



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
SELECTBOARD

Blandford Town Hall
1 Russell Stage Road Suite 1
Blandford, MA 01008

**TOWN OF BLANDFORD
MEETING MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
July 29, 2019**

1. OPEN SESSION 7:00 pm

C. Letendre, Chairman; ~~E. MeVey, Clerk—Absent~~; T. Ackley, Member; J. Garcia, Town Administrator

Meeting called to order at 7:01 pm Meeting is recorded Meeting held at Blandford Town Hall

2. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

- a. Examination of the Meeting Minutes of Board of Selectmen Meeting of June 24, 2019
- b. Examination of the Meeting Minutes of Board of Selectmen Meeting of July 01, 2019
- c. Examination of the Meeting Minutes of Board of Selectmen Meeting of July 25, 2019

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to table the meeting minutes Items 2a, 2b and 2c until the next Board of Selectmen meeting.

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to go out of order in the agenda and take up first Action Item 4c: Recommendation from the Treasurer/Collector to Appoint Susan Melo to the position of Clerk in the Treasurer/Collector's Office.

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

3. *AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

4. ACTION ITEMS:

- a. Review and Approve the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement between the Town of Blandford and Syncarpha Blandford, LLC

Garcia referenced the draft of this agreement stating that no approval is needed today as it has been sent back to Counsel for edits and for Roy Bishop to review.

b. Review and Approve the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement between the Town of Blandford and DG Massachusetts Solar, LLC

Garcia referenced the draft of this agreement stating that no approval is needed today as it has been sent back to Counsel for edits and for Roy Bishop to review.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to table Action Item 4a and 4b until the August 5, 2019 Board of Selectmen meeting.

**T. Ackley Seconded
All in Favor**

c. Recommendation from the Treasurer/Collector to Appoint Susan Melo to the position of Clerk in the Treasurer/Collector Office

Susan Melo joined the Board to discuss the open position of Clerk in the Treasurer/Collector's office. Sara Hunter, Treasurer/Collector, reported to the Board a summary of her experience and mentioned that her references came back strong. Sara believes she will be a good fit for the town. Garcia noted that the position was posted for two weeks on our Town website and the opening was shared in the Westfield Newspaper. Susan will work part time Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Susan Melo as Clerk in the Treasurer/Collector's office.

**T. Ackley Seconded
All in Favor**

d. Review and Approve Fire Chief Contract

Garcia recommended to the Board that they review the Fire Chief's Contract in Executive Session with the intent to reconvene in open session for vote to approve/disapprove, table, etc. the contract. Cara mentioned she would like to see strategic goals established with the Fire Chief position which can be measured in 90 days. Garcia also noted that there is language in the contract stating that we put together a scope of expectation that the Town hopes the Chief will accomplish in 90 days. At that point, we can give him some benchmarks going forward.

e. Draft Town Credit Card Use Policy

Garcia talked about the process and purpose of drafting this policy. This card will be used in situations where a purchase is required immediately which cannot wait for the next warrant period such as purchasing postage stamps, local store purchases or off-premise workshops. This policy will be strictly monitored and controlled. The board was given the first draft of this proposed policy for their review. The Board will study this policy and revisit at a future Board of Selectmen meeting. Garcia will circulate to each Town department for their review and recommendations.

MOTION: C. Latendre made a motion to table Action Item 4e: Draft Town Credit Card Policy until the August 26, 2019 Board of Selectmen meeting.

**T. Ackley Seconded
All in Favor**

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PRIOR MEETINGS:

a. Draft Vehicle Use Policy – Ongoing

Garcia presented the final version of this policy for review before being distributed to the individual departments. The Fire Chief suggested that the Town place in the policy a requirement of a fire extinguisher be placed in each of these vehicles. The Board agreed, although agreed it is not needed in the policy; we can just make it a directive. Ackley questioned that part of the policy where it notes that if a vehicle is not returned for 24 hours and is used to travel more than 25 miles, then it would be subject to a fee for additional fuel. Ackley recommended that this be removed from the policy as we expect to hire and keep good, honest people. Letendre suggested that we put in a statement that this is subject to approval of the BOS to waive the fee. Ackley recommended striking this entire part of the policy. Letendre agreed. Garcia mentioned that he will remove this section. This subject will be revisited at the August 26, 2019 BOS meeting as an action item for approval upon circulation and review of Town departments.

6. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Notice of Rate Increase from KP Law, Town Counsel

Effective October 1, 2019, KP Law has increased their hourly rate from \$180 to \$190 with paralegals at one-half that amount. Letendre questioned whether the budget is able to cover this increase. Garcia noted that we did not go over-budget on the Town Counsel line item last fiscal year. Garcia reminded the Board that KP Law is not a for-profit organization. They are part of the Massachusetts Municipal Association and their invoices always include a detailed list of what they have worked on which can and is easily verified.

b. Highway Department Searching for Summer Help (Seasonal) Candidates to fill two open positions

Joshua presented the job description for two open summer help (seasonal) positions that has been posted on the Town website for two weeks and also posted in the Country Journal. Garcia mentioned that Selectmen McVey had a particular concern regarding the pay rate and if whether or not it was in line with what's allowed in the union contract. Garcia connected with the Highway Superintendent and suggested that he speak with the Union Representative as well as the union attorney to cross verify and ensure there isn't any overstepping with these particular positions of seasonal summer help. The Highway Superintendent communicated with union reps and confirmed the position has nothing to do with the union and all agreed to proceed. The Town is looking for two candidates 16 years of age and older, preferably from Town, that need some summer hours and can assist the Highway Department with mowing and weed whacking. Candidates will be approved by the Board.

c. Review and Discuss FY20 SMART Goal to Achieve Ongoing Efforts of Establishing an Effective and Efficient Systems Management and Operations of Municipal Finance

Garcia presented the Systems Management Goals and Operations of Municipal Finance Goals to the Board reminding them that in his first year with the town he presented Smart Goal strategies for FY19 which included a series of objectives and strategies on how we can best navigate resources in order to implement an efficient system of management and operation of our finances. A lot of the FY19 Smart Goals have been accomplished; others we are still working on. The draft version of the FY20 Smart Goals will be reviewed and approved at the August 5, 2019 Finance Committee meeting. Garcia stated that the objectives and strategies that have not been accomplished in FY19 have been moved to the FY20 period and he incorporated many of the recommendation provided by the auditors to improve identified deficiencies. The goal behind this is to establish cross-departmental communication and collaboration to

insure that we are all on the same page moving forward around expectations with finance. Garcia noted that he recognizes this is still the Town's #1 goal – to improve the Town's position in municipal finance and hopes that as we continue to work on our objectives, we show some sign of improvement in our next audit and not revisit the same problems. Letendre remarked that these objectives the TA has formulated are very clear. Garcia shared that his goal is to establish a strong enough operating system in Town so that it's fluid. Letendre mentioned that she met with the Water Department to share the management letter with them because it directly spoke about the Water Department not reconciling to the general ledger. Cara talked to the Treasurer/Collector about it; she has some ideas about how to improve this going forward. Letendre is requesting that the Water Department come up with a plan to meet some of the objectives that relate to them such as establishing a Capital Asset plan and they need to work on their Capital Improvement plan as well. Garcia recommended that we utilize a consultant that specializes in these areas to work with their department. Letendre agreed and mentioned that the Water Department is switching to reading the water meters which is going to change our billing processes. She stated that may be a good time to hire a consultant. M. Kronholm asked Garcia how many of the FY19 Smart Goals were achieved. Garcia gave a summary of each of the established goals and strategies. After reviewing each of the goals, he noted that a majority of these goals have either been accomplished or are still actively ongoing.

6d. Highway Department Cooperation with the Fire Department

Tom Ackley wanted to mention that the Fire Department was on a call where they needed more resources. They asked the Highway Department for a loader. Rene Senecal sent the loader and a pick-up with extra equipment. Tom wants it known that the Highway Department was extremely cooperative.

6e. Animal Control Shelter for Animals

TJ Cousineau reported to the Board that the ACO officer has ordered the animal retention shelter for the use of the ACO officer and police to safely hold animals that have been found loose or in trouble in town. This unit will be located on Cemetery property by a shed they are building. TJ stated that they will make sure the building has water access and proper lighting. M. Kronholm will post a notice in the Country Journal when it is completed and ready for use.

6f. Gateway Regional School Law-Suit Discussion

Garcia mentioned that this executive session meeting will be held at Stanton Hall in Huntington on September 4 at 6:00 pm to discuss the on-going litigation regarding the school budget. Letendre, Garcia and Ackley stated that they will attend.

6g. Upcoming MMA Conference

The Town Administrator invited the Board to register for this conference in January 2020. He noted that it is an excellent source of information with a very busy itinerary and this is a conference he attends every year and is planning on attending. Garcia shared with the Board all costs and secured approval to proceed with registering. This has been budgeted for 2020 for the TA to attend as well as one member of the Board of Selectmen should any one of them want to attend as well. If a member plans on attending, a decision will have to be made by December, 2019 to get the discount.

7. OTHER BUSINESS, IF ANY:

a. Town Crier Sign – Post Office Parking Lot

Pamela Rideout was kind enough to sand and repaint the 'town crier' sign, located in the Post Office parking lot, and replace the post toppers. She also questioned the condition of Bicentennial Park noting

that it is in 'bad shape'. Cara mentioned this used to be maintained by the Garden Club which no longer exists. Cara suggested we need to hire a company to do some landscaping in Bicentennial Park because it has been neglected. Garcia asked if Bicentennial Park has its own trust fund or is it part of the Watson Park Trust. The Board confirmed to Garcia that it has its own trust and not part of the Watson Park Trust. Garcia will look into the trust fund. Garcia mentioned procuring an actual landscape firm, not for maintaining, but to give it a facelift at both parks so town employees/volunteers can maintain it going forward. He mentioned that he observed what is needed at Watson Park specifically and stated there is a lot of work that needs to be done that cannot be easily done by an individual without the adequate tools to accomplish this task. Letendre agreed and asked if the Town Administrator can get quotes to see if this is something we can accomplish.

7b. Water Department Secretary

Joann Martin has been helping out as the Water Department Secretary and would prefer to see the Water Department look for a permanent employee who has more skill and knowledge about water regulations, etc. In the meantime, Martin will maintain their clerical needs.

8. MEETING ADJOURNED:

Open Session Meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move into Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and to later reconvene in open session.

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

Roll Call Out: C. Letendre – Yes T. Ackley – Yes E. McVey - Absent

9EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Executive session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct contract negotiations with nonunion personnel.

Open Session meeting reconvened at 9:02 pm

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to reconvene into regular session to discuss Action Item d. Review and Approve Fire Chief Contract

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

Roll Call In: C. Letendre – Yes T. Ackley – Yes E. McVey - Absent

MOTION: T. Ackley made a motion to approve Edward Harvey's contract for Fire Chief of Blandford for one year effective today.

C. Letendre Seconded

T. Ackley invoked the order of necessity to approve the vote today in Eric McVey's absence and Tom Ackley is filing papers to the Board of Ethics

All in Favor

**MOTION: T. Ackley made a motion to appoint Edward Harvey as Fire Chief as of July 1, 2019.
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

Open Session Meeting Adjourns at 9:39 pm

*NOTE: Audience participation / public comment is welcome only when acknowledged by the Chair and is limited to two minutes. Participation / public comment is limited to Blandford residents and can only comment on agenda items.

**NOTE: Agenda may include items not reasonably expected 48 hours before the meeting. At any point, this meeting may go into executive session if the Board of Selectmen find it warranted.

Submitted by: Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

Cara Letendre, Chairman

Absent
Eric McVey, Clerk

Thomas Akley, Member