



Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, September 27th, 2021
Time: 6:30 PM – 8:07 PM
Members Present: Selectmen Jamie Underwood and Seth Ridinger; April Steward, Town Administrator; and Alison Mack, Administrative Assistant to the Board
Not Present: Chair Matt Mecum

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of meeting minutes: 08/23/21

Jamie Underwood made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for 08/23/21, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Town Administrators Report to the BoS:

1. *PARC Grant:* On Tuesday, September 21st, Paul Dell'Aquila went up to Lowell on the town's behalf to receive our FY22 DCS Grant award. This is the PARC Grant that we were hoping to receive to assist with the procurement of the former Camp Harrington property. The award is for 60% of the purchase price of the acquisition, which should save the town roughly \$96,000. This is the second grant that our Town Planner has been able to bring back to help the Town of Boylston.
2. *Special Town Meeting:* Part of the requirement for receiving the PARC Grant is to have the purchase price of the procurement appropriated by vote at town meeting before 12/31/2021. Therefore, we would need to have a Special Town Meeting this fall. Here are some options:
 1. Open and close the warrant October 12th, Approve, and finalize on October 25th, Hold the meeting on November 8th
 2. Open the warrant on October 12th Close the warrant on October 25th Approve and finalize on November 8th, hold the meeting on November 22nd
3. *S-2029:* An Act advancing equity for rural communities receiving state grants: The Small-Town Administrators Group that I belong to vote to send a letter to the senate requesting them to favorably consider Senate Bill S-2029. There are unique needs and challenges faced by rural communities, and this bill is viewed as being important to the overall health of our Commonwealth. Currently, rural communities often face a disadvantage in the competitive climate for state assistance which is often targeted towards larger or "gateway" cities. S-2029 calls attention to the needs of rural

Massachusetts and if passed, would be an initial step towards providing some measure of equity to smaller communities.

4. *Employee Training:* We met with town employees on Monday the 13th to go over the Employee Handbook. Jeff did a fine job in presenting the material and we are planning to hold more of these types of training going forward to better equip our employees in their day-to-day jobs.

Police Chief Search Committee joint meeting to submit report of Police Chief Finalists to the Board of Selectmen:

April provided the Board with a report regarding the search committees finalists and Boylston Police Officer Matt Ryle described to the Board the process that the search committee went through. Although the search committee was asked to put forward three candidates, they were not able to eliminate one and submitted the following four candidates to the BOS:

1. John Annunziata
2. Cody Thomasian
3. Scott Mills
4. Scott van Raalten

Berlin Police Chief, Tom Galvin mentioned that the search committee had a lot of different opinions but overall, the committee came together and presented the Board with four strong candidates and were unanimous in their decision. Boylston resident and Finance Committee Member Karen McGahie stated that they tried to get it down to three, but there wasn't one that they would be able to pull out. Boylston Police Officer Matt Ryel mentioned that all candidates are strong candidates, and the Board has a tough decision ahead of them. Jamie stated as a board they fully don't know the extent of the job and feels that having residents, Police Chiefs, and Officers from the Department was a good mix to make up the search committee; whittling it down is a huge chore and the board greatly appreciates their efforts. Police Chief Galvin stated that all the candidates are a little different, and brought a different perspective to the table, so its really going to allow the Board to say, this is what we see in our next Police Chief and pick the best personality that fits with what the Town is looking for.

Seth stated that he would assume that the department would be happy with any four of the candidates and the committee members nodded. Jamie thanked the search committee for all their hard work and mentioned that he knows it wasn't an easy decision. Seth mentioned that it was a huge endeavor, and the board appreciates that they took their job very seriously as this will have very important implications for the town for the next twenty years or so. Boylston Police Officer Mark Shepard thanked Town Administrator April Steward for all her hard work and stated she was a huge help; the rest of the search committee agreed, and the Board thanked her as well.

Discussion on installing a streetlight at Morgan Circle:

Mark Barakian, General Manager of the Light Department stated that this issue was brought up a few months ago. On the corner there is a streetlight with a short street light arm and thought they would maybe extend the streetlight. With COVID, it took a while to get the items in, and it came

in last Friday. Mark asked for the Light Department to try this out since they received the product and then he will come back to the Board to give an update. The Board will not be taking a vote at this meeting and will be waiting to hear back from Mark.

Discuss the interview/ranking process and procedure for hiring new Police Chief:

Jamie believes the ranking system is the fairest way to determine it and suggested waiting for Matt and having ZOOM call to finalize. April stated that if the Board were not able to come to a decision on a candidate, they can always schedule another meeting, then they won't have to worry about the candidates knowing the interview questions because they all would have been interviewed. Seth suggested having some type of recess for the Board to go through their thoughts. Seth thought a ranking system of 1-5 would be good and Jamie agreed. Jamie suggested Matt call an intermission after the interviews are complete. April stated that she spoke with Matt earlier in the day and he mentioned that if they do the ranking system, he does not want it to be too complicated. Jamie mentioned that we already have a plan in place for the Interim Chief and we do not need to rush through the interview process. In all fairness to the candidates, they may not be able to make it in less than a weeks' notice. The BoS is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, October 12th and will plan to do the Police Chief Interviews on Thursday, October 14th at 3:00 PM. April will present the candidates in alphabetical order.

Appoint Van Baker to Master Plan Steering Committee:

Jamie Underwood made a motion to appoint Van Baker to the Master Plan Steering Committee, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor

Vote to sign Proposal for Professional Engineering Services FY22 NPDES Small Ms4 General Permit Assistance:

Tighe and Bond – Document needs to be signed by the Town Administrator, Town Counsel, and the Board of Selectmen. April stated that the Small Ms4 permit is very complex.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to sign the proposal for Professional Engineering services FY22 NPDES Small Ms4 General Permit Assistance, Seth Ridinger seconded.

7:00 PM Hearing: NON-EXERCISE OF OPTION UNDER M.G.L. Ch. 61 to Purchase Property Classified as Forest Land Vacant land, located westerly of Route 140, Boylston, Massachusetts, situated at Lot 2A, Pine Hill Drive, Boylston, County of Worcester, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as shown on a Plan of Land recorded at the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 937, Plan 99, sheet 3 of 3, containing approximately 55.49 acres:

Seth Ridinger opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 PM and asked if anyone in the audience had any thoughts or questions regarding this piece of land. No comments or concerns were stated. Seth explained that Chapter 61 land gives an incentive to the property owner for a reduction in the tax rate if the land is put in as forest land, and the town has the first right of refusal on the purchase of this property, and he believes that the Town does not have any interest in purchasing this property.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to not exercise our first right of refusal for the property situated at Lot 2A, Pine Hill Drive, Boylston, County of Worcester, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as shown on a Plan of Land recorded at the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 937, Plan 99, sheet 3 of 3, containing approximately 55.49 acres. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to close the public hearing at 7:03 PM. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Department Head Reviews:

Treasurer/Collector, Cheri Cox:

Seth stated that the Board received the self-evaluation form back from Cheri, as well as spoke with other departments from the Town Hall. The Board individually filled out an evaluation form on Cheri and sent it into the Administrative Assistant Ali, who put it all together. The document before them is the final product of the BoS's combined evaluations.

Highway Superintendent Steve Mero asked what goes in the personnel file and Jamie responded that he believes it's all the forms. Seth stated that it should be the final document that the board agrees on; one document as a product of the Board of Selectmen. Cheri asked if she was able to see all three documents and the original responses from the Board and Stephen stated that he will look this up and needs a minute. Cheri stated that she noticed on the document she received that a lot of the areas were left blank. Jamie stated that when he was filling out his, some of them were left blank because they were very repetitive; why take the wording from up above and rewrite it down below. This is the Boards first go around on evaluations and it's a learning process. Cheri stated that in her experience when managers write comments, it personalizes your evaluation for that person who is being evaluated and seemed a little confused as to why some items were left blank. Jamie mentioned that they left goals blank because there were no goals set and could not fill it in as it would be unfair. Seth added that he believed they were going to add goals to this document for next year. Cheri stated that the document she received back was a little sparse. Seth mentioned that he is not at Town Hall every day, and he can only evaluate her based on his best knowledge of the job. As they set goals, they will have more concrete metrics to evaluate her moving forward, because right now it's just all we were working with was her self-evaluation and speaking with a couple town hall colleagues. Cheri asked if it was a collaboration with the Town Administrator and both Jamie and Seth responded that they did not speak with April. Jamie stated that he based it on the interactions he has had with Cheri and citizens. April added that Ali added all the board's comments received into one document, and she did not leave anything out.

Seth asked Cheri if there is anything starting from the beginning that she would take exception to or does not fairly characterize her professional ability that needs to be addressed. Cheri responded that she would like to talk about number 6 teamwork. Jamie mentioned that the two statements contradicted each other and being a small town, they do not have the great wealth of resources in each department and each department needs to help each other out when they can. Seth asked if Cheri believes the second comment was an unfair characterization as he doesn't know and is not in Town Hall every day. Cheri responded that Town Hall is very small and has been through a lot and feels that we have a good group of people; Team building is important and making people feel valued and respected is important. We have a small number of resources, and we utilize them and

feel like we have a pretty good team at Town Hall. Seth asked if there was any merit in that statement and if there may be any colleagues that feel you may be overstepping the roles of your department or if she feels that is not an accurate characterization. Cheri stated that she does not feel it is an accurate depiction. Seth stated that he assumes the idea of this is to have a final document signed off by the board and put into a personnel file. He brought up that there is a similar comment in another section and explained that she received meets expectations and not needs improvement; similar language is mentioned twice and asked if she had any other issues besides those two comments. Jamie brought up that Cheri previously took on a big job of back taxes and it was a big undertaking. Cheri mentioned that is one of many things that she has accomplished and referenced others on the document that she provided for her evaluation. Seth suggested changing number four to exceeds expectations and for number 6 and 10, he stated since similar language was in there twice, he would be inclined to remove one of them. Jamie stated that he is fine with that. Cheri stated that she would prefer the comment to be removed from number 10 instead of 6, and the board agreed. Cheri suggested that the Board take a little time to review all the information she had presented such as the scope of work she has completed outside of her job responsibilities; policy updates and extra stuff that she has accomplished over the years. Jamie stated that next year's reviews will be different since we will be able to judge someone off of clear goals and not previous years of work. Seth stated that in the self-improvement section, he felt that she listed more of goals and not personal areas of self-improvement and asked if she would like to contribute anything further. Cheri stated that she would like to see more of a collaboration effort with the finance team; having conversations about things that come up and getting everyone on the same page. Cheri added that she is trying to learn more about our website and become more technologically proficient with it. The Board and Cheri continued to talk about goals and Seth suggested having Cheri take some time and come back to the Board with some at a later meeting. Cheri asked what she is supposed to do regarding evaluating the employee underneath her and Seth responded that April will be sending information out. Jamie stated that he appreciates Cheri because she has the Office that no one goes to because they are happy, its not an easy job. Jamie and Seth thanked Cheri for coming tonight and sitting through this process.

Vote to appoint Officer Barbato as Interim Police Chief:

Seth thanked Officer Barbato for stepping up to assume the responsibility as Interim Police Chief. Jamie stated that having a Chief that the Officers respect makes the transition a lot easier. April stated that we will have the pinning ceremony on October 6th at 3:30 PM. On advice of Town Counsel, we can't have the Interim and the Chief technically working at the same time; The appointment tonight will be making it official as of October 8th at 3:00 PM. Seth mentioned that on behalf of Selectmen Mecum he wanted to be here for this and apologizes that he was unable to make it.

Jamie Underwood made a motion to appoint Officer Robert Barbato as Interim Police Chief of Boylston starting on October 8th at 3:00PM. Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Highway Superintendent Evaluation:

Seth asked how Steve would like to go through the evaluation; either one by one or go straight to something specific like they did with Cheri. Steve stated that he is happy with the evaluation, and

it seems that people are pretty happy with what the Highway Dept does and how he personally does his job and treats people with respect, doing what's best for the town. Seth asked if overall, Steve feels that this evaluation is a fair characterization of his job as Highway Superintendent and asked if there is anything specific that he feels needs to be addressed. Steve responded that everything seems pretty spot on and has an idea of what he can do to make adjustments, move forward and be positive. Seth stated that one thing that came up was to communicate more effectively with town residents. Steve stated that they use Facebook and we use the town website, but some people do not use those tools so they are trying to find different ways to communicate with residents. Seth asked Steve to elaborate on his goals section and Steve mentioned that he would leave it with what he wrote on there currently. Jamie mentioned that Steve had a really good evaluation and a lot of this comes from the fact that he gets a lot done with the small staff that he has; Things are getting done and we appreciate it. April brought up how easy it is to work with Steve by sharing a story about West Temple Street. It's been needing to be paved since the early 70s. She explained that a resident has called and complained, Steve met with April, discussed the options, grinded the road down, still fit into his budget. The resident was extremely happy, and Steve showed how he can think outside the box and get things done. Seth mentioned Steve can put together his goals, look at what timetable it would be like to achieve those and they will go into his personal file and the Board can look at them next year for a little more guidance. Steve thanked the Board for their feedback. The Board thanked Steve for coming in and keeping the roads maintained and safe.

Public Comments:

Resident Steve Nason sat at the table to speak with the BoS during public comments. Mr. Nason mentioned that a playground sign is needed at the center courts; Anywhere from \$18-\$584 and is required by law. Steve Mero stated that he will need to look into this as a sign must be MassDOT approved. He stated that he will speak with the Police Chief this week and meet with the safety officer to see if it's a concern. Mr. Nason added that he has an idea about the hockey rink at center courts since it dips down over 10 inches on one side. Jamie mentioned that he must be talking about it at the manor but believes that this would be something that Parks and Recreation would deal with.

Other Comments:

April stated that she will be putting out an Agenda for the 6th for the Pinning Ceremony and putting it as Hillside. Officer Barbato's wife will be doing the pinning.

At 8:07 PM, Jamie Underwood made a motion to adjourn, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Mack, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Meeting Materials

Agenda

Town Administrators Report

August 23rd Meeting Minutes

On File in The Board of Selectmen's Office

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