

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REMOTE MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 2022**

Members Present: Shana M. Shufelt, Chair
 Steven J. Ouellette, Vice Chair
 Richard W. Brewer, Clerk
 Ann E. Boxler

Members Absent: Brian Valcourt

Also Present: James Hartnett, Town Administrator

Select Board Chair Shana Shufelt, called the remote meeting to order at 6:04PM.

6:04PM Pledge of Allegiance

Chair's Announcement – Under MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f) – Meeting being recorded. *Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the **Westport Board of Selectmen** is being conducted via remote participation. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings as provided for in the Order. A reminder that persons who would like to listen to or view this meeting while in progress may do so by following the remote links listed on the posting on line. An audio recording of this meeting will be posted on the town's website as soon as we are able.*

1. Acknowledgments & Recognitions

2. Covid Update

Ms. Shufelt summarized the Covid update, there were 939 cases, and one additional death as of 7:30 am on January 31st, the positivity rate is 24.26%, based on daily caseload data so far, still not great but down from last week. The Temporary Face Mask order in effect will expire March 7, 2022. The next town vaccination clinic will be held Friday, February 18th from 3:00 – 6:30pm at the old high school.

3. Public Hearings

4. Licenses/Permits

5. Appointments and Resignations

- a. Request from Chief Pelletier to re-appoint Turner K. Ryan to Full-Time Police officer.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to re-appoint Turner Ryan as a Full Time Officer, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Ms. Shufelt aye.

- b. Request from Chris Gonsalves; Highway Department to appoint Brian R. Legendre as a Special Equipment Operator.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to appoint Brian R. Legendre as a Special Equipment Operator for the Highway Department, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

6. Discussion

- a. The Cable Advisory Board update on the Cable License Renewal Process, and seeks input and guidance for a timeline and priorities.

Irene Buck, Rene Kochman, Robert Daylor and John Resendes, presented to the board the importance of reviewing the current contract which expires in 2023, with 4700 subscribers it is very important to keep the public informed, however to keep in mind that this is a 10 year contract. This contract deeply effects Town Government and The School Department. Mr. Brewer questioned if Charter was our only option. Irene Buck answered, the only “out” would be if there were significant issues. Spectrum has a lot invested in the town. The Cable Advisory Board is interested in hearing what the Board is looking for when negotiating this new contract, and what the Board expects of the Cable Advisory Board. Mr. Ouellette stated he would really like to see local office hours again. Ms. Shufelt stated she has received complaints how the rates keep going up and the service is getting worse. Mr. Kochman stated that the Cable Companies just want you to sign on the dotted lines and be done with it, it is important to pose concerns. Ms. Buck stated that we need to gather needs with reality to go back to them with. Ms. Shufelt emphasized the importance of meeting accessibility. She questioned the timeline the Cable Advisory Board is looking at for their input. Ms. Buck stated they would like to come back to the board in May or June with an outline. Mr. Daylor mentioned coming back to the board with a draft in October or November. Ms. Shufelt added, after the Holidays but before Town Meeting. David Cole offered the Cable Advisory Board use of the survey they conducted about the current cable situation. Ms. Shufelt suggested reaching out to surrounding communities to compare. Ms. Buck noted it’s hard to project 5-10 years out.

- b. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Discussion

Budget Discussion continued from previous meetings, Ms. Shufelt reminded the Board that according Town By Law, the Selectmen has to present a balanced budget to the Finance Committee by 2/20, at the February 14th meeting. Mr. Hartnett noted that since the last meeting a few more figures have come down, State Aid has increased by \$241,362 however State Assessments have gone up by \$205, 297, leaving the 36,065 increase minimal at best. School Choice and Charter School Tuition has increased significantly over the years from 2013 to present, School Choice from 11,850 – 557,872 and Charter School from 97,750 – 678, 626. For the first time School Choice has leveled off, while Charter Schools increased by \$100,00. Mr. Brewer questions if this number represented an

increase in the number of students or cost per student. Mr. Hartnett will look into this. Mr. Hartnett shared some good news that the Diman figures are coming in lower than anticipated. Mr. Hartnett discussed the proposed cuts. Karen Raus is concerned with the timeline as to the school getting their budget to the Board of Selectmen as they do not meet until February 8th, and wondered if the Board would wait for their numbers or stick with the 54/46 split. Mr. Hartnett recommended the 54/46 split. Ms. Shufelt conquered with the 54/46 split, with the possibility of looking into free cash to cover some of the shortfall. Ms. Shufelt asked if the Board had any proposed changes. Mr. Brewer mentioned he was comfortable with the Budget as it stands. Mr. Ouellette questioned if the Charter/School Choice increases are taken out of the School Budget, Ms. Shufelt answered it comes off of the top before the 54/46 split, it does not come out of the School Budget.

7. Action Items

a. Hix Bridge Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project Support Letter

Ms. Shufelt stated the project would be to remove debris from previous structures, effecting the overall flow of the river. This project was proposed 10 or so years ago. Funding is the issue as the town portion will be \$1,000,000, she will be meeting with Legislators to discuss other possible funding options. Michael Sullivan stated it makes sense to wait, this project has excellent potential to improve water quality, however the town shouldn't have to pick up the bill, and he will seek feedback from the Watershed Alliance. Ms. Shufelt suggested waiting until the next meeting, no action was taken.

b. Request to use \$60,000 of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding for the Westport Harbor Water Study

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to use \$60,000 of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding for the Westport Harbor Water Study, seconded by Ms. Boxler. The Board voted 3-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, and Shufelt aye. Mr. Ouellette stepped away from the meeting before the vote.

Mr. Brewer added that ARPA does support the development of new public wells, this would benefit a number of homes in the Harbor.

c. Request to use \$25,000 of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding for the Entry Point Networks Consulting Service Agreement, to develop a fiber optic feasibility study.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to use \$25,000 of American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding for the Entry Point Networks Consulting Service Agreement, to develop a fiber optic feasibility study, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

Keith Novo added that this company provides fiber optic support assistance and is being used in surrounding communities. David Cole spoke fully in support of this, the Master Plan Update Sub-Committee met with Entry Point they do excellent work. This would be parallel to the current cable situation, and is delighted that ARPA funds will cover this.

- d. Request to use American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to hire a consultant/engineer to oversee infrastructure projects including design of public water and sewer projects.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to use American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds to hire a consultant/engineer to oversee infrastructure projects including design of public water and sewer projects, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

- e. The Long Term Building Committee is requesting approval to release the Request for Information for the former High School.

Don Davidson wanted to thank the Long Term Building Committee Members, this will help the Committee/Town get a feel for what residents would like to see happen to the old high school, the prospect of Nursing Home, Assisted Living and Condos have all been proposed. Mr. Ouellette questioned if there would be any deed restrictions on the property, Mr. Hartnett will look into. Ms. Shufelt stated she was happy to see this moving forward.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to release the Request for Information for the former High School, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

- f. Request to accept the following donations from the Westport Council Aging for the period of November 17, 2021 to December 31, 2021. Best Use \$870, Social Day Scholarship Program \$500, Hospitality \$20 and Tech Class \$25 totaling \$1415.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to accept the donations presented, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

- g. Request by Planning Board to consider amendments to the Town's Zoning By-Laws.

Mr. Ouellette questioned if the Planning Board will hold public meetings in regards to these amendments, Mr. Hartnett answered yes.

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette refer the amendments to the Town's Zoning By-Laws, to the Planning Board, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

- h. Request from David Cole to create an Internet Advisory Committee.

Mr. Cole added that this is a follow up recommendation from the Master Plan Update, following suit with Fairhaven. He suggested the group work closely with Keith Novo, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board and Cable Advisory Board. Mr. Ouellette and Ms. Shufelt both agreed that this is important.

MOTION by Ms. Boxler to create an Internet Advisory Committee, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Boxler aye, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, and Shufelt aye.

8. Town Administrator Report

Route 6 Sewer Design

The Planning Board has been working with Kleinfelder Engineering on the design of a public sewer main along the Route 6 Corridor. The preliminary design for Phase 1A (Fall River line easterly to Route 88) has been completed and the contract for final design will

be presented to the Board of Selectmen at this meeting. Final design of Phase 1A is being completely funded with by the “Rural and Small Communities Grant”. Preliminary design for the remainder of Route 6 is underway and test borings should begin within the next couple of weeks.

Green Communities

The Town’s energy consultant, Kathleen Stanley has been working on a number of projects for the Town. She completed a preliminary review of the Town Hall and Town Hall Annex heating systems and she will be looking to see if replacement would qualify for energy or state grant funding.

In order to maximize the net metering credits the Town receives from the solar contracts, reallocation for Town buildings must be completed. Kathleen Stanley has been working with Town Accountant Nicole Pearsall, on reallocating these percentages and allocating the unused energy credits to Town Accounts.

9. Approve Minutes

a. January 18, 2022

MOTION by Mr. Brewer to approve the January 18, 2022 Minutes, seconded by Mr. Ouellette. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote, Brewer aye, Ouellette aye, Shufelt aye and Boxler aye.

10. Report on Bill Warrant

Small no issues reported.

11. Selectmen Liaison Committee Reports & Suggestions for Future Agenda Discussion / Action

Ms. Boxler - Affordable Housing & Long Term Building Committee moving along.

Mr. Brewer – ARPA application process is now up and running, Mr. Hartnett & Ms. Pearsall are working on this. CIPC Meeting February 8, 2022 to wrap up recommendations. Southeast Transit Authority discontinuing intercity service between Fall River and New Bedford on Saturdays, they are having staffing issues.

Mr. Ouellette – Bike Path Committee plugging along.

Ms. Shufelt – School Building Committee, wrapping up punch list in hoped to get an occupancy permit, the project is still under budget. The School Building Budget Subcommittee is working really hard on the Budget. Ms. Shufelt noted she was meeting with State Legislators in regards to the Hix Bridge Project.

12. Comments and Statements

13. Boards/Committees/Commissions Vacancy List


14. Topics not reasonably anticipated forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the meeting.

15. Executive Session


Adjournment

MOTION by Mr. Ouellette to adjourn the meeting at 7:44pm, seconded by Mr. Brewer. The Board voted 4-0 in favor by roll call vote: Brewer, aye; Ouellette, aye; Boxler, aye; Shufelt, aye.

Respectfully submitted,


Paula M. Brown
Administrative Assistant

APPROVED: _____


Richard Brewer, Clerk
Select Board Member

Files

1-31-22 RFI Former Westport High School
1-31-22 RFP Westport Harbor Hydrogeologic Study
5a WPD Office Ryan
5b Hwy Dept Hire – Legendre
7a Hix Bridge
7f COA Donations
7g ATM 22 Zoning Amendment Articles
7h Internet Advisory Committee
9a 01182022 Minutes
01312022 Habel Letter.doc
After Blizzard 2022 Report
Board of Selectmen to Planning Board
BoH COVID Update 1.28.22
BoH COVID Update 1.28.22
Entry Point Networks Consulting Service Agreement