

Board of Selectmen

Date of Meeting: Monday, February 12th, 2024

Time: 6:30 PM – 7:52 PM

Members Present: Chair Jamie Underwood, Selectmen Matt Mecum and Seth Ridinger; April Steward, Town Administrator; Stephen Madaus, Town Counsel, and Alison Kennedy, Administrative Assistant to the Board

Members not Present:

The meeting commenced at 6:30 PM.

Financial Warrants were signed in agreement.

Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Town Administrators Report to the BOS:**

1. *Trailside Apartments:* There is a public information meeting via Zoom on Monday, March 4th that 6:30 PM for the affordable units located at Trailside Apartments. There are 16 units available for the affordable unit’s lottery. I have attached the flyer for more information.
2. *OSHA Reporting*: Massachusetts municipalities are now required to keep OSHA 300 logs. Along with this new reporting requirement, we need to develop a safety and health management plan. I will be working on developing a plan so we can be compliant with this requirement.
3. *Casella MRF Facility:* The Waster & Recycling Committee and I went to the Casella zero sort recycling facility to learn more about the process and to continue the discussion about waste removal and recycling for the town. Representatives from West Boylston and Princeton were there as well. I believe some good connections were made to help the Waste & Recycling Committee with their continued efforts to gather information on this subject for the town.
4. *Town Hall Closure:* Town Hall will be closed on Tuesday, February 13th due to the forecasted winter weather.

**Fire Chiefs Report to BoS:** On file in BoS office.

*Fire Department Responses*

The fire department responded to a total of 107 emergency calls for service within the last month with the majority being requests for emergency medical services. The department responded to several calls in town and provided mutual aid to Berlin, Shrewsbury, West Boylston and Worcester. The department responded to two building fires in Berlin as well as two multiple vehicle accidents on Rt. 495. The department also assisted several residents with flooded basements from heavy rains. Last week, the fire department, along with the police department, responded to a tragic call involving an infant. A critical incident stress debriefing team was called in to assist all those involved in that incident.

*Grants*

The fire department has received word from the Department of Fire Services that it has been awarded a grant in the amount of $12,500. This grant will be used to purchase much needed replacement structural firefighting gear. The department currently has 14sets of structural gear that is outside the NFPA recommended shelf life of 10 years this grant will be used to begin to replace some of the oldest turnout gear. The fire department is finishing up the applications for two FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grants. With one of the AFG grants, the department is requesting $700,000 to replace its 1951 forestry tanker and 1989 structural tanker with a new, combined, pumper/tanker. Due to the age of the current fleet, we hope that FEMA will look favorably at this grant request. This grant does carry a 5% match, but due to the length of time required to purchase fire apparatus, we will not need to provide this match in the upcoming fiscal year. A second AFG grant is being written to replace the remainder of the structural turnout gear that is out of compliance with NFPA standards. The department is requesting roughly $83,000 from FEMA for updated, compliant gear. One set of turnout gear, as per FEMA standards, consists of a turnout coat, turnout pants, one pair of boots, two hoods and two pairs of gloves. The estimated cost for each set of structural gear is $5900.Thefire department currently carries a budget line item of $4000 for “Clothing and Uniforms, Including Gear.” As per union contract, each full-time employee is allotted a $500clothing allowance, so $3000 of this line item is used on the clothing allowance so there isn’t enough in the budget to replace much structural gear. The town will have to provide a 5% match for this grant, if awarded. In addition to the DFS and FEMA grants, the fire department has applied for an Emergency Management Performance Grant through MEMA. This grant is a zero-match grant and the town is eligible for $2700 in grant funding. The department has requested equipment to assist in response to any possible electric vehicle incident. The department has requested an emergency plug that disables the electric vehicle in an emergency, along with chock blocks, collapsible traffic cones, portable scene lighting and extrication equipment through this grant.

*Training*

Two members of the fire department, Matthew Welch and Keegan Watson recently started a Firefighter I/II class through the MA Firefighting Academy. Both Matt and Keegan are on-call members of the department, and we wish them the best of luck in the course. Captain Don MacKenzie is enrolled in an Incident Safety Officer course run through the MA Firefighting Academy. This is a six-week course that trains fire officers in the requirements needed to serve in the role as a safety officer at any emergency scene. Lt. Michael O’Sullivan and Firefighter/EMT Ryan Schloerb will be taking a course sponsored by Fire Tech and Safety of New England so that they can be certified as Scott self-contained breathing apparatus service technicians. This will allow Lt. O’Sullivan and FF. Schloerb to perform preventive maintenance and some repairs in house on our equipment. All emergency medical technicians are about to complete the National Core Competency Class to be recertified. This is a very involved course that each EMT must take every two years to maintain their state and federal certifications. All EMTs must take this class in addition to twenty hours of continuing education to maintain certification. All of this training is offered through the fire department at no cost to the EMT. Lt. Jason Bradford is coordinating the NCCR class for us.

*FY2025 Budget*

The FY 2025 budget was submitted to the Town Administrator for review. The budget was submitted with zero increases in current salaries due to pending negotiations with the firefighters’ union and with the fire chief. Two additional full-time positions were requested in next year’s budget to increase the full-time staffing and allow for twenty-four-hour coverage with full-time staff. As presented in previous meetings, the average response times are quite different between the hours when the station is staffed and when employees are responding from home to staff equipment. With the marked increase in call volume over the past several years, it is prudent that the town look to provide around-the-clock staffing to make sure that at a minimum, an ambulance can get to an emergency in a reasonable amount of time. The increase in call volume also creates an increase in revenue from ambulance billing; some of these additional costs can be offset from the increased fees collected. The only other increases to the FY 2025 budget were based on the increased call volume and need for additional fuel, supplies and equipment. The department is scheduled to meet with the Finance Committee to discuss the budget further.

**Police Chiefs Report to the BoS:**

January Breakdown:

* 14 accidents
* 45 criminal summons/arrests
* Conducted 23 Investigations
* Conducted 343 Motor Vehicle Stops
* Dispatch Processed 31 Emergency 911 calls
* Total activity was 3,484 calls
* Officer McNutt and I conducted an ALICE training at Tower Hill.
* Participated in a disaster medicine tabletop exercise.
	+ - The crisis meetings and training we have been conducting at the schools showed their value.
	+ I met with EOPSS to discuss training opportunities.
		- We are tentatively hosting an exercise with neighboring police and fire partners at BES over the April vacation.
		- The training will focus on joint operations between fire and police.
		- How to respond and evacuate wounded individuals.
		- The police department was able to achieve a grant to offset OT associated with this training.

The TA brought to my attention a complaint that was made against the police department.

* A party is concerned that members of the police department have take-home vehicles.
* Detectives have take-home vehicles and are not for personal use.
* This helps us to be more efficient with after-hours callouts.
* On occasion, I allow an officer who is on a 16-hour shift with 8 hours off, to take the drug task force vehicle home while they sleep.
* This allows the vehicle to be driven on occasion and ensures fluids are moving and rust is not building up.
* The previous drug task force vehicle could sit for weeks at a time, and we had significant mechanical issues due to this.
* This vehicle was donated to us by another agency and outfitted with asset forfeiture money.

I am going to try and use some vacation time over February break.

**Highway Superintendents Report to BoS:**

* Check beaver activities (very slow)
* Maintenance of trucks-Keep water ways open
* Maintenance on plows and sanders
* Clearing sidewalks of snow
* We have plowed roads 8 times
* We have treated roads 14 days several times a day
* Highway employee drug test were done on 2/6/2024 (all clear)
* Roadside mowing on lower Stiles Road
* I was out of the office on 2/8, and 2/9 using 2 vacation days

\*\*\* Request approval of overspending to the snow and ice budget

* Expense of salt has gone up.

*Matt Mecum made a motion to allow overspending on the snow and ice budget, Seth Ridinger seconded, Voted all in favor.*

* Has started putting the chapter 90 stuff together to get a multiyear contract in place
* Met with Dan at the school regarding the flooding issue. They need to investigate more but believe there is no power running to the pump.
* Issue: Fuel cards. Light Department and Fire Department cards have been shut off.
	+ They are currently using the Highway card.
	+ This is being looked into. April gave Steve the town credit card to hold onto in case he runs into any issues with the storm.
* Steve requested to be put on the next agenda to square up his contract

*Yard Waste*

* Residents Sand/Mix is available.

*Cemetery 2024*

* 5 full burials
* 0 cremations

**Discussion on Planning and Zoning Board fees:**

Town Planner, Paul DellAquila initiated the conversation a few meetings prior; the fees have not been updated in some time. He did an analysis of surrounding communities to get everything streamlined. The net result is on the spreadsheet Paul presented to the board, bringing them much closer to surrounding communities regarding fees. This will streamline the application process; update the information on the website and update the forms in-house. In some cases, they differentiated between a residential application and a commercial application; accounting for the large warehouse we have been getting.

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the Planning and Zoning Board fee schedules as presented by our Town Planner to the Board, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Finance Committee discussion on budget:**

Howard Drobner mentioned that the Finance Committee will be meeting with different boards/committees and departments over the next four meetings.

Tonight, he plans to share information with the Board on all the data that was submitted to them.

From the towns side, the increase is approximately 27.5% ($2,300,000+). Some of that is new positions, two new firefighters/EMTs, and the $1,000,000 land purchase. The school has not yet voted on a preliminary budget, but they did meet with the school committee and had a nice discussion. The preliminary budget is showing approximately between 10% – 10.9% increase: both the district and our elementary school. Independent of capital. Capital is still unknown and vocational is still in question. Howard stated a red flag item that came up for the school is transportation costs. Howard doesn’t know yet if these numbers are attainable yet with the levy limit, we have but will dive in when he receives more data. Free cash came in at $1,033,000 and new growth was around $482,000. On the land purchase, we were awarded the grant for $500,000, but have a couple hoops to jump through before we receive the reimbursable; parking, signs and meeting with conservation to discuss on the groundwork. Howards will leave it as $1,000,000 for right now. Discussion continued on transportation and the differences in costs.

**Discussion and vote on reopening H-Intersection:**

Jamie doesn’t believe it looks good, but it has been effective. Steve Mero said they are seeing people utilize what they have open, coming off of school street. He is looking to put on the 140 side, “no left turn”, at the stop sign and across the street. On 140 on the south side, they would put a “no left turn” sign there as well. Chief Annunziata added that in roughly 15 years, they have had 23 accidents in this location and the data doesn’t suggest this is a problem area. More discussion continued on how it should be set up. Jamie stated it needs to be discussed as we need to alleviate the school street traffic. Seth suggested taking a step and putting up a Do Not Enter sign. Jamie suggested starting to make plans to open it. Matt suggested coming up with a date and moving forward. Steve Mero and Chief Annunziata are going to gather information requested by the board and it will be discussed at next months meeting on March 11th.

**Approval of meeting minutes: 01/18/24:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from 01/18/24, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Capital Planning discussion:**

Seth stated the Financial Policy Committee feels that a Capital Planning Committee should be established and wanted to take this time for the Board to discuss who should be on that committee. Matt asked if a committee is formed, he would like to see that the Board of Selectmen have some discretion. Seth stated the town of Norton has the following members on the committee: Board of Selectmen member, Finance Committee member, Planning Board committee member, School Committee member, and the Town Administrator. Jamie suggested letting the Financial Policy Committee move forward with it to see what they come up with and discuss at a later date. This committee would be tasked to determine what is the most pressing issues.

**Contingency planning discussion in the event of a vacancy of the office of the Town Administrator:**

Matt asked for this to be on the agenda and feels that this is needed for all department heads; Police Chief, Fire Chief, Town Administrator, and Highway Superintendent. Contingency planning is a must; don’t want to lose any momentum if someone were to leave. Police and Fire are a little clearer as there is a chain of command. The board is looking for a more formalized document to lay it out. Stephen Madaus stated he will check with labor counsel; not binding the board, but in case anything was to happen, it would help guide the board on next steps.

**Review and Sign the Warrant for the Presidential Primary:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to move and approve the Presidential Primary as presented, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Approve Keep Boylston Beautiful using the field at the Highway Dept. for their annual town wide clean up and to place a dumpster: May 4th and 5th:**

*Matt Mecum made a motion to approve Keep Boylston Beautiful using the field at the Highway Dept. for their annual town wide clean up and to place a dumpster: May 4th and 5th, Seth Ridinger seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Appointment of poll workers:**

*Seth Ridinger made a motion to approve the poll workers as presented, Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor.*

**Vote to appoint Special Town Counsel for Clinton Street project:**

Worcester Sand and Stone have sold the property and supposedly a large warehouse will be built in its spot. Since it abuts Boylston to a point, we are looking to have an attorney in place if any issues arise.

April advised the board that our Town Counsel is also counsel for Shrewsbury so if there was any mitigation that the town wanted to have with GFI (project owner), Steve would be conflicted to speak to it. April suggested Adam Costa as Special Town Counsel for this project and the board suggested reaching out to see if he is available to be appointed and willing to do it.

**Future Agenda Items: (topics to be proposed for discussion at future meetings)**

Seth stated that several years ago a developer advocated to amend our zoning bylaws and create a senior residential development 5-6 years ago; it passed, and it has led to utilization of the SRD bylaw a couple times. Seth believes the bylaw was hastily put together and there have been some issues with it; three lawsuits pertaining to the developments in regard to that bylaw. Residents have been displeased with the results of that bylaw, so Seth is looking for the board to discuss if it would make sense to propose to temporarily repeal this bylaw so it can be examined and determine what changes might make sense to revise it. Temporarily repeal it, revise it and then reinstate it in the future. More discussion on this topic will occur at the next meeting.

**Updates:**

*Boylston Elementary School Roof:*

Matt mentioned they went to do their second inspection of the Elementary School roof today before the storm tomorrow. Bob Bourassa met with the school facilities director for the schools Dan A, and Ryan who runs facilities at BES, along with Bill from Elements Management. They will get a report, estimating the costs for different options and suggestions on how to move forward.

*Departmental Meetings*

April has met with the different departments and needs to collate that information for the board.

*At 7:52 PM, Seth Ridinger made a motion to go into* **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** (closed to the public) ***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*– Police Chief. Not to return to open session. Matt Mecum seconded. Voted all in favor. Matt: Yes, Seth: Yes, and Jamie: Yes.*

**Executive Session Meeting Minutes:** 12/18/23 and 01/18/2024

***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”*

**Purpose 2: *Per MGL c.30A, §21, (2):*** *to discuss strategy with respect to negotiations with nonunion personnel – Police Chief’s contract*

***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 collective bargaining – *Boylston Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 5324*, if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Kennedy, Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

**Meeting Materials** On File in The Board of Selectmen’s Office

Agenda

Capital Planning Doc. (Financial Policies Committee)

Sign In Sheet

Warrant for Presidential Primary

2024 Election Team – Poll Workers List

Town Administrators Report

Fire Chiefs Report

Police Chiefs Report

Meeting Minutes:

* 12/18/23, and 01/18/24