



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Select Board

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

**Joint Meeting with
Town of Blandford, Town of Chester
Select Boards and Finance Committees
May 15, 2023
6:00 PM**

Meeting held in the Select Board Chamber, Town Hall\

In attendance: C. Letendre, Blandford Chair; T. Cousineau, Blandford Member Absent; J. Allen, Blandford Member C. Dunne, Blandford Town Administrator; J. Lombardo, Blandford Finance; E. Weiss, PVPC, D. Humason, Chester Town Administrator; K. Green, Blandford Finance; D. Brodie, Blandford Finance; J. Baldasaro, Town of Chester Select Board and Town of Chester Finance Committee

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to biii2: Joint Fire Chief with Chester
J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

1. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a. Examination of the Select Board Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2023

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes of April 24, 2023, as written.
J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

2. *AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

a. Highway

-Line Painting on Basketball Court: Line painting of the hopscotch area and basketball courts has been completed.

-Rocks on Russell Stage Road: Waldron has contacted an engineering company to evaluate this situation.

-Highway Open House: Letendre inquired about the recent Highway open house Waldron hosted. He reported 7 people were there. Letendre noted that it's a shame that this is the third open house with little interest.

-Vacation: Waldron reported he would be on vacation from May 22 – May 26, 2023.

b. Town Administrator

i. Finance/Budget

1. FY24 budget process update

The Select Board, Town Administrator and Finance Committee reviewed the FY24 Budget line-by-line and made suggestions and edits.

ii. Grants

1. MassWorks Grant for Beech Hill Road Bridge

Dunne is working with Highway on the need to repave parts of Beech Hill Road. However, the main problem is the one-lane bridge on the road and inspected in 2019 which resulted in an issue that needs to be addressed. Dunne is applying for a grant. Ultimately, if we get this grant, we can start hiring an engineer in the fall and start construction in the spring.

2. New England Mountain Biking Association (NEMBA) grant for Shepard Farm:

The Town was awarded the \$1,000 grant Dunne applied for from the New England Mountain Biking Association which will add the Collins Center project funding.

3. Soopa Digital Sign:

Dunne reported that Soopa is giving the Town a mock-up of the sign and the proposed location within the Post Office parking lot which should be ready for presentation next week.

iii. Other Departments

1. Enterprise Funds: Indirect Cost Agreements

Dunne presented the indirect cost to the Water Department. To help cover the indirect cost, the Town will not pay for water bills to give the Water Department a break on their increased direct costs. There is more discussion to come.

2. Joint Fire Chief with Chester

The Boards discussed the success of the Blandford/Chester Police Department collaboration.

Police Dept Report: Chief Dubiel joined the Board to update the work her department has been doing in her first year as Chief. Chief Dubiel explained that her priority was to focus on meeting at least 70-75% of resident calls and found that they responded to 89% of all calls in April (total for both towns). The balance of the calls were picked up by Massachusetts State Police.

-Police Presence: The Chief reported we should be seeing more cruisers on Route 23 and Chester Road.

-Grant Request: Dubiel applied for a grant of \$6,000 which would reimburse the Town for the 2 officers that went through the Bridge Academy.

-Medical Collection Program: The medical collection program is offering a \$4,000 grant for the Town's medicine collection program. Contact the Blandford/Chester Police Department regarding this program.

3. Seasonal intern/labor from Gateway Water Internship program

The Chester and Blandford Select Boards briefly discussed sharing a joint Water Operator between the Blandford and Chester Water Departments acknowledging

there is a need to move quickly on this decision as they currently have high-school interns that have been training and they are graduating this year. This would be a missed opportunity if some arrangements for these students were not in place to secure a position to continue training for this position. Dunne said the Water Department will be reaching out in the next week or so to discuss this joint program.

iv. Updates

1. *Discussions with Springfield Water & Sewer Commission*

-Road Bond: Dunne has been having discussions with their Watershed Manager and their Operations Manager about the road bond bylaw we have in place which is posing some problems with them with their construction project this spring. Dunne is suggesting the Town back off the bylaw that increased the bond to \$25,000 as we are also getting pushback from other haulers and this would be very difficult to enforce. Springfield Water is showing a willingness to help with the Beech Hill Road bridge, and they are also interested in the brush truck replacement given their shared interest with us in preventing forest fires in the area. Dunne will look into smaller things like supplying some materials to shore up the roads to ensure this is not getting into our water supply. Dunne is working on the Town's opportunities with forest management plans with the Agriculture Committee. The discussion focuses on a plan for stewardship for our conservation areas, Long Pond; Shepard farm; and Herrick Nettle (I'm sure I heard this wrong). Dunne thinks Springfield Water would be willing to help with the cost of hiring forestry professionals to do this work. Dunne is hoping to meet with them next week and talk about getting a letter of support for the grant application for the Beech Hill Road bridge project.

-Cobble Mountain Road: Springfield Water had a hearing with the Regulatory Oversight and State Administration Joint Committee in the Legislature last week. Dunne testified, State Representative Boldyga testified and select board chair from Granville, and Springfield water testified as well the suggest being to open Cobble Mountain road from dawn to dusk for passive recreation. The state agency, DECAMM owns the road and will have the final say to what happens at those gates.

4. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Review and act on appointment of **Dave Waldron as Highway Superintendent** for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Dave Waldron as Highway Superintendent for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

**J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor**

- b. Review and act on appointment of **Adam Dolby as Forest Warden** for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Adam Dolby as Forest Warden for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

- c. Review and act on appointment of **Jennifer Dubiel as Blandford/Chester Police Chief** for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Jennifer Dubiel as Blandford/Chester Police Chief for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

- d. Review and act on appointment of **Aaron Poteat as Plumbing & Gas Inspector** for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Aaron Poteat as Plumbing & Gas Inspector for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

- e. Review and act on appointment of **Theodore Cousineau as Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Alternate** for the term July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Theodore Cousineau as Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Alternate for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024.

J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

- f. Review and act on appointment of **Jo-Anne Auclair as Historical Commission Member** for the term May 1, 2023, through April 30, 2026

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to appoint Jo-Anne Auclair as Historical Commission member for the term July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2026.

J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor

- g. **Review Fiscal Year 2024** operating budget

Dunne presented the Fiscal Year 2024 operating budget to the Finance Committee and Select Board. There was a discussion about pay rate increases which Dunne reported was a point of discussion with the Finance Committee. A grant from the Collins Center laid out a salary grade for every position in the Town of Blandford. The salaries recommended were quite high in some areas, so the Finance Committee decided to go with the market rate that was recommended in that report. The Boards discussed the proposed budget and made recommendations and changes. Letendre noted the total budget is up 8.62% to \$4,707,592.39 which is the operating budget plus capital.

- h. Review and act on **Year-End Transfers**

Nothing was said here

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Joint **Fire Chief** discussion
See Town Administrator's Report

6. NEW BUSINESS

a. All Departmental Expenditure Report for May 15, 2023
Tabled

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm

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

Cara Letendre, Chair

Absent
Theodore Cousineau, Member

Jeffery Allen, Member