

Minutes
Williamsburg Board of Selectmen
February 13, 2024

The members of the Board of Selectmen met in rescheduled regular session on Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at the town office. The chair called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Present: Denise Banister and Paul Wetzel

Present on Zoom: William Sayre

Also present: Nick Caccamo (Town Administrator), Jason Connell (Fire Chief), Charles Dudek (on Zoom), Kenneth Taylor (Fire Administrative), Eleanor Warnock (Administrative Assistant)

1. Fire Department – Fire Chief Jason Connell gave his regular report. In calendar 2023 there were a record number of incidents – 639 calls for service, including several weather events. They responded to 22 fires, and half of the total incidents were sick person calls. Dollar losses from building fires came to \$73,900, with potential loss over \$1 million. They responded to mutual aid 51 times and received mutual aid 6 times. They moved into the new building in December, and things are starting to come together. The generator was repaired and seems to be working well. There have been issues with the propane boiler, the air compressor, and sensors on lights. A firefighter turning 65 this year has requested an extension to work to age 70. This involves approval at town meeting and approval by the state. They wash the apparatus inside the bays. The new rescue truck is expected in April. The payroll is running high because of the increase in calls. The training budget is holding up well. They will be looking to purchase turnout gear since a number of sets were purchased 10 years ago and will need to be replaced. The FY24 Firefighter Safety Grant came in at just over \$8,000 for equipment, including a ventilation fan and two ice water rescue suits, but less than the amount requested. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to accept the grant from the Commonwealth Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Department of Fire Services in the amount of \$8,326.75 for purchasing equipment for firefighters, and to authorize the acting chair to sign. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye.) In his new full-time Fire Chief position, he has been working long hours. He commented on the great working relationship with the Highway Department and Police Department.

2. Appointments –

Resignation – Open Space – **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to accept the resignation of Peter (Rusty) Korotev from the Open Space Committee. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

Council on Aging Advisory Board – **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to move Linda Gibbon to Associate member of the COA Advisory Board, and to move Toni Boughton to full member, terms to expire June 30, 2024. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

Planning Board – **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to appoint Darlene Stone-Adair to the Planning Board, term to expire June 30, 2028. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

3. ARPA (American Rescue Plan) funds update – Amount spent to date is \$358,569, with some other items ongoing or near completion, including broadband extension, comprehensive plan, assessors field audit, Meekins gutters, town office building scan, and a flammable materials cabinet. With the new amounts and the earmarks for planned spending, the town is estimated to

have overspent by about \$4000, though there are expected to be savings on items that have been overestimated. Upcoming are the construction documents (\$30,000) for town office repairs for restroom, painting, windows at the front, and awning, and then the actual construction costs (\$100,000 plus some funds from Town Meeting); the painting of Old Town Hall (estimated at \$70,000); the water/sewer work on South Main Street (\$100,000); and a pavement management study (\$15,000).

4. Chapter 90 – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the Chapter 90 reimbursement request for work on Adams Road. The total for the project is \$307,044.24, with this final portion coming to \$216,126.08. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) for the Board to sign the State Aid Reimbursable Programs request for \$216,126.08. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

5. Highway Department pay raise – The Highway Superintendent had reported that the new employee has been here for six months and is working out well, and he requested a \$1 pay increase to \$26.12 per hour. Board members were in favor of this and also discussed the need for a broader wage framework. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to increase the pay rate of highway department employee Darren Pensivy by \$1 per hour to move him to \$26.12 per hour, effective on his six month anniversary. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

6. Public Safety Complex MVP Solar PV – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reported that the site visit scheduled for today was rescheduled for Friday, February 16. The borings revealed some poor soil conditions for the footings of the solar canopy over the parking lot – high water table and sandy soil.

7. National Grid interconnection service agreement – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo presented the agreement as the next step for accepting solar PV to the grid. The impact study, funded by grant funds, was very favorable, with improvements also funded by grant funds. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the Interconnection service Agreement with National Grid for the Public Safety Complex solar project for \$4,804. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).

8. EDM Studio town office renovation proposal – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo reminded the Board that EDM Studio had done a review of the town office building and presented a menu of design options. For \$30,000 the town could have construction documents for removal and replacement of front-facing windows, exterior painting, accessible toilet room and removal and replacement of the front entrance canopy. The work would be done from ARPA funds (\$100,000) plus some Town Meeting funds. A concern was raised that the canopy as it exists may not be a good design and EDM Studio could be asked for other options. Concerns were also raised about the assumptions expressed in the agreement, such as lack of lead paint and asbestos and the need to borrow a ladder. Nick will follow up with them but the Board was comfortable moving ahead. **Motion** was made and seconded (PW/DB) to authorize the chair to sign the proposal from EDM Studio for production of construction documents for the town office building. **So voted** (PW aye, DB aye, WS aye).
The Bond Building scan of the town office building, a three-dimensional modeling of the building and a critical piece for the construction documents, has been completed and is available in their portal.

9. FY25 budget – Town Administrator Nick Caccamo gave an overview of the budget process. He shared the FY25 tracking sheet with numbers for FY23 and FY24 filled in for comparison. Departments have been asked to complete their preliminary estimates. State cherry sheet estimates are up 7% from last year, and the tax levy calculation is up significantly because of new growth due to solar. He described the tax levy calculation (the previous year's levy limit plus that multiplied by 2.5% plus new growth), resulting in \$7.55 million, the maximum amount the town can tax residents. The assessed value is \$403.8 million, and the levy ceiling is \$10 million. It was noted that the town's budget is driven by the school's costs. Nick reminded the Board that the borrowing for the Public Safety Complex was by debt exclusion so is outside the 2.5% limitation, as is school debt. Short-term borrowing for the fire rescue truck will start in FY25.

School budget – Selectman Paul Wetzel reported that he had attended the school budget meeting. There have been problems with poor accounting of state money coming in – no malfeasance, just something that needs to be corrected. But as a result, the regional school administrators don't know just how much money the school district has. The regional office plans to hire experts in municipal finance for \$24,000 a month to work it out. The current preliminary school budget, not counting discretionary funds, has Williamsburg's share of the budget at \$285,000 more than last year, or 15%. He added that Williamsburg has a lot of school choice students coming in and school choice students going out. It was suggested that the regional school committee members could be invited to a Board meeting.

Highland Ambulance – The Highland Ambulance assessment is increasing by \$36,000, mostly due to increase in pay rates in order to be competitive. Ambulance call numbers are up.

Joint meeting with Finance Committee – The upcoming Feb 22 joint meeting will include appointing a new person to Finance Committee, electing a new Finance chair, talking about the FY25 budget, and starting to talk about employee compensation, including possibly appointing a working group.

10. Town Administrator's report –

Public Safety Complex – The town has received the final requisition from the construction contractor, contingent on the generator, which is now working. A security system is still needed. The signage working group is in process. The building will need annual maintenance of its systems. The Owners Project Manager is continuing to work on goodwill. The fence removal hasn't been arranged yet. The bids for the site planting have come in, the low bid being \$31,275. Several residents have volunteered to oversee.

MassDOT Mountain Street hearing (project #607231) – The MassDOT information session was held February 8, and it was well attended and well received. The current design is a 24' wide roadway, roughly the same width as now. They had been granted accommodations for bikes on a 4' wide shoulder, with two 12' vehicle travel lanes. Construction of the two-year \$15 million project is set for FY27 or FY28. Residents are pleased. MassDOT had changed their design significantly on the request of the neighbors. At some point the town will need to pursue easements, which involves checking the land titles and having two professional assessments of fair market value in accordance with the state's strict easement procedures.

Old Town Hall painting site visit – The optional site visit was February 7 and was reasonably well attended. Bruce Tolda is providing some expertise. Bids are due on Thursday February 15.

MVP Expression of Interest meeting – There was a meeting with MVP, the Town Administrator, chair of Planning Board, and chair of Energy Committee, to talk about expressions of interest for

solar PV on the Dunphy School and for funding for the town's comprehensive plan. MVP was concerned about how the town would meet the match, especially if a project is in the millions of dollars. There also seemed to be some confusion about what plan was being discussed, the town comprehensive plan or a different MVP review process.

MVP Watershed grant – Selectman Paul Wetzell reported that there will be a meeting on March 11 with the Emergency Manager, Highway Superintendent, some contractors and PVPC, to look at possible bylaw changes that would improve town resilience in the response to future changing climate changes.

Complete Streets grant – The town has been awarded \$500,000 for the switchback, representing much of the approximately \$700,000 needed for the project. The Board voted at the previous meeting to submit a MassTrails grant for the remainder.

Green Communities – The town was not awarded a decarbonization grant for the Meekins Library. The application was rushed in light of the failed mini-splits and was missing key components – engineering, estimated at \$30,000, and weatherization. There may be a grant opportunity to pay for the engineering. The heating system is adequate, but the cooling depended on the mini-splits. Fans have been discussed for cooling this summer.

Time off – The Town Administrator plans to take a personal day on February 14.

Board of Health accounts – The Board of Health was concerned that one of their accounts seemed to be missing. It turns out that the money has always been there, but the report just didn't capture the full picture.

Free cash – Free cash is not yet certified. The Accountant is working with the former Accountant. The audit is coming. There is an issue with reconciling the turnovers. There will be a meeting next week with the Accountant, Treasurer, Town Administrator, and Select Board chair. It was noted that there was a massive restructuring of the financial team earlier this year.

Meeting – Board members commented that the hybrid meeting seemed to work well, allowing one Board member to attend remotely.

11. Warrant – Selectman Denise Banister had previously reviewed and signed the warrant. Payroll warrant WP24-17 for \$136,198.98 and expense warrant W24-17 for \$563,522.29, payable 2/14/23.

Documents used

Agenda and notes

Fire department report

Appointment letters of interest

ARPA spending summary

Chapter 90 reimbursement request

National Grid interconnection service agreement

EDM Studio proposal

FY25 tracking sheet

Warrant

Adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Approved:

Clerk