

Town of Washington Select Board Meeting

1/29/2024 7:00 – 9:00 PM Washington Town Hall

1. K. Lew called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Attending for the Select Board were K. Lew, D. Ellis, and Mike Case. After leading the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance, K. Lew made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 1/22/24. M. Case seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2. Attendants: Sean Curran, Dick Spencer, Dave Fish, Debra Megas, Steve Deloye, Jodi Hostetter, Ellen Bond, Chief Miller, and Linda Levernoch. Dave Drugmand, Ed Fahey, and Ben Gelb attended remotely. Tykesha Nothe was present to take the meeting minutes.

3. Public Comment period: No public comment.

4. Approval of warrants: After the Board asked B. Gelb and J. Hostetter to clarify payroll discrepancies payroll was approved. There was an error on the Becket Capital account. K. Lew asked B. Gelb to void the check for Becket Athenaeum in the amount of \$7814. 39. Sean and Jodi will resubmit correct amount on next warrant.

5. Town Administrator report: S. Curran reported he attended a Zoom call with members of the governor's administration and other town administrators regarding the Municipal Empowerment Act. S. Curran suggested the Select Board draft a letter stating how this act can be beneficial for communities with less than 500 residents. He also asked the Select Board to highlight bullets of the bill that are of interest to Washington. S. Curran reported that the One Stop Grant application for rural communities includes ADA requirements. K. Lew asked S. Curran to put together a 1 or 2 paragraph summation and expression of interest for the Johnson Hill project as well. S. Curran put in a formal request to CSX to replace the culvert. T. Johnson and S. Curran took a reporter from the Berkshire Eagle on a tour of the culvert and the article will be printed tomorrow. D. Ellis reported that Nature Conservancy is looking into putting money into culverts as well. He will follow up.

- VA Lakes: bid opening notice is in the paper. Bid opening 2/ 7 at The Town Hall. S. Curran will bring the Select Board a summary and recommendation.
- Possible EMS presentation date(s) are 4/13 or 4/20. S. Curran will follow up with Kathe.

6. Joint meeting with BOH: A defense motion to terminate the Bucksteep receivership case. None of the code violations were repaired as the receiver could only secure the property to mitigate risk to the public. There was discussion on concerns about people living in the building. As long as no one is occupying the property, and given that the Court has said it won't direct the Receiver to do any repairs, there is not much more the Town can force the owner to do. E. Bond asked if there was any legal document that could replace the receivership to ensure no one starts living in the building again. K. Lew said he thought that the correction order still stands. E. Fahey explained that state statute requires that a failed septic system be fixed within two years and the BOH could leverage this, but would need an official report of Title 5 failure, which the original inspection did not cover. K. Lew suggested requesting another inspection and report before the case is closed. The Town has spent \$8300 in legal fees so far. E. Fahey agreed that another inspection is necessary because there is no official report of the septic failure. The Select Board will follow up with Chief Miller and ask her to keep an eye on the property. The BOH and

Select Board do not object to closing the receivership case if an inspection shows that the buildings are still secured and there are no more immediate threats to public health. K. Lew will follow up with legal counsel to arrange for inspection and to coordinate with BOH and E. Fahey.

7. Police Chief: RSG speed enforcement update, ICM RMS software update: Chief Miller reported she completed 4 grants. With the MPG grant she received a new printer as well as barricades. Chief Miller reported that she and Frank have been patrolling Washington Mountain Road and Route 8 for speeders. K. Lew suggested Frank no longer patrols Route 8 and spends more time on Washington Mt Road because speed is more of an issue there. There was discussion on patrolling areas before settled areas such as West Branch. D. Ellis asked about the brackets for moving the speed sign. Chief Miller reported that there is still no easy way to move the current speed sign however she has acquired another one. K. Lew asked Chief Miller to follow up with Highway crew to revisit ideas to make signs more movable. He also asked her to follow up with S. Curran for assistance with grant reporting as needed.

8. Westfield Wild & Scenic: CRMA application & town presentation updates: D. Ellis reported that he has yet to receive a confirmation for the date of the town presentation but expects to hear back this week. The engineering on Johnson Hill culvert was only for site survey, field data, and existing conditions. WW&S also previously provided template for grant application. D. Ellis said he applied last year but we did not get the grant. K. Lew thought we should try again then. K. Lew suggested D. Ellis follow up with S. Curran and reach out to engineers to get updated estimates for final design and permitting to include in grant application for the next phase.

9. Family Fun Day: The Eagles Stage Band is asking for a formal agreement to perform at family fun day for 1 hour. L. Levernoch has secured grant to pay for the performance. K. Lew made a motion to enter into the contract for the Eagles Stage band to perform at Family Fun Day. M. Case seconded. Motion passed unanimously. L. Levernoch will follow up with the band.

10. Review of Select Board FY25 Budget Requests: K. Lew reported that the requests will change. Education total is \$1,054,325. K. Lew reported that the request will change after the School Board Meeting. K. Lew asked S. Curran to gather more information to refine the Voc. Ed. Transportation budget in the next few months. The request for Community Services is \$20,215. S. Curran will reach out to the new executive director at the Becket Atheneum to get their FY25 requests. The request for Emergency Services is \$17,454. M. Case pointed out that there will need to be a new line item added for the ambulance. The request for General Government is \$103,871. There was discussion on the Town Administrator salary and adding a line item for his expenses. Forms will be filed with the approved minutes. D. Megas asked if she should have the budget completed for all departments by 2/12/24. K. Lew explained that he doesn't expect to do a full budget review with the Select Board. The Finance Committee should do the full budget review and the Select Board will focus the bigger picture.

11. Review of proposed Financial Policies & Procedures and possible adoption: K. Lew had several questions about different policies. He questioned the Accountant maintaining an inventory of assets, since she is not in position to learn about new assets or evaluate changing conditions. He suggested the Town Administrator would be in better position to maintain overview of capital needs. There was discussion on appropriating money for the Town Stabilization Fund in annual budgets for future capital. The Select Board agrees that it would be ideal to have money available when the Town needs it for capital improvement, rather than always borrowing, however this is an aspirational policy. A larger discussion is necessary. Since time ran out to discuss other policies, D. Megas and K. Lew will meet

separately to negotiate K. Lew's remaining issues and report back to the Select Board and Finance Committee.

12. Authorization of second signatory for town checks: K. Lew suggested using either the Tax Collector or the Town Administrator as a second signatory. B. Gelb suggested using G. Campbell because she is already in the system. K. Lew asked if it was necessary have a written policy to establish when a secondary signatory can be utilized. D. Ellis suggested that it should not be too restrictive in the event that the Treasurer is unavailable. The policy could be part of the new general town bylaws. S. Curran will follow up with G. Campbell. B. Gelb will check with Tom at ESB. B. Gelb mentioned that some towns have checks printed with the Treasurer's signature already on them. The Board was not in favor and suggested using a stamp instead.

13. Discussion in advance of joint meeting with Middlefield discussion about the budget request: The Board discussed continuing to maintain a phone. S. Curran doesn't believe he needs to go to the MMA every year. Much of the meeting is also covered in webinars. The Board agreed.

Adjournment: K. Lew motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:14PM. D. Ellis seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Accepted: _____ Date _____

Accepted: _____ Date _____

Accepted: _____ Date _____

Respectfully submitted,

Tykesha Nothe

Correspondence: Notice of decision from the Lee Planning Board in regards to approval of a special permit for property on Limestone Rd.