

**Minutes of Regular Meeting
Select Board
Tuesday, January 24, 2023
Remote Online Meeting (Zoom 818 5541 7295)
Called to Order at 6:30 p.m.**

Remotely participating were Board members, Chair Christopher Houston, Harvey Boshart and Laurie Bent. Also present were Town Manager Leon A. Gaumont, Jr., Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director Lisa Yanakakis, Assistant to Town Manager, Michelle LeBlanc, Town Finance Director Susan Kelley, DPW Deputy Director Project Management Ken Calder, Town Engineer Jason Lavoie, Jennifer Warner Library Director.

Mr. Houston called the remote meeting to order and read the following:
Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, "An Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations", authorizes municipal boards to hold fully remote or hybrid meetings through March of 2023. The law does not mandate or prohibit in-person meetings; instead, it allows the Town flexibility in that regard. As required, if a meeting is held fully remotely or as a hybrid meeting, adequate alternative access is provided through a video conferencing link included on the meeting agenda.

Resident Comments:

Leslie Glynn was happy to see the FAQ's and the notification of the upcoming public Water Tank Forums have been posted on the Town's website. She encourages additional advertisement for the upcoming public Water Tank Forums so the meetings can be widely publicized.

Karen Martin requesting permission to purchase # 2 plots at Linwood Cemetery

Ms. Martin asked the Select Board to grant her special permission/waiver to purchase a burial plot now for her and her brother at Linwood Cemetery, since she has not met the age (she is 58 years old) criteria to do so. She feels it's important for her and her brother to be buried in Linwood where both of her parents are laid to rest. Ms. Martin has been a resident of Weston since 1973.

MOTION: Mr. Houston moved to grant the waiver and permission requested by Karen Martin to purchase a 2-spot plot at Linwood Cemetery. 2nd by Ms. Bent.

Roll call vote: Ms. Bent, Mr. Boshart and Mr. Houston voted in the affirmative. **Approved unanimously.**

Public Hearing: Presentation of the Draft Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget

Mr. Gaumont presented a slide show for the FY2024 Recommended Budget and Finance Plan. This plan can be viewed on the Town's website at; <https://www.westonma.gov/1808/2024-Fiscal-Year>. The operating budget for FY23 was \$90,615,158 and the FY24 proposed budget is \$93,771,227. This is an increase of 3.4%. Mr. Boshart stated he would like to congratulate Mr. Gaumont on this being the third budget in a row that has grown less than inflation. Mr. Gaumont stated that we will not know probably for another few weeks or couple of months how much school aid and local aid we will be getting. Ms. Bent asked what the ARPA Fund number was, and Mr. Gaumont replied it's about 3.3 million dollars. He said only a few hundred thousand dollars have only been spent from it. He feels the remaining ARPA funds can be used towards the Water Tank Project which would lower the impact on water bills.

FY24 New Budget Requests (recommended): Facilities- Woodland School Fence \$45,000, Fire- Air compressor \$40,000, Library- A/C Electricity \$22,000, IT-Continuing Balance Increase \$20,000, Town Celebrations \$10,000, Police Training Increase \$5,000, Police- Radio Equipment \$4,000, Land Use Uniforms \$ 2,500, and Police K9 Supplies \$2,000. Total new recommended requests \$150,500.

FY24 New Budget Requests (not recommended): Additional Police Officer \$85,000, Board of Health Nursing hours \$66,941, Police- Body Cameras \$19,778 and Land Use- Additional Staff Support Hours \$6,000. Total new requests not recommended \$177,719.

Recommended Capital Requests- Projects Funded by Debt/Free Cash: DPW Drainage Improvements \$400,000, DPW Ash Street Sidewalk \$359,000, DPW Cherry Brook Culverts \$136,000, Fire Department: Ambulance \$495,000, Information Systems: Capital Updates/Phase 3 \$593,600. This is a subtotal of \$1,983,600.

Recommended Capital Requests-Departmental Operations/General Fund: DPW/Fire/Police/Facilities/Information Systems/Select Board/Schools (bus replacement) operational costs are generally on a yearly basis. The FY24 subtotal is \$4,244,880.

Recommended Capital Requests- Projects Funded by Debt/Enterprise Funds-Water Enterprise: Traditional Water Main Rehab Program \$ 425,500 (which has been funded annually), the Paines Hill Water Tank Replacement \$5,200,000. This is a subtotal of \$5,625,500. The figure for the Water Tank is just a placeholder. There may be two Water Tank Replacements asked for at Town Meeting, which would change the figure.

Recommended Capital Requests- RE & Departmental Operations/Enterprise Funds. Water Enterprise (Hydrant Rehab, Water Storage Tank Program, Large Meter Replacement Program) \$75,500. Recreation Enterprise (Department Equipment- Tractor) \$25,000. Brook School Apartments Enterprise (Repairs and Replacements & Capital Improvements) \$308,192.

Mr. Gaumont said the FY24 Proposed Budget is currently meeting policy goals with money reserved in the free cash account, the money balance in the Stabilization Fund, and money for Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) reserve- full amount of annual required contribution (ARC). He wanted to point out that there are revenue & expense variables for the FY 24 Proposed Budget; rising cost inflation, several union negotiations still pending, Final State & School Aid (Governor has not made announcements) and the benefit of ARPA funds for the next two years.

Ms. Kelley stated that the preliminary tax rate, based off this presentation would be an increase of \$.40 or 3.4%, without overall Town value assessed in pricing.

Ms. Bent asked Mr. Gaumont to explain the increase from \$25,000 to \$50,000 for the Traffic & Sidewalk Committee. Mr. Gaumont said the Traffic & Sidewalk Committee uses that for consulting purposes. He stated that this was level funding and believes this was the same amount from last year. Ms. Kelley pointed out that from the comparison page, last year Traffic & Sidewalk only used \$25,000 of their \$50,000 budget, and that it is a continuing balance it goes from year to year.

Ms. Bent wanted further explanation of the increase in salaries for the Town Clerk's Office. Mr. Gaumont stated that we have a Presidential Primary Election coming up, and this is based off the number of elections we have in a year. Ms. Yanakakis noted there is a lot more that goes into running the elections now than previous years. The Town Clerks Office puts a lot of hours into setting up and running the elections.

Ms. Bent raised the issue she had with the \$22,000 figure provided to run the electricity for the new AIC. Ms. Bent stated this was a new building, but not efficient. She does not like that heat is blowing out the drafty windows and would like something to be done so the Town is not wasting money. She said it is not in line with the Town promoting to be a Green Town. Ms. Warner stated that her staff complains the building is cold, and some of them wear their jackets as a result. She said it's a concern because they host classes in this building, and she hopes a solution can be found to resolve this. Mr. Houston raised the point that since this is a newly reconstructed building, they should have considered this issue. Mr. Gaumond believes the windows are historical and had to be used. He will work with Facilities, Library Staff and Historical Commission to see what improvements can be made to resolve this issue. Mr. Polando, Resident and Permanent Building Committee Chair, wanted to point out that when the AIC was reconstructed, due to historic issues they had requests to put those windows back. He agrees that they should look for ways to resolve the issue. Mr. Polando pointed out that the AIC is a fully electric building not just for heating and air conditioning, it's the entire building due to gas not being part of it.

Mr. Houston raised the question as to why the tree maintenance and sidewalk maintenance were going down. Ms. Kelley said tree maintenance was a separate article last year, \$30,000 that was passed last year at Town Meeting.

Resident Kristin Barbieri asked about the school bus replacement line item. She wanted to know how often they are replaced, and if any efforts will be made to replace the buses with more climate friendly: hybrid electric, etc. Mr. Gaumond stated they have a rotating schedule for the buses, and this is something they always ask for. He said the Schools and the Sustainability Coordinator have been working on getting grants to help offset these costs. He said they are working on electrification of vehicles, specifically school buses, but it will take time. Mr. Gaumond noted that the Schools are the ones who decide which type of buses they want.

Ms. Reitano, Finance Committee Chair, noted that the schools purchase 3 (three) school buses a year, keep them for 10 years, and currently there are about 30 school buses.

Mr. Gaumond wanted to end on the note regarding funding, the deadline to submit CPC Articles, has passed and there are about 4 Articles that will be presented at the Annual Town Meeting. This is subject to change. These Articles are: Traditional Article for Administrative Funds for CPC, Traditional Article for the Regional Housing Service Office, Pickleball Court Improvements, and a project supported by Members of Historic Committee, Planning Board and Michael Harrity on the Improvements on the Rhododendron Garden on Legacy Trail

MOTION: No motion was made. Mr. Houston officially closed the Public Hearing.

Review and Approve Master Plan Committee Charge

Mr. Gaumond, Ms. Bent, Mr. Aiu, and Ms. Glynn met to work on the framework for this committee. It was decided that since this is more than a Master Plan, as defined by MGL, they want this to be more of a unified plan. The Select Board reviewed the draft.

MOTION: no vote taken. Ms. Bent advised that this will be taken as a draft and work on final language for this.

Water Abatement Request- 175 Boston Post Road Bypass

Resident, Mr. Joe Esposito of 175 Boston Post Road Bypass, is contesting a water bill he received. The DPW has not found any areas of malfunction with his meter. Mr. Esposito claims there is a tax lien on his property due to this nonpayment. He would like to resolve this, and remove any interest accrued with respect to this bill.

Mr. Houston stated that he was trying to figure out exactly what happened with this bill. Mr. Gaumont stated the DPW said the meter was in working order. Mr. Gaumont stated that perhaps there was other issues such as running outside faucet or running toilet. Mr. Esposito said when DPW checked the water meter reading, all the water was shut off to the house, and the meter was checked, and it was not running. This proves the meter was in correct working order.

Mr. Boshart stated the water usage probably put him into a different tier system. Mr. Boshart explained that typically when they grant abatements, the Town and the users gets charged for water, so they still need to pay for water. They are on a progressive water system; they review the water consumption by the user and reduce it to a lower tier which would be comparable to what the user consumes.

MOTION: Mr. Houston moved to abate and adjust the bill of 35,800 water usage shown on bill date 4/30/21; first 5,000 usage billed at lowest tier rate of \$2.20, the next 10,000 usage billed at the second tier rate of \$6.60, and the balance 20,800 usage should be billed at \$4.40. This should be abated and readjusted as of date of bill. The interest should be recomputed accordingly, considering the \$27.00 fixed charge. The Treasurer and Finance Director can recalculate the bill for Mr. Esposito. 2nd by Ms. Bent.

Roll call vote: Ms. Bent, Mr. Boshart and Mr. Houston voted in the affirmative. **Approved unanimously.**

Consent Agenda

MOTION: Mr. Boshart moved the Consent Agenda as follows. 2nd by Ms. Bent.

Roll call vote: Ms. Bent, Mr. Boshart and Mr. Houston voted in the affirmative. **Approved unanimously.**

Open the May 8, 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant for Articles and Citizens' Petitions until March 3, 2023.

Approve "Change of Manager"; Michael Pedranti for Brothers Marketplace

Accept gifts totaling \$2082.44 from the donors listed in the attached document to be applied to the Weston Council on Aging.

Accept gifts totaling \$1700 from the donors listed in the attached document to be applied to the Weston Arts & Innovation Center.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Laurie Bent
Clerk

Note: A copy of all documents, explanatory material, and exhibits presented to and used by the Select Board as part of this meeting are attached to the approved minutes