approach the FY25 budget season, how the two committees will interact and work together, and what to do about salaries.

15. Town Administrator’s report – Public Safety Complex – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the most recent requisition from Forish Construction, through the end of the November, total billing at 99%. The architect and OPM have both signed off on it. The generator is slated to be repaired in the next

couple of weeks. There are still some minor things not yet resolved at the Public Safety Complex.

EDM Studio – Nick presented EDM Studio’s draft renovation study. They will be putting together a proposal of critical needs. Nick recommended that the town continue working with EDM Studio and get construction documents for an ADA compliant restroom, windows, and gutter roof system. In addition the town may want them to do an ADA assessment, e.g., a lift for the stage. He clarified the 30% rule. If interior changes exceed 30% of the building’s value, it needs a fire suppression system. Roof and windows are exterior so do not count in the 30% calculation, though of course are also constrained by available funds. Gutters and paint can be done separately from the roof. The roof has no signs of failure but is approaching the end of its life so should be done in the next three years. He recommended starting with the restroom and windows.

MVP Monthly Reports – Two updated monthly reports were filed, for the Public Safety Complex and the Watershed. These are grants for reimbursement at the end of the fiscal year.

MVP expressions of interest – The town submitted two expressions of interest for FY25 action grants, one for funding the Comprehensive Plan, one for funding the solar PV system at the Anne T. Dunphy School.

16. Minutes – **Motion** was made and seconded (DB/PW) to accept the minutes of November 16 as presented. **So voted** (3-0).

17. Warrant – Chair William Sayre will review and sign the warrant. Payroll warrant WP24-13 for \$113,892.08 and expense warrant W24-13 for \$387,836.03, payable 12/20/23.

Documents used

- Agenda and notes
- Tax classification information
- Building permit listing
- MassDOT Bridges Project memo
- VHB bicycle matrix memo
- VHB notes on South Main Street site visit
- South Main Street residents memos
- Hazard Mitigation Plan update contract
- Senior Volunteer Tax Relief application
- Letter of interest
- Licenses
- Solect Energy contract
- MBI Broadband Infrastructure letter of support
- Liaison list
- EDM Studio renovation study
- MVP monthly reports
- Minutes
- Warrant

Adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk