

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting, June 14, 2022

Hilary Weeks, Rebecca Coletta, and Patrick Williamson were present. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The minutes of May 24th and June 8th were accepted as submitted.

Highway Department

Walter Jennings, Highway Superintendent, reported River Road is open. The bridge should pass MassDot inspection.

The superintendent inquired about Juneteenth. The Board has not addressed Juneteenth as paid holiday for employees. After discussion of the matter, Hilary move not to accept Juneteenth as a paid holiday for employees at this time pending further research and education including budgetary impact. The motion was not seconded. Rebecca moved to accept Juneteenth as a holiday and subsequently withdrew the motion. Pending further research, Plainfield employees will work next Monday.

Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 44:33B end of fiscal year transfers were discussed; Machinery Upkeep, Highway Salaries, and Winter Roads are overdrawn. The General Highway account has sufficient funds to provide for the overages. Hilary moved to approve the transfer of funds from General Highway to Machinery Upkeep, Winter Roads, and Highway Salaries. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was approved.

Co-Response Clinicians

Chief Beth Bezio, Ashfield, addressed the Board about the up-tick in mental health issues both locally and nationally. A \$200,000 grant has been awarded to provide a clinician to respond to mental health crisis in eleven area towns. The grant will cover the clinician training, wages, uniforms, etc. An officer and cruiser will be required from each town one day per week (11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Monday - Friday) to transport and work with the clinician. Special uniforms, not police uniforms, will be worn by both the clinician and the officer assigned to work with the clinician. Chief Bezio stated the Ashfield PD is the base of operations.

Questions concerning the remaining 16 weekday hours, weekend hours, scenarios when the clinician is occupied and another call comes in, and start dates were addressed. The CSO mobile response team in Greenfield is available if necessary.

The grant start date is anticipated for July 1, 2022. Officers shifts prior to that are not covered by the grant. Fuel costs for the required cruiser is not a grant eligible expense. Chief Bezio is the grant administrator. Accurate record keeping is the responsibility of the clinician. The Greenfield program has been successful in diverting transport to the ER. The grant award letter is anticipated soon.

MLP/Broadband

MLP Manager Kimberly has received one interested applicant for the position of Broadband Manager. She asked how the Board wished to proceed with the interview process. Hilary suggested Kimberly and Brian take the lead on the interviews and make a recommendation to the Board at the July 12, 2022 meeting. A response to the proposed Broadband Bylaw is still being researched by Town Counsel.

Kimberly also spoke to centralizing administration instead of several positions. The Stripe reconciliation process was discussed. The possibility of the broadband manager taking on the reconciliation process was discussed. Kimberly believes it is a management issue not a budgetary issue. Hilary will consult the treasurer. It was noted the figures provided by Westfield Gas & Electric do not match bank deposits.

American Recovery Plan Funds for Broadband are being used to connect new customers, upgrading the hub alarm system, and the redundancy and resiliency project.

Community Policing Survey

Patrick referenced the previous discussion concerning the establishment of a process for managing the working groups recommendations. Hilary suggested members of the Board marking up the recommendations and reporting back to the Board. As the police department liaison she is willing to discuss the recommendations with Chief Litchfield. Hilary stated the Select Board should not facilitate community meetings; this is a supervisory issue.

Patrick referenced the Open Meeting Law noting recommendations are beyond the initial responses. He added the recommendations have to be broken up into manageable parts.

Rebecca said it's fine for the liaison to meet with the chief and hopes specific recommendations will be discussed. She added the agenda should reflect specific recommendations scheduled for discussion.

Resignation/Appointment

Hilary move to accept Dudley Williams' resignation as Veterans' Graves Officer with regret and appreciation of his many years of service. The motion, seconded by

Patrick, was unanimously approved.

Hilary moved to appoint Mike Melle as Veterans' Graves Officer through June 30, 2023. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was unanimously approved.

Other Business

Right of First Refusal, 55 Campbell Road: Hilary moved not to exercise the Town's right of first refusal for 55 Campbell Road. The motion, seconded by Rebecca, was unanimously approved.

The FY23 NOVUS proposal will be addressed at the June 28th meeting. The need for "help desk" support was noted.

The Board is still waiting for responses to reference requests for Building Commissioner applicants.

Adrian Alquist asked about American Rescue Plan funds noting other towns have designated funds for big ticket items like fire trucks. The cost of a fire truck was discussed. Questions about the program and the dissemination of information were also discussed. It was noted discussions and decisions of the Board are included in the meeting minutes.

Residents of Monument Street inquired about the Lower Liberty Street bridge. Highway Superintendent Jennings stated replacing the bridge would be a costly project requiring wetlands determinations, replication, etc.

Correspondence

The monthly report was received from the Animal Control Officer.

Other mail was reviewed.

Warrants were signed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary