



**Town of West Newbury  
Select Board**

Monday, October 2, 2023 @ 7:00pm  
381 Main Street, Town Office Building  
[www.wnewbury.org](http://www.wnewbury.org)  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Open Session:** Chairwoman Reed opened the session at 7:00pm.

**Participation at the Meeting:**

- Rick Parker, Wendy Reed, Chris Wile- Select Board
- Angus Jennings- Town Manager
- Jim Blatchford- Town Clerk
- Michael Dwyer- West Newbury Fire and Police Chief
- Jason Goldweber- Mill Pond Committee applicant
- Kevin Bowe- Cable Advisory Committee representative
- Rob Phillips- Finance Committee representative

**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.
- Merrimack River boat tour fully booked; keep an eye out for future events and activities as part of River Road resiliency planning, funded by Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant!
- Fall Special Town Meeting to take place on Monday, Oct. 23, 2023 at 7pm in the Annex
- Call for volunteers! FY24 positions on Boards/Commissions/Committees. See [www.wnewbury.org/volunteer](http://www.wnewbury.org/volunteer)
- Reminder to subscribe for emailed Town agendas/news/announcements at [www.wnewbury.org/subscribe](http://www.wnewbury.org/subscribe)

**Regular Business**

- A. Request for appointment of Liam Grenham as Police Officer-Police Chief Michael Dwyer**  
See Exhibit A, p. 3. Dwyer talked about Grenham's previous service to the Town as a dispatcher, as well as his education and family background. After attending the Police Academy, Grenham will join the force as an officer in May. The appointment of Grenham means a return to 10 full-time officers on the West Newbury force. **Parker motioned to appoint Grenham to the West Newbury Police Department as a full-time officer. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- B. Notification of appointment of Michael Dwyer as Interim EMA Director**  
See Exhibit B, p. 4-5. Jennings explained that Lee Ann Delp, the present Director, was resigning, and that the Chief would be appointed the Interim Director. **No motion was made at this time.**
- C. Request for appointment of Jason Goldweber to Mill Pond Committee**  
See Exhibit C, p. 6. Parker stated it was valuable that Goldweber had a degree in Environmental Studies. **Wile motioned to appoint Goldweber to the Committee. The motion was properly seconded.** Blatchford confirmed it was a one-year term expiring in June 2024. **The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- D. Select Board review of Committees' charge/ function: Cable Advisory Committee**  
See Exhibit D, p. 7-11. Reed tried to get clarity on the length of terms for the Committee. The draft charter at present includes a different term length than those for present members. It was discussed if it was appropriate to have Adam Stone (A/V specialist) as the "staff liaison" which Jennings felt was not the best match since he was not a Town employee- though he lauded Stone's dedication to supporting the Town's functions. Following that, the Board went over the Committee's accomplishments. Reed asked what a "Field Kit" was- and Bowe explained it was a tool to help residents come up with their own local programming. Bowe talked about the present equipment and what he would like to see it be used for. Also discussed was the hope to make PEG funding sustainable, since long-term projects could be hampered by lack of funds. Lack of funding has not been an issue so far in West Newbury. Bowe hoped that a local TV studio would eventually be developed. Reed and the Board began looking over a draft charter for the Committee, analyzing it and offering critiques. The worry about PEG funds drying up as cable becomes outmoded was discussed- how would CAC and its activities be funded without that money? How can the CAC and its activities evolve to meet new needs and challenges? Wile asked, regarding Bowe's hope about establishing a local TV studio, if the high school already had one. One challenge with the establishment of a community TV studio in the high school would be the regional nature of the school district: would West Newbury's efforts to establish their own local studio there cause friction with respect to Merrimack and Groveland? Could they also use the studio as well? Bowe enthused that the opportunity to do programming for the Town and the students would be very valuable- and hoped that streaming would become a bigger part of the picture. **No motion was made at this time.**
- E. Review of updated draft Warrant for Fall Special Town Meeting; discussion of draft articles, if needed**  
See Exhibit E, p. 12-25. A fresh version of the Warrant with changes suggested by Town Counsel was circulated. No substantive changes were reported. The Board and the Manager discussed placement of Articles in the Warrant and some of its contents (mainly dollar amounts that had changed). **No motion was made at this time.**
- F. Request for ARPA funding to support repair of sills / remedial masonry work at Page School**  
See Exhibit F, p. 26-48. Jennings told the Board that back at the Annual Town Meeting funding had been approved to study the sills. A draft RFP was provided to the Board that provided for replacement and repairs at a cost of \$50,000 using ARPA funds to get the project underway ASAP. If ARPA funds were not used it would go to a vote at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting. Wile asked about the level of detail in the study and Jennings told him it was robust. The work would not include restoration of the sills after shoring them up for safety. Parker expressed his

reservations on using the funds on the Page School, still hoping to put it toward the Middle Street Bridge, saying that the Town had still not actively courted their legislators for help on acquiring the additional funds (besides ARPA) to get that project executed. Work on the sills would not begin until next Spring, but it would put the Town at a better juncture than waiting. The Board tried to ascertain who would be using the School at different points during the Summer and if it would interfere with the work but no major obstacles were cited. **Wile motioned to use \$50,000 in ARPA funds for the repair of sills. The motion was properly seconded. The motion passed. (2 Yes, Parker No, 0 Abstain).**

**G. Review employee requests for carry-over of unused FY23 vacation time until December 31, 2023**

**See Exhibit G, p. 49.** For perspective, Jennings said that this matter had been taken up every year for the last few years and explained a bit more about the concept and its development as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. It was revealed that there were employees with vast quantities of unused vacation time, and using it up would leave departments short-staffed if it was mandated to do so. **Wile motioned to accept employees carrying over time until December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The motion was properly seconded.** The room discussed the cut-off date, which last year was December 7<sup>th</sup>. Jennings said that research into policies in other communities revealed a variety of approaches, and no approach was perfect. **The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

**H. Review of draft amendments to Personnel Policy; consideration of referral to public hearing**

**See Exhibit H, p. 50.** The Board looked over proposed amendments. Jennings suggested if the Board liked any of the amendments, they should refer them to a future hearing to handle the amendments in one go as a whole slate. Jennings said that no comments had been submitted regarding the amendments originally planned for the hearing this evening. The Board discussed the closure of the Town Offices on the day after Thanksgiving. It was at present treated as a “snow day” for employees. Previously, it had not been recognized as an official day off by the Town because of union contracts. In 2023, all union contracts recognize the Friday after Thanksgiving as a holiday, meaning the procedure of making it a “snow day” is no longer necessary. The change would impact policies at other Town entities beyond Town Offices such as the Library. In the view of the Manager, it would hinge on the level of service the Town wishes to provide in its various branches on that Friday. **Parker motioned to have a public hearing to consider changes to the Personnel Policy.** Before the final vote, Parker pointed out that the definition of a “day” was unclear across the Policy. **The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Discussion continued on the history of the Personnel Policy, accruals, and definitions.

**I. Public Hearing to consider proposed amendments to Personnel Policy Sec. 1.4 Amendment of Policies**

**See Exhibit I, p. 51-78. Item tabled until October 16, 2023.**

**J. Review of proposed amendments to Select Board policies: Agenda Items; Signs on Town Property**

**See Exhibit J, p. 80-92.** Reed encouraged her fellow Board Members to examine the policies and propose any changes, deletions, or updates necessary. In this case the Board focused on signage on Town property and Agenda Items (such as setting a firmer deadline for submissions to the Board’s Agendas) after Clerk Blatchford had conducted a review of the policies and highlighted issues. The Board discussed these and other concerns they had with vague language, outdated segments giving them authority over matters which they no longer do, and other aspects. **Wile motioned to accept the amendments. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).** Parker suggested a thorough review of the entire body of policies.

**K. Consideration of potential new policy to establish criteria for use of Town Facebook, email notifications, etc. for communications and publicity**

**See Exhibit K, p. 93.** Reed outlined several recent email postings that endorsed private or quasi-private activities or groups. The Chair offered criteria, after Wile emphasized that those receiving Town promotion should be only Town or Department entities/persons. Other suggestions were taking care to not endorse candidates or issues. Jennings provided context to the Board of who at Town Offices were handling email blasts from the Town (essentially the Town Manager, Clerk, Executive Assistant, Assistant Clerk). It was suggested to steer people not affiliated with the Town to other Town-related websites to promote their events. The room debated merits of various proposed policy aspects. The group felt that a greater discussion was warranted. **No motion was made at this time.**

**L. Clarification of policy regarding use of EV Charging Station revolving fund to pay related electric bills; potential revision to rate for use of charging stations**

**See Exhibit L, p. 94.** Jennings stated that usage was not covering the expenses of the Stations at Town Offices and Page School. Reed inquired about charging more from the users. **No motion was made at this time.**

**M. Select Board liaison updates regarding recent or near-term Board/ Commission/ Committee activities**

Wile said he had not yet been to any meetings besides the Finance Committee and provided updates on which meetings he was intending to sit in on. He planned to contact his assigned BCCs via email to get an overall feel. Parker said he had been to a few meetings but had no updates to provide. **No motion was made at this time.**

**N. Town Manager recommendations re draft Select Board/Town Manager Goals/ Priorities for FY24**

**See Exhibit N, p. 95-107.** A follow up to prior discussions, Reed wanted to highlight various differences between the Board and Manager matrixes so they could discuss them, feeling that some things therein had already been done or were in progress. They discussed interest in certain aspects of the matrix such as performance reviews, the need to address CSOs and Merrimack River Pollution, the Carr Post project and its status, Fire Department reorganization, and several others. Jennings felt that continual sharing of information through the matrix was valuable to keep up, even if all the items weren’t being addressed every meeting. **No motion was made at this time.**

**O. Updates regarding Goals/Priorities; potential to initiate facilitated goal-setting/prioritization workshop**

Jennings said that in his past employment in Westford that leadership development trainings had been very valuable to attend. He hoped to bring this approach to West Newbury, and spoke with a Carlisle-based consultant on two occasions with Wendy Reed and Rebecca Ambra (Executive Assistant to the Town Manager) and solicited a proposal on how the consultant could help. Reed endorsed the idea, and Parker expressed his willingness to see what the consultant could bring to the table. Reed also wanted to create a standardized approach to communicate priorities to Boards, Committees, and Commissions to work more cooperatively and make sure money is spent on time, goals are unified, etc. The Town Manager said he would send out potential meeting dates to the Board. **No motion was made at this time.**

**P. Meeting minutes: September 14, 2023**

See Exhibit P, p. 108-110. Parker motioned to accept the September 14, 2023 Minutes as amended. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

**Town Manager Updates**

**Q. MVP Action Grant updates (regarding River Road resiliency planning); consideration of whether to pursue consolidated public outreach/planning event (with Rte. 113 corridor planning), or separate events**

See Exhibit Q, p. 111-125 (Minutes for group posted twice). Parker and Jennings talked about the volume of administrative requirements of the Grant, and lauded Elisa Grammer for leading the charge on much of the organization. Jennings urged the Board to check out the Minutes as they proved valuable. Jennings wanted to confirm with the Board that it was OK to put up signage relevant to the MVP Action Grant which prompted discussion. Jennings relayed that an event on November 15th for the public on Rte. 113 and River Rd. MVP projects was in the works (reference to this “summit” are found at previous Select Board meetings through the Summer and Fall of 2023). **No motion was made at this time.**

**R. Process to review request for Certificate of Approval to construct dwelling on land at 520 Main Street subject to Agricultural Preservation Restriction co-held by Select Board and Conservation Commission**

See Exhibit R, p. 126-130. Jennings said the review was not before the Board that evening, but provided an update on process being followed. He said that he and the Conservation Agent had been in touch with the Commonwealth, leading to a planned site-walk of the 520 Main location to address a variety of issues including material stockpiling. Jennings said that no permits for further construction would be entertained until compliance issues on the property were cleared up. **No motion was made at this time.**

**S. Community Compact grant application (filed Sept. 28 for new budgeting/capital planning software)**

See Exhibit S, p. 131-134. Jennings said the application had been filed, and an agreement had been signed with ClearGov to help with Town financial activities. Jennings said he and Town Accountant Walsh would be scheduling a training on the new computer program in the near future. Reed asked if there was a large amount of administration to be done with the Grant, but Jennings said there wasn't. **No motion was made at this time.**

**T. Town Planner Report, September**

See Exhibit T, p. 135-136. **No motion was made at this time.**

**U. MS4 Annual Report (filed with U.S. EPA late September)**

See Exhibit U, p. 137-159. Jennings lauded the Annual Report as a team effort, saying that various members of the DPW contributed to its creation. **No motion was made at this time.**

**V. Updates on other ongoing/active projects/initiatives**

Parker brought up a package created by Elisa Grammer submitted to the Town regarding issues with the DPU and municipal power aggregation. He urged the Town submit the letter proposed by Grammer with the Town Manager as the signatory. Time was of the essence, with a due date of October 6<sup>th</sup>. In addition, Jennings also mentioned that the FinCom Booklet would be on its way to press in the near future. **No motion was made at this time.**

**W. Follow up meeting assignment; placing items for future agendas**

**No motion was made at this time.**

Wile motioned to adjourn the session. Reed seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The session adjourned at 10:45pm.

**To access a video recording of the meeting, use the link below:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KumEwDd2UuE>