

Town of Paxton

Board of Selectmen

697 Pleasant Street, Paxton, MA 01612

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Regular Meeting Minutes

# Monday, February 12, 2024

**Meeting Location: Training Room of the Public Safety Complex**

**576 Pleasant Street, Paxton, MA 01612**

Members Present: Julia N. Pingitore, Chair

Kirk R. Huehls, Vice Chair

Carol L. Riches, Clerk

Town Administrator: Charles Blanchard, Interim Town Administrator

#### Attendees: see Attendee List

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. We will enter into Executive Session and will

return to the regular meeting only for the purpose of adjourning.

**UPDATE FROM TOWN COMMITEES AND BOARDS**

* **Anita Fenton COA** BOARD
* The COA has become a popular town institution. Many improvements have been done with donations. A new multimedia art show will be available in the dining room. The artwork could also be sold at this event. Partnership with the Elderbus which will provide curb to curb service. The Senior Center has become a popular building for various meetings to be held, but we have a problem with key access to the building and this leads to a problem with who is in the building and the state of the building. In the past there have been occasions where lights are left on, doors are left unlocked, and property has been damaged. How do we solve this? Webpage with the listing of all events? Invited Carol as the liaison to come to a Board meeting to discuss this matter.
* **(CR)** Do you contact Donna when there are problems?
* **Cindy Love** Yes, I do. We have had tables broken, things are left behind, food is taken, plants are taken, debris, pizza boxes left behind. It’s our Seniors home and we would hope that the people that use it at nigh would be respectful.
* **(KH)** How many doors would you want to control?
* **Cindy Love** The side door by ramp.
* **(KH)** Keypad entry instead that can be changed on a regular basis.
* **Cindy Love** The activity room and dining room are the only ones.
* **(KH)** A keypad would be a little bit of maintenance but would help with this problem.
* **Cindy Love** Could we do this with our ADA grant.
* **Anita Fenton** Could a camera be put at the door.
* **(JP)** There are different things we can do that we can talk about outside of this meeting. We can talk about a policy and community calenda, and perhaps a camera as well.
* **Christopher Isperduli** RML Board of Trustees
* We are getting our roof done.
* Pam has secured a grant for a sensory room at the library. We are waiting on some quotes and the building inspector to move forward on that event.
* Our programs are going well for both children and seniors.
* A car accident recently at the library. There were no injuries and the only damage to the property was a bush which stopped the car from hitting the library. So, the bush and the lawn may need some repairs.
* We have a full board and the individuals that are up for reelection are all running again.

**CONSENT ITEMS**

* 1. Approve the meeting minutes from the Regular Meeting held on January 22, 2024.
* 2. Appoint Emily Benoit, Jonathan Parsons, Chau Quach as Election Officers for the term of February 13, 2024, through August 15, 2024.
* 3. Request from Donna Couture to use the Training Room at the Public Safety Complex on Wednesday, February 28, 2024, for the Worcester County Collectors Treasurers’ Association to meet from 9am to 1pm.
* 4. Vote to increase the mileage rate for 2024 to $0.67 per mile based on the IRS standard mileage rate, up 1.5 cents from 2023.
* 5. Approve and sign the warrant for the Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.
* **(JP)** Hearing no other comments, all consent items have been approved.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Review timeline for warrant and date for Annual Town Meeting.**

* Open Warrant February 12, 2024
* Joint meeting with Bay Path and Fin Com March 11, 2024

CIPC Recommendations to the SB

Close the warrant

* Warrant to Brian Falk As articles appear and are approved
* Joint meeting with WRSD & Fin Com March 25, 2024
* Vote on recommendation for ATM April 8, 2024

warrant articles with SB, Fin Com & CIPC

* Typing of Warrant Complete by April 10, 2024
* Post Warrant April 12, 2024
* Warrant to printer April 12, 2024
* Have printed warrant available April 22, 2024

and upload to website

* Annual Town Meeting May 6, 2024

**Open warrant for the Annual Town Meeting**

* **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) approve opening the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on May 6, 2024. Unanimous, all in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**

**Vote to formally accept and sign the revised deed for Olivia Knoll**

* **(JP)** We have a revised deed from Town Counsel on Olivia Knoll
* **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) approve and sign the deed for Olivia Knoll. Unanimous, all in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**

**Discuss reserve fund transfer that was requested for payment of an invoice for Roselli & Clark.**

* **(JP)** This is a transfer that had been requested for $3,500 from the reserve fund to the annual town audit fund. We had an RFP that went out and Roselli came in at a higher rate which was not budget for.
* **(CR)** The request was denied at the Fin Com meeting, and I think we owe them the full amount and we have no money left in the account to pay it and it should go back to Fin Com to fund it.
* **(JP)** There is a balanced due. Asked Mark Love for opinion.
* **Mark Love** This was discussed at our Fin Com meeting and when it was put to vote it was determined to disapprove to take it out of the Reserve Fund. It does not meet the definition of the use of a reserve fund for extraordinary and unforeseen purposes. Also, the Fin Com had a position that when the budget was prepared a year ago the Town Administrator reduced the audit line-item number. There was no reason to go out to bid. Administration was advised that this should not be done. This would push the incumbent to put in a higher bid and this is exactly what happened. Yes, it has to be paid but that is not a criteria to use the reserve funds. You can bring it back, but there are a few votes that you won’t get, and we are suggesting that the Select Board figure out something. The audit is in the Select Board budget, and it is your responsibility to control it and you did not and now you are imposing this upon the Fin Com for them to bail you out.
* **(JP)** Yes, it is in our budget, but we are not the Procurement officer for the Town. So, we have to rely on the person that has taken the training to be able to do these things.
* **Mark Love** That person is to oversee the process and the final selection of the audit firm is up to the Select Board.
* **(JP)** This did not come to the Select Board until we received the bids that came in. The decision to go out to bid per the Town Charter is the Procurement Officers responsibility which supersedes any financial management policy. At this point we cannot go backwards and unincur this bill and as much as I understand the Fin Com is upset you should not hold the reserve fund as a punitive measure against somebody who did something that the Finance Committee didn’t want them to do.
* **Mark Love** I go back to the issue of extraordinary and unforeseen.
* **(JP)** We have talked about that before and sometime there is a difference in opinion. Unforeseen is something that you would have seen at the time of setting your budget. We were expecting 18,000 at the time of the budget. Maybe there is a learning opportunity here, but we need to get beyond that, and we still have a bill to pay. Not out of the purview of the Reserve Fund. Certainly, we can get additional opinions on that if that is necessary and send it back to Fin Com.
* **Mark Love** I would send it back to the auditors and explain the situation. They technically don’t have to be paid until the time of the next audit. I would take this advice to ask them to work with their client. I would volunteer to make that call.
* **(CR)** The service has taken place this year, so we have to pay the bill in this fiscal year.
* **(CB)** Donna did speak with them and explain we needed to go to the reserve fund, and I think they would rather have it in the fiscal year that it was billed for. In my experience the reserve fund has been for unanticipated expenses. So, anything after the Town Meeting is unanticipated. The idea that it is extraordinary, unless that is unique to Paxton, generally is not the way that we look at things.
* **(KH)** What is left in reserve funds?
* **Mark Love** $33,000 currently with another $17,000 potentially to be spent on IT, so that would put us down to $16,000. With other items at the end of the year that could come forward.
* **(CB)** I think we are going with the $6,500 and not the $17,000.
* **(JP)** At this point Fin Com has chosen not to pay this bill to preserve the reserve fund for later on down the road.
* **(CB)** The discussion needs to be had with the auditor to confirm that we can pay it by June 30th.
* **(JP)** Yes, another conversation needs to be had with Roselli and Clark.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Follow up on discussion of Town Signs donated by Gibbs Realty**

* **(JP)** Gibbs Realty came to us to offer the sponsoring of a Town sign and then on an annual basis we could go out and seek sponsorship for the sign. We initially looked at designing the sign, but I think we are better off going to a sign company with this project and make sure we are still good with Gibbs to move forward with this.

**Correspondence**

* **(JP**) Letter from Maura Healy for the firefighter safety grant.

**Town Administrator update**

# Departmental Updates

**COA**

Cindy and I met with representatives of the WRTA regarding plans to make sure the transition to service from SCM Elderbus is as seamless as possible. Information meetings will be held at Paxton Hills on March 19th at 10:30 am and at the Senior Center on March 20th at 10:30 am. We hope to be able to tape the Senior Center presentation for showing on the Cable channel.

The Town received a $25,733 Municipal ADA Improvement Grant to remove barriers and improve access to the White Building.

**DPW**

The DPW Building Committee met on February 5th to discuss the potential impact on taxes if the Town decided to move forward with a Debt Exclusion to replace the DPW building. Weston & Sampson has some upcoming bids for similar projects so we may get a better idea of current construction costs, but right now the estimate for the building is $25,000,000. The annual cost for the average single-family dwelling would be:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Amount Borrowed** | **$25,000,000** |  |
| **Average Home Value** | **$459,020** |  |
|  |  | **USDA** |
|  | **20 Yrs. @ 4.5%** | **40 Yrs. @ 4.0%** |
|  |  |  |
| **Cost Per Year (Level Debt )** | **$1,129.19** | **739.02** |
|  |  |  |
| **First Year Coat (Level Principal)** | **$1,395.42** | **954.76** |
| **Last Year Cost (Level Principal)** | **$766.56** | **674.76** |

In December the Town received a $200,000 Earmark Grant from the State’s ARPA funds for designing and construction a new septic system and adding two new restrooms and temporary office space at the DPW facility.

DCR’s approval letter for the proposed new building made it clear that no new work would be allowed in the present location of the buildings, but that a location closer to Holden Road could be used. We have asked Weston & Sampson to review the estimate that was used for the $200,000 grant to see what the cost of designing installing the septic system in a location that could serve a future new DPW Building would be, and to get a current estimate on the cost of modular restrooms and sufficient office space to improve DPW operations as a stop-gap measure until a new facility could be built.

**IT Services**

Julia, Donna, Shawn, and I met with Adam Suzor and Casey Chisholm of Suzor IT to discuss some concerns we have had about the work they have been doing, and to get a better idea for the IT needs Paxton is facing:

* Adam Suzor provided the following information on our most pressing needs:

1. Enforce MFA from a Town Policy perspective.
2. Upgrade Internet to fiber & migrate to Azure and Office 365.
3. Replace the infrastructure with an enterprise- grade solution (Cisco, HP, Fortinet, etc.)

A plan to achieve this with scope of work examples will be presented soon.

**Building**

In December, the Building Department had 24 permits pulled, which is the same as last month.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Permit** | **September** | **October** | **November** | **December** | **January** |
| Building | 16 | 13 | 6 | 5 | 12 |
| Electrical | 9 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Gas | 3 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 4 |
| Plumbing | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 2 |
| Sheet Metal | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Wood Stove | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| **TOTAL** | **31** | **26** | **24** | **24** | **24** |

**ADJOURN**

* **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) to leave the regular meeting and entered into Executive Session at 8:06pm and we will return to the regular meeting for the purpose of adjourning. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
* **Returned to Regular Session at 10:30pm**
* **Adjourned Meeting at 10:30pm, Unanimous all-in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes**
* **The next meeting is scheduled for February 26, 2024, 7:00pm.**

**Documents from the Meeting filed in BOS office:**

Agenda

Attendance list

Town Administrators update

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Graf-Parsons, Executive Assistant