

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Selectmen

Date: December 13, 2021
Time: 6:00 p.m.
Place: McCourt Social Hall
Memorial Town Hall, Spencer, MA
Present: Chairman Woodbury, Vice-Chair Howard, Clerk Grigg, Members Hicks and
Pepe, and Interim Town Administrator Bill Ross
Remote: None

Chairman Woodbury called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcement Any members that are participating remotely in accordance with Regulation 940, CMR 29.10 of the Open Meeting Law

None

Meeting Minutes:

Review and Act on Meeting Minutes of October 21, November 8, and November 22, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes of October 21, November 8, and November 22, 2021 (Hicks/Howard) passed 4/0. (Note: Selectman Pepe arrived at 6:03 pm)

Review and Act on Executive Session Minutes of August 16, 2021, not to be released at this time

A motion to approve the executive session minutes of August 16, 2021, not to be released at this time (Hicks/Grigg) passed 5/0.

Review and Act on Executive Session Minutes of September 27, October 4, and October 18, 2021

A motion to approve the executive session minutes September 27, October 4, and October 18, 2021 (Hicks/Grigg) passed 5/0.

Citizens Input

Matt Defosse, 7 Pauls Dr.: asked why the Planning Board was not consulted prior to the most recent appointment and suggested a plan be developed in the future; he was disappointed that it led to resignation of the Planning Board Chair. Dr. Hicks suggested that Mr. Defosse read the Town Charter, which outlines the appointment process.

Communications

None

Old Business

Review and Act on Traffic / Pedestrian Signals at Main and Pleasant Streets

U & F Superintendent William Cundiff discussed the proposal from VHB to address concerns raised over the traffic signals at the intersection of Pleasant and Main, specifically, allowing pedestrians to cross with turning traffic. The fee to make it an exclusive pedestrian crossing is \$12,500 and may change the Maple Street intersection as well. Traffic delays between 45 to 58 seconds will occur as a result, with the highest a delay of 58 seconds turning left onto Route 9 from Pleasant Street.

Mr. Cundiff noted that Chapter 90 funds may be used to cover the cost, with approval from the State.

Mr. Grigg pointed out that folks need to be alert when crossing the street. Chairman Woodbury noted there will be delays on Maple Street, and Mr. Pepe indicated the change will have a domino effect. Dr. Hicks mentioned at least two people have been struck in the intersection and he wants to protect the public. Mr. Cundiff will contact VHB and arrange for them to provide an assessment to the Board.

Chairman Woodbury stated that the larger issue is the lack of any type of signal or flashing light in the turning lane onto Pleasant Street; there is no indication that someone could be in the crosswalk resulting in this safety issue. Mr. Grigg asked if there are alternatives to improve safety. Mr. Cundiff said signage has been installed. Dr. Hicks suggested installing a box of flashing lights on the sign. Mr. Cundiff will coordinate a presentation with VHB to provide all available options to the Board.

Review and Act on 2022 Lodging House License Renewals for SMOC at 126 Main and 204 Main: contingent upon Meeting with SMOC Representatives on 1/24/2022

At the Selectmen's meeting on November 22, 2021, there was discussion on increased police activity for Lodging Houses located at 126 and 204 Main Street. Ultimately, the Board decided to pass over approval of this license until SMOC management could meet with them to determine how to reduce the police activity which has been scheduled for January 24th. Chairman Woodbury pointed out that the Lodging House license for SMOC expires on December 31, 2021 and advised the Board to vote tonight and if management does not appear on January 24th, they may vote to rescind the license at that time.

*A motion to approve the 2022 Lodging House License Renewals for SMOC at 126 Main and 204 Main, contingent upon Meeting with SMOC management on 1/24/2022
(Pepe/Hicks) passed 5/0.*

Update on Coronavirus / COVID-19 Cases

Mr. Ross provided an update on behalf of the Health Agent.

There have been 421 Coronavirus cases since August 1, 2021; over 7,383 Spencer residents have been fully vaccinated, with 892 partially vaccinated. Children aged five and over are eligible to receive the vaccine. The Rutland Vaccine Team is offering COVID clinics and booster shots to all eligible residents at the Rutland Library.

New Business:

Review and Act on Board of Selectmen Representative to Serve on the Housing Production Plan Steering Committee Charge

Chairman Woodbury indicated that Selectman Howard is willing to serve on the Committee.

A motion to nominate Selectman John Howard to serve on the Housing Production Plan Steering Committee (Grigg/Hicks) passed 5/0.

Discuss Official Name Change from Board of Selectmen to Select Board

Dr. Hicks said he brought up the idea to change the name of the “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board” a few years ago and at that time, the Board was not receptive. He would like to explore it again noting that women are serving on a vast majority of Boards in Massachusetts.

A motion to ask the new Administrator to review steps to formally change the name of the “Board of Selectmen” to “Select Board” (Hicks/Woodbury) passed 5/0

Mr. Grigg said if a female member were on the Board at this time, he would consider changing the name. Dr. Hicks expressed concern that if a young girl only saw the name “Selectmen”, she may assume she is not able to run for the Office. Mr. Pepe pointed out it is not the name that matters, but what the Board accomplishes. The Board agreed to allow Town Meeting make the decision.

Mr. Ross noted that if it passes at Town Meeting, it will need to go to the Legislature for approval.

Update on Signatory for the National Opioid Litigation

Mr. Ross reported that he signed off on preliminary documents for a settlement which was reached on the opioid litigation. He advised the Board to authorize the new Town Administrator, Jeffrey Bridges to be the signatory going forward on behalf of the Town.

A motion to authorize incoming Town Administrator Jeffrey Bridges as the Signatory for the National Opioid Litigation (Pepe/Grigg) passed 5/0.

Town Administrator's Report

Update on Questions Relative to the Audit of Revolving Fund Accounts

Mr. Ross reported: Tom Scanlon, of Scanlon and Associates advised that the same methodology for audits is used in all communities; it is a standard audit. He requested they specifically review the process for changes made regarding the Planning Board Revolving Account and also pull samples for the FMPC Road Improvement project.

Citizen's Input

Matt Defosse: \$12,000 seems expensive to change the traffic signal and would like more details on the breakdown of the cost and suggested having all signals turn red at same time to shorten the duration of the delay. He believes the Board name change is petty and should be dealt with if the time comes. In terms of the audit, the people in Town should be clear on what they want to be reviewed.

Board Member and Staff Comments

Mr. Pepe said the Parade of Lights was a success and thanked Donnie and Wendy Berthiaume for their efforts. He asked if the auditors review both financials and procedures. Mr. Ross said they include both. There was some discussion on a deeper dive for the next audit. Mr. Pepe suggested a standard audit may not be wide enough; he will provide suggestions for a more detailed audit in the future.

Mr. Grigg asked to revisit COVID bonuses for emergency personnel at the next meeting.

Request for Executive Session under Mass General Laws, Chapter 30A, 21(a) (3), to discuss strategy with respect to potential litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the Town and the Chair so declares: Mass Broken Stone

This item has been postponed to date to be determined.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Savoie
Executive Assistant

Referenced documents: VHB Proposal; Opioid Litigation documents