



**Town of West Newbury
Select Board
Monday, November 21, 2022 @ 7:00pm**
381 Main Street, Town Office Building
www.wnewbury.org
Open Session Meeting Minutes

Open Session: Open Session was called to order at 7:11pm by Chairperson Archibald

Participation at the meeting:

David Archibald, Richard Parker, and Wendy Reed *Select Board Members*
Angus Jennings, *Town Manager*
James Blatchford, *Town Clerk*
Alison Hardy
Kelly Scott
Jennifer Walsh, *Interim Town Accountant*
Christian Kuhn, *Town Assessor*

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; see agenda for details.
- Pentucket Arts Foundation – Makers’ Market, Sat., Dec. 3rd from 10:30am-4pm, Veasey Mem. Park, Groveland
- 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. Requests for appointment:

a. Application of Alison Hardy to serve on Historic District Commission

Alison Hardy appeared before the Select Board in person (see exhibit A.a. for details). Hardy and the Select Board members discussed prior experience serving on the Topsfield Historic Commission. **Parker made a motion to appoint Alison Hardy to the Historic District Commission term ending June 30, 2023. Reed seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

b. Application of Kelly Scott to serve on Cable Advisory Committee

Kelly Scott appeared before the Select Board in person (see exhibit A.b. for details). Scott discussed prior experience with Community Cable Access program in Ipswich. **Parker made a motion to appoint Kelly Scott to the Cable Advisory Committee term ending June 30, 2023. Reed seconded.** Scott requested assistance locating minutes from previous Cable Advisory Committee meetings. **Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

B. Request for appointment of Town Accountant

Reed made a motion to appoint Jennifer Walsh to Town Accountant and to enter contract negotiations. Parker seconded. Jennifer Walsh appeared before the Select Board in person (see exhibit B for details). Reed stated Walsh had over 20 years of experience in finance and office work, had completed complex accounting and payroll projects, and had taken on more responsibilities as interim Town Accountant. **Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

C. FY23 Tax Classification Hearing

Christian Kuhn, Town Assessor, appeared before the Select Board remotely (see exhibit C for details). Kuhn stated there was a 21% increase in property value, which was the most aggressive increase for the Town and across Essex County. Kuhn explained the process of how the value of property was determined and the role of the DOR in the yearly tax rate process. Jennings reviewed the requested items to be voted on; single tax or split tax rate, the open space discount, the residential exemption, and the small commercial exemption. Jennings informed the Select Board the FY22 tax rate was 13.01 and the FY23 tax rate was estimated to be 11.07.

Archibald reviewed the Board of Assessor’s vote 3-0 to maintain a single tax rate. **Archibald made a motion to maintain a single tax rate versus residential versus commercial due to the little amount of commercial property. Parker seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Archibald stated the Board of Assessors voted 3-0 not to adopt an Open Space Discount. **Archibald made a motion not to adopt an Open Space Discount. Parker seconded.** Kuhn explained the discount would apply to land that was not Chapter Land eligible yet open to the public for use and therefore considered Open Space. Kuhn stated land of this nature would not be tax exempt but could be discounted under the Open Space Discount. **Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Archibald reviewed the Board of Assessor’s vote 3-0 not to adopt the residential exemption. **Archibald made a motion to not recommend the residential exemption. Parker seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Archibald stated the Board of Assessors voted 3-0 not to adopt the small commercial exemption. **Archibald made a motion not to adopt the small commercial exemption. Reed seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

D. Discussion of Pentucket Regional Agreement

Archibald stated that every three years the towns of the tri-town agreement had the opportunity to review the Pentucket Regional Agreement (see exhibit D for details). If changes were proposed, all three towns would be required to agree upon those changes proposed at the Spring Town Meetings. Any approved changes to the current agreement would go into effect 2024. The Select Board discussed potential revision recommendations to the Pentucket Regional Agreement made by the Finance Committee. Topics of revision were the phrasing surrounding the number of elementary schools per town, the Pentucket Regional Contingency Plan, Capital Project reporting, and annual building maintenance plans and reports. The Select Board discussed the goal of finalizing and sharing the comments from West Newbury with the other towns before the end of December. **No motion at this time.**

E. Update and request for Board direction regarding proposed Whetstone Greenway project

Reed informed the Select Board that Brad Buschur had made the changes to the original project design under the belief that it would have less impact on the wetlands (see exhibit E for details). Reed stated the Conservation Commission did not necessarily agree there would be less of an impact on the wetlands. Further, Reed stated the CPC believed the design change to be a major change and would require additional approval from the CPC and Town Meeting. The Select Board discussed the potential increase in construction costs and potentially hiring a structural engineer to ensure ADA compliance. The Select Board agreed that this project should be handled by town staff moving forward. Jennings stated that no additional funds, other than \$220 for the legal ad, had been spent on this project to date. **No motion was made at this time.**

F. Preliminary discussion of FY24 budget policy direction (scheduled for review at Dec. 5th meeting)

Jennings stated the FY24 budget would be a primary item on the December 5th agenda (see exhibit F for details). Jennings and the Select Board discussed department turnback of unspent department budgets and if there was another way to carry the money forward. Jennings discussed department budgets such as Fire and recycling that had significant turnbacks and how the budgets had been conservatively set. Jennings and the Select Board discussed different ways to present the budget at Town Meeting that could reduce the number of line-item transfers. Jennings stated legislative body would vote on the department budget as a whole, but could have access to the broken-down budget within each department. This item would be further discussed December 5th. **No motion was made at this time.**

G. Potential to revise rates for use of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations at Page School, 1910 Building

The Select Board discussed if the rates at the charging stations should be increased. Parker discussed the current rate structure per kilowatt through National Grid and the amount of money the town received per kilowatt from Main Street Solar production. It was decided to leave the rate as is at the charging stations. **No motion was made at this time.**

H. Set date and time for annual Holiday Tree Lighting

It was decided to schedule the annual tree lighting for December 8, 2022 at 6:30pm.

I. Review of draft Select Board meeting schedule for first half of calendar year 2023

The Select Board reviewed the proposed dates for meetings for the first half of the calendar year (see exhibit I for details). The Select Board decided to change the January meeting dates to the 9th, 17th, and 30th.

J. Meeting minutes: November 1, 2021

Archibald made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from November 1, 2021. Parker seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

Town Manager Updates

K. Update on recent Planning Board discussion of policy priorities

Jennings stated the Planning Board found the list of priorities helpful (see exhibit K for details). Jennings gave a brief update on the progress of each item listed on the priority list.

L. Middle Street Bridge updates

Jennings stated DPW Director Wayne Amaral had visited the site the week prior and noted that two sink holes had developed (see exhibit L for details). Jennings informed the Select Board that Newburyport had been asked to repair the sink holes and the town was waiting for a response. Jennings reviewed a meeting held with mayor Reardon where the Middle Street bridge was discussed. **No motion was made at this time.**

M. Update on recent submittal of Safe Routes to Schools grant application to advance/implement recommendations from Route 113/Page School/Pipestave intersection safety audit

Jennings informed the Select Board the Safe Routes to School grant application had been submitted (see exhibit M for details). Jennings commended the DPW projects manager for assisting in helping make the submission deadline. **No motion was made at this time.**

N. Update on recent meeting at Whittier Tech regarding proposed school building project with MSBA

Jennings and Parker reviewed a meeting they attended with superintendent Maureen Lynch and other town officials from the district (see exhibit N for details). Jennings stated the school would need approval from all 11 cities/towns in the district get through the MSBA process. Parker stated the construction option that would increase the student population was found to be too costly and therefore had been taken off the table. Jennings discussed areas of the school that would need to be upgraded to meet code compliance. **No motion was made at this time.**

O. Update on Capital Improvement Committee process to review draft Capital Improvements Program

Jennings stated a draft of the Capital Improvements Program had been circulated. The CIC discussed the draft and will revisit the updates at the December 8th meeting. **No motion was made at this time.**

P. Timeline and next steps to update Housing Production Plan

Jennings stated a meeting was scheduled for December 1, 2022 with the Town Planner, MVPC designee, and the Town Manager. Jennings stated the members of the Affordable Housing Trust were invited to attend and participate. **No motion was made at this time.**

Q. Timeline and next steps to update Hazard Mitigation Plan

Jennings stated the regional kickoff was scheduled for December 7th. Invitations to various town departments had been circulated. **No motion was made at this time.**

R. Update on recent meeting with MIIA for annual review of insurance policies and coverages

Jennings discussed the annual MIIA review of insurance policies and coverage. Jennings stated that most likely cyber coverage would require two-factor authentication starting July 1, 2023. Jennings also informed the Select Board that municipalities renting out any portion of municipal building space would become increasingly more difficult as insurance coverage would not be issued. Jennings stated that West Newbury was grandfathered in but the town should continue monitoring this as it could change in the future. **No motion was made at this time.**

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

Archibald made a motion to adjourn to executive session in accordance with MGL Ch. 30A §21(a) 6: To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body (362 Main Street; 31 Dole Place); Parker seconded. Motion unanimously passed (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The Board adjourned to executive session at 10:30pm.

The Board returned to Open Session. Archibald made a motion to adjourn open session. Parker seconded. Open Session adjourned at 10:58pm.