



TOWN OF BLANDFORD
Select Board

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

MEETING MINUTES
BLANDFORD SELECT BOARD
Monday, February 12, 2024
6:00 pm

Meeting held in the Select Board Chamber, Town Hall

In attendance: C. Letendre, Chair; J. Allen, Member-Absent; T. Cousineau, Member; M. Szlosek, 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 February 05, 2024

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to table the Select Board Meeting Minutes of February 05, 2024, until the February 26, 2024, Select Board meeting.

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

2) AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION / PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3) DEPARTMENT REPORTS

a) Highway Department – Dave Waldron

-Waldron met with the Select Board to recommend two of the four candidates that he and the Select Board have already interviewed. Waldron is choosing to hire Alex Tatreau and Clayton Therrian. Waldron and Martin will take care of collecting the necessary paperwork.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the hire of Alex Tatreau to the position of Highway Department Employee

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve the hire of Clayton Therrian to the position of Highway Department Employee

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

b) Town Administrator – Mike Szlosek

-MIIA Renewal Prices: Szlosek presented the renewal health care prices. The average increase was 9.95%. Szlosek recommends bundling health, dental and vision for cost savings.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to include the vision plan coverage to the current health care plan for Blandford’s full-time employees.

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

-Severe Weather Policy: Szlosek gave the Board a draft policy for severe weather. Letendre stated they will review, make any changes, and approve at the February 26, 2024, Select Board meeting.

-Library Grant: Szlosek is working with the Library for certain documents required to complete their grant Library construction process. The Town of Blandford’s Financial policy, debt service policy, 5-year capital plan policy and free cash policy were requested. The Town Administrator will supply these items from the Treasurer and Accounting Departments.

-Chester/Blandford Joint Meeting: Szlosek spoke to Don Humason, Town Administrator for the Town of Chester regarding meeting Tuesday or Wednesday to talk about the Animal Control vehicle, shared police department, shared water operator and hiring a shared fire chief as well as the ACO car in question. The Town of Blandford will host the meeting.

4) ACTION ITEMS

a. *Approve Warrant #15 Payroll & Supplemental Payroll*

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve Warrant #15 Payroll & Supplemental Payroll for Warrant #15

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

b. *Approve Warrant #16 AP & Payroll*

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve Warrant #16 Water Department Accounts Payable excluding the A.C.T. Equipment invoice for \$3138.17 coming out of the Shared Water Operator Grant

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to approve Warrant #16 AP and Payroll for payment

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

c. *Special Town Meeting Vote*

The Board and Town Administrator discussed and decided the Special Town Meeting would be March 18, 2024. The Warrant will need to be posted by March 04, 2024.

5) NEW BUSINESS

a) *Belle Fleur Permit Decision – Planning Board*

-Battery Energy Storage Systems: Paul Martin, Planning Board Chair joined the Select Board to discuss getting a by-law on the upcoming Special Town Meeting Warrant regarding Battery Energy Storage Systems. Edna Wilander will send the Warrant Article to the Town Administrator for this. Martin is speaking about a specific project on North Blandford Road, stating that it is a large project and will bring substantial income from personal property taxes to the Town, so it is important to get this bylaw going now. Martin is recommending a new category set up in Permit Eyes because we do not have a fee structure for battery energy storage systems at this time. Town Administrator, Mike Szlosek will reach out to John VanHeynigen, Electrical Inspector and Jason Forgue, Building Inspector advising them to make provisions for this type of inspection on their fee schedules.

-Belle Fleur: Paul Martin talked about their original permit request that was process and paid in 2021 of \$39,225. Due to COVID, problems with lead times for vital components taking up to 40 weeks to arrive, the law suit that Belle Fleur won against their original construction company who committed fraud, and problems with wetlands and conservation laws has set Belle Fleur back on their original construction timing and building plans. Originally, they were working on a two-story building but have changed their working buildings to greenhouses. Martin reported it took two years to resolve these problems. The original permit amount was never used in 2021. Martin is asking to start paying for building permits out of these unused funds. The current permit application is \$6,500 and Belle Fleur is hoping the Town will agree to take these funds from the original \$39,225 that was paid in 2021 and never used.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to deduct \$6,500 from the already paid permit fee made by Belle Fleur in 2021 of \$39,225 and never used in 2021

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

b) Town Hall Meeting with Senator Mark & Representative Boldyga

Senator Mark & Representative Boldyga will be hosting a “Remarks & Refreshments” session in Blandford on Friday February 23 at 9:00 am – 10:30 am in the Select Board Chambers. All are welcome to join.

c) STAM (Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts)

STAM is reporting the Chapter 90 formula will be increased to help small towns when creating funding for: Municipal Building Assistance, Regional support to reform education funding, create regional incentives for districts to be able to create sustainable pathways, increase State procurement thresholds, to help reduce admin and cost burdens to small towns, improve prevailing wages, reform pilot programs, staffing and support for office of rural affairs, reduce admin burdens to prevent small towns from getting state grants.

MOTION: C. Letendre made a motion to support the 2024 STAM Legislative priorities for Small Town Administrators of Massachusetts

T. Cousineau Seconded

All in Favor

6) EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

Meeting adjourned at 7:11 pm

Submitted by Joann Martin
Administrative Assistant to the Select Board
and Mike Szlosek, Town Administrator

Cara Letendre, Chair

T. Cousineau, Member

Absent

J. Allen, Member