



Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, November 20th, 2023
Time: 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM
Members Present: Chair Jamie Underwood, Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger; April Steward, Town Administrator; and Alison Mack, Administrative Assistant to the Board

The meeting commenced at 6:00 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The Board opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. Seth Ridinger made a motion to go into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** (closed to the public):

Per MGL c.30A, §21(a)(1): To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual.

Per MGL c.30A, §21, (2): To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel or contract negotiations with non-union personnel, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares – Highway Superintendent

Per MGL c.30A, §21, (3): To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. – “Mary K. Cutter v. Town of Boylston and Boylston Water District, Civil Action No. 2385CV00178” and “Mary K. Cutter et al. v. Town of Boylston Zoning Board of Appeals, Civil Action No. 2385CV00264

The Board will return to open session. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Fiber maintenance discussion:

Matt stated he spoke to Steve, and he felt they were okay with doing one year. He has not done anything with that but can go to Phoenix as ask for a clean version. Matt preference would be to stich with Phoenix since they will be running the fiber, and they are going to have the network layout and all that stuff. Matt will get a clean version and the board will sign it at the next meeting. There are two questions that need to be addressed; they need to come up with \$7,500 and negotiate with the schools on the pieces that we’re not using for the radio. Discussion occurred where the

money could come from, and the use of ARPA funds was suggested. Matt requested the contract be put on the agenda to be signed at the next BoS meeting.

Vote to Fully Execute Dispatch CBA:

The Board received the Dispatch CBAs ratified copy and needs to vote to fully execute it.

Seth Ridinger moved the board to execute the Boylston Dispatchers Collective Bargaining Agreement, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to approve ARPA funds request of \$9,000 for the Fire Department Building emergency egress:

Matt Mecum made a motion to approve \$9,000 ARPA Funds for the Fire Department building emergency egress, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Vote to award Feasibility Study to Austin Design Cooperative, Inc.:

CADD drawings have been requested from Thompson Liston, but they have not been able to find them yet. If they are able to find them, it could save the town some money.

Matt Mecum made a motion to award the Senior Feasibility Study to Austin Design Cooperative, Inc, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Authorization for TA to sign LAND Grant:

April advised the Board that they can authorize Seth to sign, and then on the signatory page, Seth can sign off to have both Paul Dell'Aquila and April Steward as signatories as well if there are any additional paperwork that comes in.

Seth Ridinger made a motion to authorize himself as a representative of this board to sign the LAND grant, and to further authorize the Town Administrator April Steward, and/or Town Planner Paul Dell'Aquila to sign on behalf of the board if myself or April are not available. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Meeting minutes 10/23/2023, 11/06/2023:

Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 10/23/23 and 11/06/23, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.

Reports to the BoS: Town Administrator, Building Inspector and Town Planner

The Board decided to skip the Building Inspectors Report and the Town Planners report for tonight's meeting

Town Administrators Report to the Bos:

1. Scheduled Time Off: I am scheduling out my remaining vacation days and holding back 5 days for rollover to 2024. I am planning to take the following days off: November 21st,

November 22nd, November 29th, November 30th, December 1st, December 8th, December 11th, December 21st, December 22nd, December 26th - December 29th.

2. *Shared Animal Control:* I attended a call with Chief Annunziata on November 4th to discuss a shared animal control position with the towns of Berlin, West Boylston, Lancaster, and possibly Harvard. All the towns discussed what they are currently doing and what their needs are. It looks like we may be looking to hire one FT person for the position and one PT person, possibly being a per diem position that is paid a stipend. Another call is scheduled to be held on December 12th to discuss further.
 - a. Regional agreement would be between \$15,000 - \$20,000.
3. *EOHLC One Stop Debrief:* Paul and I met with representatives from the One Stop program to discuss the Hillside Master Plan Grant Application. We received good recommendations for our next attempt with the grant, which Paul will be implementing on the 2nd attempt. A 10% matching was recommended to gain additional points which will make us more competitive within the program.
4. *E-Newsletter:* I am currently vetting Constant Contac as an e-newsletter for the board to utilize. Ali has been looking onto Mail Chimp as well. Once we decide which format is easier to manage, we will get a cost estimate and make our recommendation to the board.
5. *West Boylston/Tahanto Lions:* On Wednesday, November 29th at 5:30 p.m., the West Boylston/Tahanto Lions will be playing in the State Championship Football Game at Gillette. The team has been undefeated all year long and this is their second year in a row going to Gillette to play in the Championship game. Please get this onto your calendar and support the players if you can.

140/Sewall intersection discussion:

We received a grant last year and need to get moving on this, we have an extension through 2024. Matt doesn't believe the plan we currently have, that doesn't include the light, which was also made before a 40B in the intersection, is a good plan. We have over \$187,000 that needs to be spent and want to figure out what we are doing, so they do not have to return that money. Matt believed that we were going to an engineering firm to get a price on getting plans to put a light there and missed the part that we were just doing a grant. We didn't get the grant, but they still need to do something with that intersection. Town Planner, Paul Dell'Aquila clarified that the intent of the first grant was done in as a more of an economic development tool. It wasn't done to specifically address the intersection; it was to address additional pedestrian improvements through a corridor from the Brookside property leading to the commercial strip that we have along that side of Route 140. With the addition of the warehouses and at the time proposed 40B, we added those in this part of our processing; having all this different development in here in the coming year or two, let's find a way for people to use the corridor in particular. The grant that we received was geared towards providing some sidewalk improvements; north side of 140 and a pedestrian crossing from the Crest corner to the commercial property across the street. That grant calls for a pedestrian activated crossing. Under the initial grant, there was no crosswalk on South Sewall. Since Paul has been back, they have had some additional conversations about since they are doing this work, can they dovetail it with the traffic signal at that location to deal with the access issues

coming in and out of Sewall at that location. After talking about it, staff thought just a pedestrian crossing might not do the trick, so they did start to explore. Highway Superintendent reached out to his contacts to get some ballpark estimates. This grant then came up, the Shared Streets Grant Program, and going through their process on estimating how much this project costs, we did get a quote for engineering costs which was about \$55,000, just for the traffic signal, independent of any grant. The grant was submitted two weeks ago, and we just found out on Friday that we did not get it. The estimate of the grant that was submitted was around \$180,000; including the \$50,000 for the engineer. Where we are at now is, we have existing funds for that intersection, designs that were upgraded as part of shared streets grant, and now a piece of the possibility of the traffic light.

Matt asked if in theory, assuming we were going to pursue a traffic light and sidewalks, the next step would be to hire someone for \$55,000 to do the engineering of what it is going to take to put a light there, and then everything else that was just mentioned. Steve Mero stated that said and done, the amount he received for completing the project was around \$400,000; not including the signal. Matt stated that is good so we can use these grants towards that. Paul clarified that the Shared Street Grants has specific design elements already attached to it, so we can't just go do whatever we want, we have \$180,000 to go do specific things; sidewalks and things like that. The traffic signal is something over and above that. Matt stated he believed that the number Steve gave him included the sidewalks, and Steve confirmed it did not, the sidewalk was a separate contract. Jamie asked if MassDOT has a say whether or not we can even put a light there or not, because why would we spend money to do a study if the state is going to say you can't do it anyway. Steve Mero stated he does not believe so as the signal that was done up at Cross Street, the town was outside of the buffer zone and their concern was for traffic backing up onto 290. Discussion continued about what can and can't be used regarding the grant money. Paul added that he asked the direct question to the grant program whether given the light was deemed eligible, if we put a light on our own dime, would that negate the existing grant and they responded that as long as it doesn't negatively impact the existing grant. Seth stated we need to consider moving forward on the sidewalk aspect of the project; Brookside down to the Other Place Pub/Post Office. That component won't change, except where it would tie into the crosswalk and figuring out how we do that in conjunction with a light or whatever can be put there. Steve Mero stated that the biggest concern in the original grant plan that they have seen was having a crosswalk across Route 140. He does not want to put his name on a Crosswalk on Route 140 that is a 50mph road and have a pedestrian be injured. He would like a light there, but along with spending that \$180,000 on sidewalks, comes a \$400,000+ bill to add a light. Seth stated that if somehow, they can get a traffic signal there and still use the grant money to do everything else, they are all on the same page and that is the ideal situation. However, he personally would rather see some traffic calming measures and a crosswalk as opposed to nothing; people will be crossing it. Jamie stated that in his opinion, if you put a crosswalk there, he doesn't believe that's where a crosswalk should be; especially with the solar glare. Steve suggested he could reach out to see if they can get the speed lowered. Seth stated the design is not just a crosswalk and there are traffic calming measures; island in the middle, curbs on the side and traffic would be forced to slow down there whether someone is crossing or not. Paul Dell'Aquila stated he agreed with that statement as DOT funded the grant and they are obviously funding things they want to see and did not express some of those concerns that some of the members just mentioned. Matt stated they did not know the apartments were not there, and Paul stated that they did. Jamie asked about a roundabout and Paul stated he believes it's a volume issue and Steve could reach out to his contacts to confirm. Town Administrator April Steward stated that she doesn't believe there was enough circle to do a roundabout. Seth stated that they

are all in agreement that they want to see a light, so how do we get there. How are we able to utilize the grant, put in the sidewalks, put in everything we do want and have it be in conjunction with the light, is that even possible. Paul responded that the issue may be time is of the essence and we only have so much time to do the work on the existing grant so it may be that we don't have enough information. The grant we applied for said the light would cost \$120,000 and Steve Meros contact stated it would be more than that, where is the actual number. Matt stated it's time we decide; we have at least \$48,000 from multiple sources. We have money available to be spent on engineering. April stated we would need a scope and must reach out to three different firms for engineering. Discussion continued about how the money can be used towards this project. Matt asked April to dig into the amount of money that is available to use. Paul stated that he will get definitive clarification from district 3. Until we have a full picture, its tough to move forward. Matt would also like to see if its possible to get another extension.

HR Representative:

April stated that Andrea Healy was interested, but she can only do it per diem and can't be in the office for 12 hours a week. She could probably get someone for an on-call basis. Jamie suggested budgeting for a full-time position. April suggested if we do go that route, we would have to put more duties on their desk. She will be reaching out to the school district as well.

Speed Signs:

Steve Mero stated the have received the speed signs. Mark Barakian is not a fan of putting speed signs on utility poles for liability purposes. He is trying to find some fiberglass tubes that can be installed. As soon as poles are found, we can do South Sewall Street first. On the Mill Road side Steve asked where would we want to place it? Matt suggested around Gochers, Seth suggested around the sharp corner on North Sewall. Steve stated they can be moved so we can change them around every 6 months if needed.

Board of Selectmen meeting time changes: Seth asked that all board members be in agreement I they are going to change the time of a meeting.

Joe McGrath, from the conservation commission asked if they spoke about the School Street property. Jamie advised Joe that it was already approved. April advised that Seth will be the signer and Paul and herself will be signatories. Joe stated he had some questions for Paul regarding the cost of signage. Conservation Commission also has to draft a conservation restriction and get it to DEQE and also they will have to come before the Board of Selectmen with management regulations for the property to put it in conservation restriction. Seth stated they are excited to be moving forward with this and appreciate all the work the conservation commission has been doing.

At 9:30 PM, Seth Ridinger made a motion to adjourn, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: Yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Mack, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Meeting Materials – On File in the Board of Selectmen's Office

Agenda

LAND GRANT Project Agreement

Town Planner Report

Building Inspector Report

10/23/23 Meeting Minutes

11/06/23 Meeting Minutes