



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Select Board

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

**MEETING MINUTES
BLANDFORD SELECT BOARD
Monday, December 18, 2023
6:00 pm**

Meeting held in the Select Board Chamber, Town Hall

In attendance: C. Letendre, Chair; J. Allen, Member-Via Zoom; T. Cousineau, Member; I. Brezinsky, Interim Town Administrator

Meeting Open at 6:00 pm

Meeting is recorded

1) EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) *Examination of the Select Board Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2023*

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the Select Board Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2023, as written

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to 3a) Jesse Permar Kelly interview

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

2) AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT

3) TOWN ADMINISTRATOR FINALIST INTERVIEW

6:00 *Jesse Permar Kelly*

Jesse Permar Kelly joined the Select Board to be interviewed for the position of Town Administrator. The Board asked a series of questions of the candidate as well as giving the candidate a chance to ask any questions they may have. The Board discussed the three potential candidates for Town Administrator:

Mark Siegars
Michael Szlosek
Jessie Permar Kelly

Ira Brezinsky will reach out for references.

**MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move to 7a) Ron Pelletier Culvert Herrick Road
J. Allen Seconded
All in Favor**

4) DEPARTMENT REPORTS

a) *Highway Department-Dave Waldron*

-*Russell Stage Road Water Leak:* Waldron explained a company was hired to investigate this leak and found that it was not a leaking water pipe but ground water seeping down the hill and from a nearby home causing excessive ground water to come out of the side of the bank and pool in the road. Upon further investigation, it was found that the resident's property in front of the leaks has two buried PVC pipes in the ground running that are gushing water. Highway cleaned up the area.

-*Kaolin Road Work:* While doing work on Kaolin, Highway found a catch basin that was 3 feet under material. Highway dug it out. Residents should be notified to keep these catch basins clear as well as culvert pipes.

-*North Blandford Road:* N. Blandford is back open. Downed trees fell into a 2-foot culvert pipe and blocked it. The road is now passable. Letendre asked if maintenance is needed on the trees. Waldron believes this is not needed.

-*Heyden Road:* Highway has cleared this road and Waldron stated it is passable, but folks should use caution.

-*Cobble Mountain/Heyden Road:* The culverts are plugged again and have overflowed and washed-out part of the road. Waldron is looking into getting price to replace this culvert.

-*Blair Road:* Waldron took pictures to send to Springfield Water & Sewer as the road is always flooded. Ira Brezinsky shared his interaction with Springfield Sewer. He reported Springfield Water wants to have a discussion with Blandford about this problem. Waldron presented pictures to the Select Board. Waldron asked if the Town should take the responsibility and send the bill to Springfield Water and Sewer after the repair. The Board disagreed, stating it would be difficult if not impossible to get this bill paid by Springfield Water.

-*Huntington Road by Knox Road:* Waldron reported the pipe is also too small for the water flow in the culvert on this road and it needs to be replaced.

In general, the issues dealt with this week were about water run-off.

b) Town Administrator

- i) ***Electrical Renovation and Modification to Standby Generator update***
John VanHeynigen, Town Electrical Inspector is still waiting for a third quote for the transfer switch.
- ii) ***Update on setting tax rate/Tax Classification Hearing***
Ira reported the Tax Classification Hearing will be at 5:30 pm Wednesday, December 20, 2023.
- iii) ***DOR/DLS Community Compact Best Practice grant – update***
Brezinsky mentioned the Community Compact grant that Christopher Dunne was pursuing. Unfortunately, all the funds for this grant have been spent for this year. We will take another shot at it next year.
- iv) ***DLTA (Delta Local Technical Assistance) Permitting Guide project – update***
Ken Comia, PVPC, contacted the Planning Board, Building Inspector, Board of Health, and the Conservation Commission about this project that is wrapping up. He sent a draft copy to these departments for review and comment.
- v) ***FY24 DLTA requests***
Brezinsky inquired about any possible DLTA (Delta Local Technical Assistance) requests for the coming year that we should consider applying for. Ira referred to shared services as an example. Letendre mentioned we are in the process of talking about a shared fire chief between Chester and Blandford.
- vi) ***Water Department indirect costs***
Brezinski has been working with the Water Department on their indirect costs that will be paid to the Town of Blandford for their share in the indirect cost of the Town of Blandford building and services. The question is should the Town of Blandford send a check to the Water Department for water usage and the Water Department send a check to the Town of Blandford for their indirect costs or should a system be set up to accomplish this without passing checks back and forth. This will be discussed at the next Finance Committee meeting. Brezinsky reported some of the Water Department staff does not agree with the indirect cost calculation. Letendre stated she would prefer we use checks for audit tracking; however, she is suggesting if the accountants can set up a system that is easy to follow and set up, that would be okay, but she would prefer we stick with checks payments. Letendre also suggested this be clearly studied by our Finance Team members who are quite capable of researching these overhead costs used by all Towns and have produced something fair and reasonable.

Brezinsky mentioned the shared water operator grant purchase had already been approved by the Water Department Commissioners to purchase this truck with these funds that were awarded to the Town of Blandford to share with the Town of Chester specifically for a shared water operator. Brezinsky noted these funds cannot be used for this vehicle. Brezinsky mentioned he emailed the chair of

the Water Commission to have a conservation with him and found out he reached out directly to the person that was responsible for processing this grant to inquire about the legality of using these funds for a new vehicle. The answer was clearly, no. Brezinsky reported that the Water Department spent about \$59,000 for this vehicle. Letendre is requesting a joint meeting with the Water Department.

vii) *Hunting on private property – update*

J. Martin will be working on the form that is needed for hunters to get permission from residents when hunting on private property. These forms should also be used for hunting on AT&T property.

5) ACTION ITEMS

a) *MIA Valuation Update Invoice*

Ira reported we are still waiting for the updated valuation.

b) *Approve Warrant #12 for Payment*

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve Warrant #12 for payment for the Town of Blandford excluding the Water Department FY24-Water AP for Warrant #12

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

c) *Transfer Switch - Approval of purchase*

See TA report (i) above: John VanHeynigen, Town Electrical Inspector is still waiting for a third quote for the transfer switch.

6) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a) *Animal Control / Inspection vehicle - Update*

Letendre mentioned she does not want to put any money into this vehicle. She is okay if Chester wants to purchase this for their own use, which is fine otherwise we will auction it off. Chester is suggesting this vehicle could be used as a back-up vehicle for police when they are called for a detail. Letendre believes if this vehicle can generate income, which would be fine; otherwise, she believes we should get rid of it. Letendre is asking for Chief Dubiel to join the Board to discuss this situation. Brezinsky reported blue-book value is around \$3,000. Ira mentioned we are holding a bill for replacing the windshield on this vehicle which has not yet been paid. Letendre is suggesting this be taken out of reserve fund as it is an unforeseen expense. Brezinsky will bring this to the Finance Team.

7) NEW BUSINESS

a) *Ron Pelletier Culvert Herrick Road*

Mr. Pelletier joined the Board to discuss the new culvert that was installed on Herrick Road in front of his residence. He believes the Culvert is too deep and therefore dangerous. The Highway Department recently replaced this culvert as the old one was

insufficient and failing. Pelletier would like the Highway Department/Town of Blandford to run the pipe farther underground and down along his property as he believes this culvert is dangerous and a safety issue. He would like the culvert pipe to be extended down to the end and not be as deep or wide open. Letendre referenced the Town bylaws that state the resident is responsible for culverts on private property and this action could possibly open ‘pandora’s box’ on this subject which the Town cannot afford. Waldron pointed out that depending on the circumstances, these new culverts can be quite deep depending on the location to take care of proper drainage. Cousineau stated the culvert could be lined with stones however, it looks good to him, and he has seen a lot worse. Cousineau pointed out that running a culvert pipe all the way down the property is an expense Town cannot afford to take on. Cousineau spoke about lining this with 4” stone. Waldron warned that putting in larger stone will cause the leaves to hang up in the stone and created a bigger problem. Mr. Pelletier will take care of extending the culvert himself.

b) All Departmental Expenditure Report Review

**MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to table the All-Departmental Expenditure Report review until the December 27, 2023, Select Board meeting
T. Cousineau Seconded
All in Favor**

c) MMA Conference - Appoint delegate for the Annual MMA Business Meeting

Letendre reported she will not be able to attend this year as she cannot get the time off work. This conference is still open for registration.

d) FY2020 Blandford CDF, Extension Request

**MOTION: C. Letendre made amotion to approve the FY-2020 Blandford Community Development Block Grant extension request.
T. Cousineau Seconded
All in Favor**

**MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to move into Executive Session pursuant to G.L.c.30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with possible selected candidate for Town Administrator position
T. Cousineau Seconded
All in Favor**

Letendre reached out to J. Allen who left the discussion after the interview with Jesse Permar Kelly. Jeffery Allen is back on the call discussing a potential candidate in executive session.

Roll Call Out: C. Letendre-Yes T. Cousineau-Yes J. Allen-Yes

8) **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Executive Session pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, §21(a)(2) to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with possible selected candidate for Town Administrator position.

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 pm

Submitted by Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Select Board
and Ira Brezinski, Interim Town Administrator

Cara Letendre, Chair

T. Cousineau, Member

J. Allen, Member