



Town of West Newbury
Select Board
Monday, March 13, 2023 @ 7:00pm
381 Main Street, Town Office Building
www.wnewbury.org
Meeting Minutes

Open Session: Chairman Archibald called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Participation in the Meeting:

- Wendy Reed, Rick Parker, David Archibald- Select Board
- Angus Jennings- Town Manager
- James Blatchford- Town Clerk
- Chris Wile, Dan Innes, Rob Phillips- Finance Committee
- Mark Gootée- Water Superintendent
- Robert Janes- Water Commissioner
- Dena Trotta- School Committee Member
- Rich Morrell- Representative of Yukan Sports, via Zoom
- Jack Foley- Representative of Pentucket Youth Football and Cheer
- Maureen Lynch, Kara Kosmes- Whittier Technical High School

Announcements:

- This meeting is being broadcast on local cable TV and recorded for rebroadcast on the local cable channels and on the internet. Meeting also accessible by remote participation; instructions below.
- Summer Recreation Program at Page School-Online Registration Opens Friday, March 10th at 7am! Details on Town website and at <https://westnewburyma.myrec.com/>
- Affordable Housing Trust listening session, Thursday, March 16th at 7pm
- Annual & Special Town Meeting: Monday, April 24, 2023 at 7pm
- Town Election Monday, May 1st. Nomination papers due to Town Clerk by March 13th at 5pm.
- Call for volunteers! Open positions on Boards/Commissions/Committees. See www.wnewbury.org/volunteer
- Reminder to subscribe for emailed Town agendas/news/announcements at www.wnewbury.org/subscribe

Regular Business:

- A. Special Event Permit Application- Road Race on June 11 at 8am- Yukan Sports LLC (cont'd from 2/27)**
(See Exhibit A). Town Manager Jennings briefed the Board that the race organizers had already been moving through the appropriate channels to secure permissions, submitting a certificate of insurance, and arranging for a police detail, which Morrell went into greater depth on briefly. **Archibald motioned to approve the permit. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- B. Request for temporary signage - Natale Smith, Pentucket Youth Football and Cheer**
(See Exhibit B). A representative from PYFC specified the locations of the temporary signs in accordance with Town Bylaws. Reed asked for the dates of the sign postings (March 15th to March 29th). **Reed motioned to approve the signs. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- C. Presentation of proposed FY24 Whittier Tech budget, and discussion of proposed MSBA construction project (for potential Town Meeting consideration in Spring 2024)**
The Superintendent and the Business Manager offered positive updates on the school including new program areas, scholars of distinction, as well as admissions statistics and grants received from the Commonwealth. Lynch stated that renovations of the school building would be no longer feasible, and that Whittier would need to seek state assistance in constructing a new building. Lynch stressed the hope that their process would be transparent as possible and offered information on costs of the new building (\$425,000,000). **No motion was made at this time.**
- D. Report on recommendations for FY24 Capital Articles - Capital Improvements Committee**
(See Exhibit D). The Select Board discussed the Capital Improvement Committee recommendations on the Town Meeting Articles. Archibald queried Parker about the urgency of the sidewalk snowplow, which he replied was not fully effective in its role and a maintenance liability. The discussion also focused on concerns about not knowing the true costs of future projects in FY25 and beyond, given the increasing prices across many sectors. **No motion was made at this time.**
- E. Presentation of proposed FY24 Water budget - Board of Water Commissioners**
(See Exhibit E). The Select Board heard data from the Water Commissioners, one of whom clarified figures written incorrectly in the Budget that would be amended. Reed was curious about potential line-item transfers, which would need to be approved by the Finance Committee, and Janes and Jennings clarified how the budgeting drafting was done- with specific respect to water agreements with Newburyport as well as impacts on how the Budget was structured because of COVID-19-era water usage changes. The Department of Revenue at the state level had found such structuring invalid, and it necessitated a greater Budget for FY 23-24 to compensate. Continued discussion of the budget from the Water Commission occurred, which focused on the difficulty in predicting future costs and expenditures, the thinly stretched workforce, and salaries. Reed had reservations about the vagueness of the salary line item, thus she will be abstaining from the vote pending a discussion from the Water Commissioners regarding the salary line item. **Parker made a motion to approve the budget. Archibald seconded. The motion passed. (2 Yes, 0 No, Reed abstaining).**
- F. Follow-up discussion of proposed warrant articles for spring Annual and Special Town**

Meetings; including article proposals from Water Commission

Discussion flowed smoothly from Item E to Item F similar topics. Votes occurred on the following Articles, which took place following discussion of Item G. When queried by Reed as to why so many Articles were coming from the Water Commissioners, Superintendent Gootée explained it as coincidence, a number of unforeseen and seen expenses all being incurred within a short window. Discussion of these further Articles begins at roughly the two-hour mark in the live video:

Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the repair of Wellfield building #1 at a cost of \$16,610. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the cleaning of Wellfield #1's wellheads at a cost of \$9,975. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the purchase of SCADA RTUs at a cost of \$7,340. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the purchase of a continuous chlorine monitoring system at the cost of \$19,900. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the purchase of a new master meter at the cost of \$3,865. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article to purchase water from Newburyport and to replenish line items in the FY23 Budget at a cost of \$140,000. Reed stated she wanted to further clarification on what line items were being backfilled under this Article. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). Archibald motioned to approve the Article providing for the repair/replacement of components of the water distribution system at a cost of \$30,000. Gootée explained the purpose of the money within the Water Department's operations, as an emergency backup to primary funds already available. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

G. Request for allocation of ARPA funds for Church/Prospect water main replacement - Board of Water Commissioners

(See Exhibit G). Primary discussion on this Item focused on the use of ARPA funds for water main replacement on Church and Prospect Streets. Intensive discussion occurred on the difficulty of purchasing requisite piping, planning for long-term projects, and the upcoming challenge of PFAS mitigation. The Board determined that Town Meeting should vote to authorize the funding of the replacement regardless of the funding source to ease the process of carrying out the project, with Jennings stating he felt the public would be supportive of the strategy even though it would modify a preexisting Article in the Warrant. Discussion continued on where appropriate secure storage for the piping would be, and potential documentation/parameters that would need to be generated/followed. **Parker motioned that the Town use \$625,000 in ARPA funds for the purchase of some of the piping, subject to written documentation that all applicable rules related to ARPA funding are followed. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Archibald then motioned to revise the Town Meeting Article related to the purchase to encompass necessary borrowing for bidding and construction costs to replace the water main, with knowledge that costs may vary in the future. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

H. Updates regarding proposed FY24 Town Operating Budget incl. Finance Committee reviews to date

Articles voted and/or discussed on were:

Article 21: Town Manager Jennings opened discussion bringing up the carryover for curbside recycling that had to be added to the Operating Budget at late notice. Jennings stated that in future the Board of Health could at their discretion use revolving fund money to pay the recycling expenses. **Reed moved to approve Article 21 and its line items, including the fund to pay the curbside pickup expenses. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 26: **Parker motioned to approve Article 26 for the replacement fire pickup truck. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 28: The Board clarified that the Town was unable to acquire a police cruiser at the hoped for price and therefore additional thousands were needed to cover the cost. Citing an interest in further information about the operation of the hybrid engine in the cruiser, the Board tabled the Article. **No motion was made at this time.**

Article 43: Concerned by how recently the amendment, which proposed to modify the Zoning Bylaws to add further wetlands protection, had been introduced, the Select Board talked with Rob Phillips of the Finance Committee (who had similar reservations) about their feeling that the Article should not be included on the Warrant. Further, Archibald found the language vague and too sweeping. **Parker motioned for Article 43 be brought before the Finance Committee. Reed seconded. The motion failed. (1 Yes, 2 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 20: The Select Board determined that the Article should be discussed by the Finance Committee before the Board would discuss in depth. **The Select Board decided to table the Article for a future meeting.**

Article 19: **Archibald motioned to approve the Article which would provide funding for the snow and ice deficit. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 15: **Parker motioned to approve the Article in order to establish a study- defining the scope of testing at 31 Dole Place. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Article 31: Jennings recommended the Board hold off on the Page School crosswalk project, instead rolling it into a later Route 113 corridor project to improve pedestrian safety. **No motion was made at this time.**

Article 24: The Select Board wished to have further clarification on the Article, particular pending voting on related Articles on the Town Meeting Warrant. **No motion was made at this time.**

Article 23: **Reed motion to approve the Article. Archibald seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Jennings concluded this portion of the meeting by bringing to the attention of the Select Board Budget items that needed to be reconciled between variants of the Operating Budget. These reconciliations were in items relative to group insurance costs, veteran's benefits and expenses, as well as the Pentucket School District, public safety, Park and Rec, and Council on Aging funding. Particular attention was paid to Park and Rec's adjustments, with a potentially substantial change in funds from which seasonal PT employees would be paid. Jennings did not recommend approving Park and Rec's changes. For reference, see Budget items highlighted in yellow in the Select Board meeting packet for 3/13/2023. Following this discussion, **with the exception of the Park and Rec line items, Reed motioned to approve the Operating Budget with these adjustments. Parker seconded. The**

motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

I. Discussion of Ch. 70 State educational funding formula

(See Exhibit I). The Board expressed their confusion with the Chapter 70 formula, and Archibald suggested communicating with the state government to learn more about the process and how determinations are made. Jennings agreed and relayed that serious talk had occurred on suing the state over the determinations. **The Select Board decided to table the Article for a future meeting.**

J. Review of draft Annual and Special Town Meeting warrants, incl. determination of which articles would be on Special (instead of Annual) Town Meeting Warrant

(See Exhibit J). Jennings asked the Board to provide any additional input on which items should be in which Town Meeting, but the Board had no remarks. **No motion was made at this time.**

K. Proposed adoption of Financial Policies (recommended from MassDOR Division of Local Services Municipal Best Practices grant)

The Select Board decided to table the Article for a future meeting.

L. Review of proposed revisions to Facility Rental fee schedule

(See Exhibit L). Reed raised a concern regarding an unexplained distinction between for-profits and non-profits in the schedule. The Board also agreed that renting the Select Board Meeting Room should be off-limits. They also discussed rates and hour limits. **No motion was made at this time.**

M. Meeting minutes: January 9, 2023; January 17, 2023

Archibald motioned to approve the meeting minutes for January 9 with revisions and January 17 without revisions. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

Town Manager Updates:

N. Update on pending issuance of Page School Feasibility Study Request for Qualifications

Jennings stated that the name of the “Page School Feasibility Study” would be changed to “Page School Assessment” to help identify issues with the Page School for the Town, and for the Town to make a future determination on how to proceed. Parker lauded the change of name. **No motion was made at this time.**

O. Public Comment period for regional Transportation Improvement Program

(See Exhibit O). Jennings stated he provided the Town’s “usual comments” for regional TIP priorities and stated a meeting with TIP representatives was upcoming shortly. **No motion was made at this time.**

P. Updates on ongoing/active projects/initiatives

(See Exhibit P). Under this Item, the Town Manager provided the Planner’s Report and correspondence on the Middle Street Bridge permitting process. Jennings also informed the Board about insurance issues impacting the G.A.R. Library, as the Library’s digital infrastructure is maintained by the library consortium and not the G.A.R. itself. During this Item, Reed brought up the proposed a Cost of Living Adjustment increase. Jennings stated the Board would in this situation be finalizing a COLA increase by 3% in FY24. **Reed motioned to approve the increase. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Q. Follow up meeting assignment; placing items for future agendas

No motion was made at this time.

Archibald motioned to adjourn the session. Parker seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The session adjourned at 11:18pm.

To view a recording of the meeting, see the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daSkEI06jWs>