



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Select Board

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

MEETING MINUTES
BLANDFORD SELECT BOARD
January 26, 2023
5:30 pm

Meeting held in the Select Board Chamber, Town Hall

In attendance: C. Letendre, Chair-Absent; J. Allen, Member-Absent; T. Cousineau; Member; C. Dunne, Town Administrator

Meeting Open at 5:30 pm
Meeting is recorded

1. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a. *Examination of the Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2022*

MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2022, as written

C. Letendre Seconded

All in Favor

b. *Examination of the Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2022*

Tabled

MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to move to Action Item 4f: Appointment of Interim Fire Chief

C. Letendre Seconded

All in Favor

2. *AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

a. *Highway Department-D. Waldron*

-Bridge Welding: The Nye Brook bridge that the Town owns needs repair. J. Allen mentioned that he is able to weld if this could be a solution to the problem. Waldron looked into this and found that Allen would need to be State qualified to take care of this job. Waldron reached out to Guard Rail Solutions to repair the bridge at \$7,000.

-Stabilization Account: Waldron is suggesting setting up a Stabilization account for Highway in case of emergencies. Dunne will investigate this and discuss with the Collins Center during the development of the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to Action Item 4e: Zoning Board of Appeals Kim Bergland for the period January 26, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

b. Town Administrator-Christopher Dunne

i. Budget/Finance

- 1. FY24 budget** hearings with Finance Committee scheduled for January 24th, 31st and February 1.

-The FY24 Budget meetings will begin January 24 through February 1, 2023. Finance. January 24 included the Planning Board, Council on Aging, Fire Department, Recreation Committee. Additional meetings are scheduled for next week.

ii. Grants

- 1. Efficiency & Regionalization: Shared Water Operator** project update and next meeting scheduled tentatively for February 16.

-Dunne reported that the meeting this month was a productive one with the Town of Chester Water Commissioners. The focus will be to share Steve Grondin, Blandford Water Department employee, between Chester and Blandford. Grondin is in the process of getting a license which requires a certain number of hours so by making him a full-time employee shared by both Towns, he will be able to complete the process sooner while providing much-needed support to both Water Commissions. Additionally, Gateway has offered a pipeline to their students who may be interested in becoming a water operator. They recently visited the Westfield Water Treatment Plant. They will be helping the Water Department with everything from mowing the lawn to learning about treatment plant and distribution system operations.

- 2. Baystate Health Better Together: the next computer training** is scheduled January 30 at 5pm.

-The next computer training will be next week, January 30, at 5:30 pm. The first training session was well attended and Dunne has heard from many of the same folks returning for the second training.

iii. Other Departments

- 1. Water Department: Historical Society water bill**

-Chips Norcross met with the Board to discuss the recent water bill submitted to the Historical Society. The Historical Society has not paid a water bill in the past but has recently been receiving them. The Board decided that the Historical Society would bills would be covered by the Town until the Blandford Water Department is fully set up as a metered system rather than a flat rate across users. Dunne noted that once the building is metered, their water bill will be very small.

- 2. Fire Department: applications for Fire Chief position** extended to January 24 at noon.

-Adam Dolby has been appointed as Interim Fire Chief while the Town searches for Chief Mottor's replacement.

3. Treasurer-Collector: applications for **Assistant Treasurer-Collector position** to close January 24 at noon; Screening Subcommittee to meet Thursday, January 26 if needed.
-Dunne reported receiving 5 applications for this position. Three met the minimum requirements. The screening committee is starting its interviews. A decision will be made at the next Select Board meeting February 1, 2023.

iv. Ongoing Projects

1. **Legislative update:** Rep. Boldyga filing Cobble Mountain Road/Reservoir reopening, Blandford volunteer firefighter tax break bills.
-Last week was bill filing week in the Legislature. Representative Boldyga's office filed three Bills for the Town of Blandford: One for Cobble Mountain Road regarding re-opening the road. He also filed our Volunteer Firefighter Tax Break Bill as well as legislation to validate actions at the June 2022 Annual Town Meeting.
2. **Fire/Highway facility:** Alternatives Evaluation Committee/Subcommittee structure.
-Now that the Town has an interim Fire Chief, we can put this project in motion again. Dunne spoke about forming a committee with the objective being to focus on making a recommendation to the Select Board about whether or not we can move forward with the current Owner's Project Manager and the original plan with a vote at Annual Town Meeting. The Board agrees there has to be some kind of objective. Cousineau believes it should be made especially clear that residents should take into consideration the MA State requirements that are in place for putting procuring construction contracts for municipal buildings. Cousineau pointed to the amount of 'guessing' that was taking place at the Special Town Meeting. Cousineau believes any person that is on this committee must be educated as to the parameters we are required to work within and realize we cannot just do what we want here. The Board spoke of constructing some kind of structured outreach to the community and overcoming the various and many roadblocks associated with this process. Dunne presents a newsletter monthly, the Country Journal posts our activities regularly and all Board meetings are open to the public as well as posted on the Town Website. Letendre mentioned that the Special Town Meeting saw many people who came out because they were angry. Letendre is wondering how we get this many people out to be willing to contribute to this project and learn as our Boards do to assist in this decision making without anger. Cousineau agreed that rumors started before this meeting and most of these rumors were untrue or shaded. The Board discussed the ongoing problems with social media negativity and unhealthy information being circulated and how to promote a positive social media platform in order to get the Town's information out to everybody, honestly and regularly. Ultimately the Board came to the conclusion that two residents should be added to the Building Committee and the meetings would be conducted with greater transparency.
3. **Belle Fleur:** Conservation Commission and Foresight working to address tree removal issues at site.

-Belle Fleur's contractor, Foresight, will be meeting with the Conservation Commission tonight to discuss tree removal. Belle Fleur and the Commission have been trying to work through these issues. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is collaborating with both parties.

4. **Ambulance Service:** Hilltown Community Ambulance Association discussing template contract at board meeting January 26 at 5pm.
-Hilltown Community Ambulance Association is meeting tonight. Unfortunately, due to another commitment, Dunne is not able to attend.

4. **ACTION ITEMS**

- a. Review and act on Fiscal Year 2023 **Warrant #14** for payment.

**MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve Warrant #14 for payment
T. Cousineau Seconded
All in Favor**

- b. Review and act on contract with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to **provide technical assistance with the Efficiency & Regionalization Grant** for the Blandford/Chester Shared Water Operator Effort in the amount of \$10,082.

**MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to approve the PVPC Efficiency & Regionalization Grant for the Blandford/Chester Shared Operator Effort in the amount of \$10,082.
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

- c. Review and act on application for **MIIA Wellness Grant** to support healthy snacks at Town Hall in the amount of \$5,000.

**MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to approve the application for MIIA Wellness Grant for healthy snacks
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

- d. Review and act on application for **District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)** funds from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for development of a permitting guide and flow chart for permitting processes, regional municipal financial software RFP and regional conservation/zoning services.
-Tabled as the deadline for applying was extended to February 13.

- e. Review and act on application of **Kim Bergland** to be appointed as a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to appoint Kim Bergland as Zoning Board of Appeals member for the term January 26, 2023, to June 30, 2024
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

**MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to Departmental Report 3b iii
Other Departments: Water Department Historical Society
T. Cousineau Seconded
All in Favor**

f. Appointment of **Interim Fire Chief**

**MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to appoint Adam Dolby as Interim Fire Chief for the Town of Blandford
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

The Board spoke of the interest regarding sharing a Fire Chief. In the meantime, Blandford will hire a fire chief and thank Adam for temporarily stepping up.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review **All Department Expenditure Report**

The Board reviewed the latest expenditure report and found no significant problems.

b. **Donation to Fire Department** from Otis Reservoir Property Owners Association \$100

**MOTION: T. Cousineau made a motion to accept the \$100.00 donation from Otis Reservoir Property Owner's Association
C. Letendre Seconded
All in Favor**

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm

Submitted by Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Select Board
and Christopher Dunne, Town Administrator

Cara Letendre, Chair

Absent
Jeffery Allen, Member

Theodore Cousineau, Member

