



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
SELECT BOARD

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

**MEETING MINUTES
BLANDFORD SELECT BOARD
January 25, 2021
6:00 pm**

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 limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Blandford Select Board will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting may do so by visiting either of the following options:

- **Zoom Video Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87116077710>
- **Meeting ID:** 871 1607 7710
- **Phone Dial In:** 1-929-205-6099, dial in meeting ID when prompted

No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted unless you are on the agenda ahead of time, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Town of Blandford website a transcript or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

If you have any comment regarding items that are on the agenda, please forward to Joann Martin, Administrative Assistant, at Selectboardadmin@townofblandford.com or 413-848-4279 x206.

1. Open Session at 6:00 pm

Meeting is recorded

Meeting held virtually/Zoom

In attendance: C. Letendre, Chairman; E. McVey, Member; T. Ackley, Member; J. Garcia, Town Administrator

2. EXAMINATION OF THE MEETING MINUTES:

a. Examination of the Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2021

MOTION: T. Ackley made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 11, 2021 as written
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor

b. Examination of the Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2021

MOTION: E. McVey made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 20, 2021 as written
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor

c. Examination of the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2020 as written

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the Executive Session Meeting Minutes of January 11, 2021 as written

T. Ackley Seconded
All in Favor

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to 6c. Meeting with Pete Sparks to discuss ongoing concern regarding Gate 20 located on Julius Hall Road

T. Ackley Seconded
All in Favor

3. *AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION/PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

4. ACTION ITEMS:

a. Review and take action on Contract between the Town and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for FY2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) of \$449,825

Garcia asked that the Board review this contract between the Town and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and approve at the next Select Board meeting as there are still some adjustments needed to the contract. He reminded the Board that these funds are focused on two things: 1) Housing rehab modifications for income eligible residents and 2) Town compliance ADA transition plan for each of our public buildings.

b. Review and take action on contract between the Town and Massachusetts Department of Revenue Senior Deputy Commissioner for Local Services on behalf of the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (EOAF) for \$15,000 Community Compact grant for costs associated with the development of a wage and classification plan

Garcia applied for a community compact grant through the Commonwealth and the town was awarded this grant to do a wage classification study and schedule. Garcia explained that this will not only include looking into pay scale for part/time and full/time employees, but also stipends for those who received them including looking into stipends for boards and committees – a recurring topic that keeps coming up every year. The grant through this contract being voted on tonight will pay for a qualified consultant who will work with an appointed advisory group through this study and oversee this process.

MOTION: E. McVey made a motion to approve the contract between the Town and MA DOR Senior Deputy Commissioner for Local Services on behalf of the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance for \$15,000 Community Compact Grant for costs associated with the development of a wage and classification plan

C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor

c. Review and take action on contract between the Town and Massachusetts Department of Revenue Senior Deputy Commissioner for Local Services on behalf of the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (EOAF) for \$20,000 Community Compact Grant for costs associated with the development of a capital improvement plan

Garcia reported this grant amount comes from the Commonwealth's Community Compact grant program and it is specifically for the purpose of putting together a capital improvement plan that will be a tangible and useful document when we are working on our annual budget and funding capital projects.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to accept the contract between the Town and Massachusetts Department of Revenue Senior Deputy Commissioner for Local Services on behalf of the Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (EOAF) for \$20,000 Community Compact grant for costs associated with the development of a capital improvement plan

E. McVey Seconded

All in Favor

d. Receive quarterly Animal Control Activity Report

McVey mentioned an incident reported on this report that is concerning. Allegedly, somebody called from the Town Hall pretending to be our former Animal Control Officer informing this resident how to properly capture a dog. The current ACO, Teresa Donovan did not make this call. Garcia reported that it is premature to assume such until we can confirm the allegation, it can be a misunderstanding. He said Chief Ilnicki is looking into this allegation and he will report back. The Board mentioned that it is important to see these quarterly reports.

MOTION: E. McVey made a motion to accept the quarterly activity report from the Animal Control Officer.

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

e. Review and take action on the Town's Annual Report to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) as required by M.G.L. Ch. 138 S. 10A

Garcia explained to the Board that this is the Town's annual report to the ABCC reporting on the number of licenses issued in Town as well as the established fees, revenue generated and a list of all violations and actions and findings of these violations for calendar year 2020.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the Town's Annual Report to the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission as required by M.G. L. Ch. 138 S. 10A.

T. Ackley Seconded

All in Favor

f. Review and take action to authorize the Town Administrator and the Treasurer/Collector as agents of the Town on the Commercial Card Resolution form regarding Business/Corporate Card Agreement Authorization with People's United Bank

M. Kronholm researched and sent this application from People's United Bank to the Town Treasurer as a tool for Town Department's to use when making small purchases such as stamps, training seminars, etc. Garcia reminded the Board that a Credit Card Policy had been previously approved by the Board. He explained that the credit card will be kept and maintained by the Town Administrator's office and will signed in and out on an

as-needed basis and returned after each use and there will be on-line monitoring of the activities of the credit card to maintain accountability.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer/Collector as agents of the Town on the Commercial Card Resolution Form regarding Business/Corporate Card Agreement Authorization with People’s United Bank.

E. McVey Seconded

All in Favor

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PRIOR MEETINGS:

a. COVID-19 Update

J. Girard met with the Board for a recent COVID update. She reported that we will move into Phase II on February 1, 2021.

b. Warrant for Special Town Meeting February 22, 2021

The Board reviewed the changes and additions to the Warrant for the February 22, 2021 Special Town Meeting. Garcia explained the final changes made which have been vetted by Town Counsel.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the Warrant for the next Special Town Meeting on February 22, 2021 with the amendment on Page #1 that replaces ‘Annual Town Meeting’ with ‘Special Town Meeting’

E. McVey Seconded

All in Favor

6. NEW BUSINESS:

a. All Department Expense Report

The Board reviewed the current All Department Expense Report and found no issues.

b. Municipal Schedule for 2021 from Town Clerk’s Office

M. Kronholm was available to report on this Municipal Schedule to the Board for 2021. She reported that the State is contemplating giving Town’s permission to move the date of the Annual Town election if needed. The Board will take this into advisement.

c. Meeting with Pete Sparks to discuss ongoing concern regarding Gate 20 located on Julius Hall Road

Pete Spark, Blandford Cemetery Commissioner, met with the Board to discuss the ongoing problem with Gate #20 on Julius Hall Road. Sparks reported to the Board that he is continuing to be harassed on Julius Hall Road by State Police when he uses his ATV to access the Cemetery. Sparks was responding to a tree-limb-down report at the Beach Hill Cemetery. He reported that he lives on Julius Hall Road and the only access to the cemetery is past Gate #20. When he returned home, he found that the State Police had questioned his wife and were waiting for him to return. He stated that they are patrolling Julius Hall Road often 3 times a day and that he is forced to bring documentation with him to move along this road in order to explain his business and association with the Town when the police inevitably stop him. He stated that he always presents his documentation and some of his interactions are pleasant but 90% of these interactions are very confrontational. He also reported that his wife will no longer walk on the road they live on because they are harassed so frequently. Sparks will meet with J. Martin, Administrative Assistant to acquire a Town ID Card. Letendre stated that they will speak, again, to Springfield Water to inform the State Police they should stop harassing

Sparks so he can maintain the cemetery as part of his job. Letendre said they are still working with Springfield Water to remove the gate all together as this road is a public way.

d. Board of Health – Vaccine Clinic

Girard reported that she is working with the State to establishing a Covid-19 Vaccine Clinic in Blandford which she hopes will be up and running by mid-to-late February. This clinic will be available for Blandford Residents only. Girard will work with the Council On Aging to be sure those folks that don't have access to the internet are notified and given any help needed to access this program.

e. Discuss the expired Families First Act and possibly extending for Blandford employees

Garcia explained that this Federal Act was passed allowing businesses to offer their full-time employees, those that get diagnosed with COVID-19, up to an additional 80 sick hours over their already established accrued time. This Act has expired and Garcia is asking the Board if this is something they want to extend and support for Town employees noting that this can be a serious burden on families.

f. McVey's Announcement that he will not run as Select Board Member in 2021

E. McVey officially announced that he will not be seeking re-election to the Select Board in May 2021.

7. OTHER BUSINESS, IF ANY

a. Bay State Health \$25,000 for Outreach Coordinator

Garcia spoke of this grant that he and the Director of the Council on Aging, Margit Mikuski worked on and the Town was awarded \$25,000. This grant will allow the town to hire an outreach coordinator so that we can assess the digital needs of our elderly population to help understand where the gap is and how to bridge that gap. The idea is that residents can contact this outreach coordinator and receive help signing up for Broadband or helping them with their digital needs, etc. A large piece of this grant is going to cover the cost of laptops for those who are income eligible.

b. Municipal Light Board – Additional Hot Spots for Town hall

MLB reported that they will be able to put additional hot spots at the Town Hall. The Board thought this would be beneficial for the Board of Health when they start up their vaccine clinic. Garcia will ask the Municipal Light Board to proceed with this installation.

c. OPM Review of 10 Proposals received

Garcia reported on the Owners Project Manager proposals. Ten proposals have been received to date which is a lot more than he had anticipated. On February 2, the Advisory Committee, TJ Cousineau, Rene Senecal, Tom Ackley and Josh Garcia will convene and begin reviewing these proposals.

d. Swearing-In of Police Chief Tammy Weidhaas

The Town of Chester will be holding a swearing-in ceremony for the newly hired Police Chief, Tammy Weidhaas Monday, February 1 at 6:00 pm at the Chester Town Hall.

e. Shepherd's Farm

Garcia told the Board he will begin actively looking into the situation at Shepherd's Farm. What he hopes to accomplish is to have a future public meeting with the Board to have a discussion about what the board wants the town to do with this property. He is looking into options available, what the solutions may be and vet out the pros and cons to come up with a consensus of what the town can do with this property.

f. Bridge on Russell Stage Road – Senecal

Senecal spoke of the problem with the ice build-up on the overpass on Russell Stage Road. He reported that 50% of the problem has been solved but it is still a large and potentially dangerous problem. He said the Town has been spending a great deal of time and money trying to mitigate this problem. This is a State problem, he reported, which they have agreed to but they have reported that they cannot get to it until the spring. Blandford Highway can only do so much to ‘repair’ this because it is bridge footing for the MA Pike so the Town cannot do these repairs. Senecal is taking pictures and documenting the time and resources the Town has been spending to maintain as best they can and will request that the Town be reimbursed by the State for the large amount of materials and time spent on this.

8. TABLED ITEMS:

a. Discuss creating a committee to research and provide recommendations for stipends for elected and appointed Town Boards, Commissions and Committees that exist per Town Bylaws.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to Executive Session in accordance with G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct contract negotiations with non-union personnel not to reconvene.

Roll Call Vote: C. Letendre, Aye T. Ackley, Aye E. McVey, Aye

9.MEETING ADJOURNED:**

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm

10.*EXECUTIVE SESSION:

a. Anticipated executive session in accordance with G.L. 30A, s. 21(a)(1) to discuss complaints or charges brought against a public officer, employee, staff member or individual not to reconvene

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

**NOTE: Agenda may include items not reasonably expected 48 hours before the meeting. At any point this meeting may go into executive section if Selectboard finds it warranted.

Submitted by: Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Select Board
and Town Administrator

Cara Letendre, Chairman

Eric McVey, Clerk

Thomas Ackley, Member