

**Minutes of Regular Meeting
Select Board
Tuesday, April 28, 2020
Remote Online Meeting (Zoom ID 998 5987 8373)
Called to Order at 7:00 p.m.**

Remotely participating were Board members Laurie Bent, Harvey Boshart, and Christopher Houston, Chair. Also present were Town Manager Leon A. Gaumond, Jr., Assistant Town Manager/Human Resources Director Lisa Yanakakis, and Recording Secretary Kara Fleming.

Mr. Houston called the remote meeting to order and read the following:

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order concerning imposition on strict limitations on the number of people that may gather in one place, meetings in the Town of Weston will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. We will strive to provide access to such meetings via a link to call in, or other similar option. In the event we are unable to accommodate the same, despite best efforts, we will post recorded sessions of the meeting as soon as possible following the same. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings.

Resident Comments

There were none.

Discussion with Public Works Director Tom Cullen

- a. Application of Double Yellow Lines**
- b. Update on Guardrail Replacement Program**
- c. Opting Out of Wireless Water Meters**
- d. Town Center Lighting**
- e. Town Center Irrigation Well**
- f. Perambulation of Boundaries**
- g. Process for Traffic Mitigation Requests**
- h. Approve Stop Sign Request at Westerly and Buckskin Roads**

Tom Cullen, Public Works Director

Double Yellow Lines

Mr. Cullen said the roadway reconstruction season is starting up soon and last year, after paving was completed, many comments were made regarding the aesthetics of a double yellow line replacing the single line on the rural roadways. Massachusetts law does not recognize a single yellow line in the center as a roadway marking and because the Town accepts Chapter 90 roadway funds from the state, there is explicit expectations that the Town will adhere to state law when maintaining roadways. Additionally, not having the double yellow line is a potential liability if there were an accident on a town road. He asked for the Select Board to rule on this rather than his department. The Board agreed the Public Works Department should follow the state law.

Guardrail Replacement Program

There was a discussion in 2014 regarding the aesthetic of the galvanized guardrails that were being installed around town, which halted the guardrail replacement program so a study could be conducted to determine what product could be used around town. Following the report, the Planning Board provided

the Board with a recommendation to use the steel-backed timber rails with wood posts. This was installed along Summer Street last year. Mr. Cullen was asked to find what it would cost to replace the deficient 4,500 linear feet of guardrail in town using the galvanized steel product and using the timber-faced product. Mr. Cullen said the numbers he has would need to be re-bid because it has expired, but to replace the deficient rail the galvanized steel product would cost approximately \$240,000 and the timber-faced product would cost \$710,000. In all, Weston has 28,000 linear feet of guardrail. The galvanized steel lasts about 25-30 years and the timber-faced rail and posts lasts about 15 years. Mr. Cullen added that since the program halted, he still continued to submit the typical \$50,000 request for the program, which would need to be supplemented if the timber product was used. Mr. Houston asked how long it would take his department to replace the deficient railing and the newly identified areas that previously did not have guardrail. Mr. Cullen said it would take about five years to complete. Given the cost and half-life of the timber-faced railing, the Select Board discussed examining a judicious application of the timer-faced product, and what that process would entail. For example, would a quiet scenic road get the timber-faced product and a busier state road get galvanized steel or vice versa because the aesthetic visual presented to passing traffic is more desirable.

Mr. Houston took comments from the audience. Ms. Katharina Wilkins of Brook Road said despite the better appearance of the timber-faced railing, it was more financially prudent to use the galvanized steel. Mr. John Sallay of the Finance Committee agreed that the cost is quite high and added that if a selective approach is taken that more town constituency should be involved in the decision. Ms. Melissa Crocker of River Road said it would be financially irresponsible for the town to choose aesthetics over the cost of the material.

Mr. Houston said he would reach out to the Planning Board member that initiated this study to get a sense of how to move forward with the goal to have the program re-start this year.

Wireless Water Metering

Mr. Cullen said he is getting closer to getting the program ready to go online; however, the second part, which consists of switching out the meters that are located inside homes, is obviously delayed due to the public health emergency so the launch of the program is delayed. There are over 3,600 water customers in Weston and the earliest the program can launch is spring 2021.

Ms. Aimee Debrot of Pigeon Hill Road raised concerns over the lack of privacy and the data collection with the use of wireless metering. She explained that the monitoring piece can tell when someone is not home due to lack of water use and the wireless software is susceptible to personal network hacking. This makes her and her family uncomfortable with the 24-7 vulnerabilities present in the system. She asked if she can opt-out, as this is an option for other countries. Mr. Houston asked what that would entail. Mr. Cullen said the meter would need to be manually read by personnel. He added that the wireless system allows for instantaneous reading, which further allows for faster detection of any water leaks. Mr. Cullen says his department receives 200-300 high water bill complaints annually. He will inquire with the company to see if there is an option to turn off the wireless component. Mr. Houston added that he would also like to know what the additional costs would be associated with this option, as well as the technology specifications with regard to security and protection.

Town Center Lighting

Ms. Bent said she had recently attended a presentation on the impacts of outdoor lighting on wildlife and, in particular, migrating birds. This made her curious about what the Town does to manage lumen output, timing, and the angles of the lighting shed, in particular with the new Town Center Project. Mr. Boshart said during the Town Center Project planning process, considerable time was spent on studying the lighting intensity, shed distance, and spacing between poles. He added that dimmers will be installed on the poles to further control the lumen output because the group was focused on the Town Center having

limited amount of light that is required. Mr. Cullen added that the discussion was pretty extensive and the Planning Board member on the committee took the lead on the serious discussions. Ms. Bent asked if the lights could be turned off at night as an additional consideration for wildlife. Mr. Boshart said he would look into that.

Town Center Irrigation Well

Mr. Boshart said approximately one-acre of green space is being built, as well as an additional 112 trees are being planted in the new Town Center. The committee discussed the necessary irrigation component for the new landscaping and considered the benefits of using Town/MWRA water or digging a well, but a final decision was not made. The estimate for the well will cost approximately \$250,000, which includes \$100,000 to sink three wells. For comparison, the Josiah Smith Tavern Working Group also did not budget for a well but its estimate is \$60,000, including the infrastructure, due to the size and needs being less than those for the Town Center. Mr. Cullen added that the water yield and quality are not known until the well is sunk, so there remain additional uncertainties with a large upfront cost. Mr. Boshart looked at the water needs for the first few years and compared it to the cost to determine the breakeven point, which looks to be about 50 years from now and not worth the investment. As a comparison, a private residence will see the breakeven point after only ten years. Mr. Houston asked Mr. Boshart about the water study working group's and Planning Board's desire for private residences to sink wells and the perception of the town not following its own recommendations. Mr. Boshart said there is an opportunity to lead by example but a well in this instance is not cost-effective. He added that the resulting policy of the water work group should be to encourage residential water-saving strategies and education on how to use less water.

Perambulation of Boundaries

Every five years the Town is asked to walk the borders of the Town. In recent years, the task was assigned to George Bates and Town Engineer Steve Fogg. Mr. Fogg is willing to continue the practice. Ms. Bent said Joel Angiolillo of Weston Forest and Trail Association would like to join Mr. Fogg.

MOTION: Mr. Houston moved to appoint Town Engineer Steve Fogg as Perambulator of Boundaries and with the authority to appoint others, as allowed. 2nd by Ms. Bent

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

Process for Traffic Mitigation Requests

Mr. Houston explained that there has been a rise in the number of traffic volume complaints on side roads due to the use of mobile navigation applications, such as WAZE. The complaints are given to the Traffic and Sidewalk Committee to review but they are numerous and all present unintended consequences. Mr. Houston is proposing the following process to address traffic volume mitigation requests:

- A request goes to the Traffic and Sidewalk Committee
- The committee studies the situation with the Department of Public Works, which includes a data collection process to substantiate the complaint
- If the committee determines there is a problem that can be addressed, it will develop recommendations for remediation
- The recommendations are taken to the impacted neighborhood for support
- If there is support, the neighboring streets/neighborhoods will also be surveyed for support
- When agreement is achieved, then it will move forward to the Select Board for final approval

Mr. Houston added that this process will be applied only to meaningful traffic restriction or flow. He then surveyed the Board Members and Mr. Cullen for feedback. All were in support of the process.

Approve Stop Sign Request at Westerly and Buckskin Roads

Mr. Fogg has reviewed the area and is recommending a yield sign be installed at the intersection of Westerly Road and Buckskin Drive.

MOTION: Mr. Boshart moved to install a yield sign at Westerly Road and Buckskin Drive. 2nd by Ms. Bent.

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

Review Recommended Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget and Annual Town Meeting Warrant Articles with Finance Committee Representatives

Mr. Houston initiated the conversation by saying the Select Board Members are seeking more specificity in what the Finance Committee wants to see in terms of budget cuts in order to support it. He said the reports prepared by the committee were not clear to the Board in how to move forward finding reductions in the budget. Mr. Houston continued to say that the Board agrees with the committee's position that long-term benchmarking and strategic financial planning should be in place; however, he asked that before any analysis is conducted that there is agreement on what parameters are used so the premise is understood by both bodies. He explained that when the Finance Committee compares the average Weston tax bill to other communities that quality of life decisions are not taken into consideration. He asked the committee to develop a method by which quality of life expenses are quantified when comparing the budget to other communities. He continued to ask that when analysis is conducted that the median is used in addition to the average to better establish the statistical approach. Lastly, Mr. Houston asked the Finance Committee to work towards a meaningful compromise in reducing the budget. Ms. Reitano, Finance Committee chair, said her committee does wish to work towards a compromise; however, the unknown implications due to the pandemic and the pending economic impacts is driving the committee's concern with the 6.6 percent increase in the operating budget. She added that the request for three new full-time employees, an increase in funding for roadwork, and the OPEB contributions need to be reconsidered at a time like this. With regard to OPEB contributions, Mr. Houston said there is some cushion in the funding obligations so that can be decreased somewhat this year but did not want to go as low as cutting it in half so as not to defer payments any longer. Further, he explained that the roadway reconstruction funding is a part of a five-year incremental funding plan to bring the quality average up to standards. The Board is not prepared to reduce below last year's request, again, because of past budget deferrals due to the town underfunding the maintenance over so many years. Lastly, Mr. Houston asked if the committee would be amenable to adding one firefighter this year and one next year, since the request to add the staffing is a deferral from two years ago. Ms. Bent said when looking at a Level Service budget and factoring in inflation and cost of living, it is difficult to make big deductions in the smaller areas where deductions can be made. Mr. Houston asked Mr. Gaumont, Ms. Yanakakis, and Finance Director Susan Kelley to go back to department managers for additional budget reductions.

Mr. Boshart, referencing the analysis conducted by the Finance Committee, noted that the average residential tax bill is 33 percent higher than peer communities but when looking back 10 years ago, the average tax bill was 44 percent higher. He added that Weston had less growth in that time period when compared to the same peer communities. He asked what the contributing factors could be. Mr. John Sallay of the Finance Committee, said there are many people who are upset with the rising tax bill, which led to a discussion on what should be removed from the budget.

Mr. Bob Froh of Filmore Lane asked for a separate public comment meeting due to the current time of the evening and the frustration of several residents wishing to find answers. Mr. Houston said he would schedule this meeting.

Mr. Neil Diver of Highland Meadows said an open letter was delivered to the Town Manager and the Select Board citing concerns over the budget increases over the last five years. He said the common denominator of the 100 signatures echoed concerns for the town to be run more efficiently and more cost effectively, and to not be burdened with unnecessary town services and liabilities. Mr. Houston asked if there was a specific example of an unnecessary service. Mr. Diver replied that it was the job of the Select Board to make that determination. Mr. Houston said if there were unnecessary services offered by the Town he would like to know what those are since the budget is developed maintaining existing services. He asked if Mr. Diver had a specific town service in mind that should no longer be offered, such as the Library or Council on Aging. No specific examples were provided.

Ms. Bent expressed concern with the complaint that the budget is too high and the town should have no unfunded liabilities but to cut budget by not funding the liabilities the town planned to fund is contradictory. She added that the town operates as a democracy and it has a long history of supporting the schools, town projects and budgets, so the debt incurred needs to be understood and supported. Mr. Boshart noted that some of what is being added to the budget is bringing the town to a bare minimum in operations, such as the addition of two firefighters due to past deferrals.

Mary Ellen Sikes of Conant Road said every department operates above our peer communities and cited that the Wayland Police Department has 1.6 officers per 1,000 residents vs. the 2.3 officers per 1,000 Weston residents. She said the town is not being careless in determining actual need.

Review and Approve the Historic New England Agreement for the Josiah Smith Tavern

Mr. Houston reported that he has been having productive conversations with Historic New England to amend the preservation restrictions that are placed on the building. Historic New England has been very accommodating and a revised preservation restriction document has been drafted, which town Counsel has reviewed. The amendments include a more streamlined and modern process for alterations to the building the building can be used but still without taking away any historical significance of the building. He continued to report that the agreement explicitly says the current restoration process is approved by Historic New England.

MOTION: Mr. Houston moved to accept the Preservation Restriction with Historic New England for the Josiah Smith Tavern project as presented subject to further unsubstantial edits. 2nd by Ms. Bent.

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

Receive Gift Donation and Determine Where to Contribute

The Town has received a \$1,000 donation with the instructions to apply it to where it is needed most. Given the public health crisis, Mr. Gaumond reached out to the Council on Aging Director Mignonne Murray to see if there is a need for food. Ms. Murray reported that despite the state-funded Meals on Wheels program operating at normal capacity, she is seeing a need for fresh food and produce and anticipates this becoming a growing issue in the coming months. Ms. Murray also reported that there is some uncertainty with Land's Sake Farm being able to donate farm vouchers this year, which serves over \$10,000 of fresh produce to income eligible older residents during their open season.

MOTION: Ms. Bent moved to accept the donation of \$1,000 from the Stephen & Jill Kramer Charitable Gift Fund to be added to the Council on Aging's Miscellaneous Gift Account. 2nd by Mr. Boshart.

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

MOTION: Ms. Boshart moved to adjourn. 2nd by Mr. Bent

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

Laurie A. 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