



**Town of West Newbury
Select Board Meeting**

Monday, November 6, 2023 @ 7:00pm
381 Main Street, Town Office Building
www.wnewbury.org
Meeting Minutes

Open Session: Chairwoman Reed opened the session at 7:01pm.

Participation at the Meeting:

Rick Parker, Wendy Reed, Chris Wile- Select Board
Angus Jennings- Town Manager
Jim Blatchford- Town Clerk
Maureen Curtin- Assistant Assessor
Rich Baker, Loretta Harrigan- Board of Assessors
Bob Janes- Historical Commission, Board of Water Commissioners representative
Heather Conner- COA Applicant
Nancy Lee- COA Applicant
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
- Pentucket Regional School District "State of Our School District" meeting- Tuesday, Nov. 7th at 6pm
- Project fair/forum re MVP/River Road project, and Route 113 corridor planning-Thursday, Nov. 9th 5:30-8pm
- Special Select Board meeting re proposed Whittier Tech School Building Project- Monday, Nov. 13th at 6pm
- Project fair/forum re MBTA Communities initiative- Wednesday, Nov. 15th 5:30-8pm
- SAGE Center newsletter and upcoming events!
- Historical Comm. Tales of Our Town: West Newbury in Winter: Sleighs, Sleds, Skates, Skis, Family, & Friends
- Notice of Award: \$IM Mass Works grant awarded to support reconstruction of the Middle Street Bridget
- Call for volunteers! FY24 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. Joint meeting w/Board of Assessors to consider appointment of William Studzinski to open Board of Assessors seat

See Exhibit A, p. 25. Richard Baker of the Board of Assessors talked about Studzinski's background in real estate in response to queries about the candidate's qualifications. Former Board Member Jenn Polisenio had moved out of the area, resulting in the opportunity for a new appointee. **Wile motioned to appoint Studzinski to the Board of Assessors. The motion was properly seconded. The motion passed unanimously. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain). The Board of Assessors then approved of Studzinski's appointment.**

B. Applications for appointment to Council on Aging: Heather Conner; Nancy Lee

See Exhibit Ba, p. 27, and Exhibit Bb, p. 28. Conner spoke to her experience with Meals on Wheels and how she enjoyed it, and how the enjoyment provoked her to seek a bigger opportunity. Lee spoke to her workplace experience in healthcare access, and that now in retirement she would be able to better to engage with the community. **Parker motioned to appoint Conner to the Council. The motion was properly seconded.** Parker asked if Lee would be willing to volunteer with COA, particularly assisting with Medicare-related matters. Lee agreed readily to volunteering. **The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**

Item D was taken out of order at this time.

C. Select Board review of Committees' charge/ function: Historical Commission

See Exhibit C, p. 29. Bob Janes was invited to speak to the Board about the Commission's work. He highlighted the recently-completed repainting of Old Town Hall on Main St., stating that a Commission member researched the historical colors of the structure, and this informed the choice of paint colors. Other initiatives undertaken lately were the nearly-completed historical structure surveys and work in the Quaker Cemetery which resulted in the discovery of a previously overlooked headstone. In the documents provided to the Select Board from the Commission, it was suggested the Town step up upkeep of cemeteries in Town (such as the Almshouse Cemetery and the Quaker Cemetery). Janes also said there were a number of cemeteries on privately owned land, and he urged the Town develop a mechanism to make sure that those burial grounds are taken care of, despite being on private property. Reed wondered if it would be possible to use CPA funds to purchase an easement. On the same topic, Jennings said he had reached out to Town Counsel but had not heard back regarding this matter concerning A, the Town's responsibilities to upkeep these cemeteries (should they meet the threshold for care defined under state law), and B, if the cemetery did not meet the threshold, what notice should be provided to property owners whose land includes burial grounds. Wile suggested organizing a living history "event" or similar with West Newbury long-time residents. Reed asked Janes about the possibility of fusing the Historic District Commission and Historical Commission together, but he admitted he had not given it much thought. Janes did suggest there could be some overall benefit. Before concluding the Item, Wile urged any listeners to consider joining the Commission, as it is short one member. **No motion was made at this time.**

D. Update re MDOT installation of new overhead sign on Bridge St. approaching Rocks Village Bridge

See Exhibit D, p. 32. At a prior meeting, the Board had decided to discuss the installation of a sign and strike bar further before putting it in. It was also discovered that the sign's location needed to be modified slightly, according to

Reed, and therefore public input was being encouraged on the topic. Comments received revealed that there was not strong desire in the community for its installation. Audience members and Town officials discussed the sign and the pros and cons of putting it in. Parker opined that a sensing system would have been more effective than a strike bar, but with no other options on the table, a strike bar was optimal. The frequent strikes and closures, and the ensuing repairs, sometimes numbered in the millions of dollars. **Wile motioned to request the state not install the sign. The motion was properly seconded.** Parker reiterated his hope that “something more” would be introduced to help mitigate the striking problems. Reed wanted to revisit the issue as well, with a future consideration of a notification warning system. **The motion passed (2 Yes, Parker No, 0 Abstain).**

Item C was taken up at this time.

- E. Request for authorization to pursue Massachusetts Automated External Defibrillator Equipment Program Grant - Chief Dwyer**
See Exhibit E, p. 34. The Grant would allow for the purchase of two vehicle-based AEDs. **Parker motioned to authorize pursuit of the Grant. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- F. Request for authorization to pursue grant to purchase My Senior Center Touch Screen- Council on Aging**
See Exhibit F, p. 36. Jennings explained MySeniorCenter Touch was a platform to help SAGE Center keep track of statistics, financials, and other metrics. Per the Manager, COA Director Christine Marshall was keeping track of these metrics in an Excel file, but she wants to upgrade to the “industry standard”, the standard this product. Wile reminded the room that it cost \$1,500 to use annually. **Wile motioned to authorize pursuit of the Grant. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- G. Request for use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for Water pump replacement-BOWC**
See Exhibit G, p. 44. Reed wondered why ARPA funds were appropriate for this replacement. Janes explained that one pump was not functioning at optimal capacity. The discussion turned to figuring out how to plan financially for pump maintenance and replacement, with a staggered approach. The replacement of the pump in question was not worked into the Capital Plan for the Water Department, but replacement of the problem unit at this time would mean that the Town would not be overtaking one working unit if the other failed completely. Reed expressed reservations about putting further ARPA funds toward the Department since so much of the funds had already been allotted to them. The Board felt that waiting until Spring Town Meeting to request money for a replacement and working with the present setup was preferable to spending money at this time. Wile asked if there was a warranty on the most recently replaced unit but it did not appear that there was. **Parker motioned to deny the request for funds. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).**
- H. Confirm proposed revisions to PRSD Regional Agreement, for regional review at Nov. 7th meeting**
See Exhibit H, p. 54. Reed turned the floor over to the Town Manager. Jennings said West Newbury’s slides on the Regional Agreement would be integrated into PRSD’s slide deck. He highlighted a small change in the slides since the last time the Board viewed it. Jennings was picked by Reed to present the slides. Parker suggested that on page 57 of the Regional Agreement (which dealt with posting locations), that the West Newbury posting location be specified as Town Offices for the sake of clarity. The Board hoped that a regional finance committee could be restarted, as it had previously existed and been very helpful. **No motion was made at this time.**
- I. Preview of upcoming meetings re proposed Whittier Tech school building project, incl. special meeting with West Newbury Select Board on Nov. 13th, and Whittier Tech public forum at Annex on Dec. 6th**
See Exhibit I, p. 75. The District’s public meeting in December had been cancelled, but a joint meeting with Whittier representatives would take place on November 13th which was still open to the public. Reed suggested using the time at the current meeting to prepare questions. Wile affirmed his support for trade schools, but agreed that budgeting for most Towns in the District would be very difficult. He likened the current process to the Pentucket Middle High School building project, which initially failed due to its large size and price tag- and he wondered if there were other options that Whittier could present beyond the ultimatum of renovate or replace currently facing the communities. Wile also found the present proposed design from Whittier to be overpriced, overdesigned, and oversized compared to other area technical schools. He also stated there was a “problem” creating the formula for funding for the project, with Haverhill having the greatest number of students but only paying 42% of the cost. Parker lamented the intense public exposure of the building project issue in the brief window of the last few months. He also rued the lack of a “close coupling” between Whittier and the Towns in the District that has created a false impression of conditions at the school. Parker continued by saying that with the sudden, urgent need to rebuild or renovate, many communities have been left feeling blindsided, referencing the letter from the Town of Rowley on this topic. Jennings chimed in saying that information has been received by West Newbury from Whittier over the years but it would require closer analysis of that data to determine the strength or weakness of that which the school had supplied. Reed said she wanted to know what the process would be to revise the Whittier Regional Agreement- was there a periodic review process? She also was curious if the new building would enable the school to expand its curricula. Blatchford recapped questions Jennings had about the timeline of the building process. The MSBA required a yes or no vote from the community on funding within 120 of the MSBA’s approval of the building project. For the November 13th meeting, Jennings told the Board that Whittier would give a presentation on the project, and then follow up with a Q&A session. Wile asked for the email address of the West Newbury Whittier School Committee member so that the Committeeman could be brought in for the meeting on the 13th. **No motion was made at this time.**
- J. Select Board liaison updates regarding recent or near-term Board/ Commission/ Committee activities**
See Exhibit J, p. 85. Reed noted that the Board of Assessors was missing from the list, and volunteered to be the liaison for it. Parker reported that the Energy and Sustainability was discussing pursuing three potential sites for solar panels (two at the DPW site on Main St., and one on the roof of the West Newbury Housing Authority). Parker said it was a challenge to find a company to support the project. He relayed that the Director of the Authority, Tracy Watson, was already exploring solar options independently. The Housing Authority site would save the community money, provide green energy, and also offer backup power supplies to the residents/Town Offices. The challenge of relocating

those living in affordable housing for the construction would pose a major issue for this option. Reed provided an update on the Open Space and Conservation Commission, saying that a checklist was being developed to guide review and permitting of trails on Town-owned property, with eventual engagement with other stakeholders for feedback. **No motion was made at this time.**

K. Meeting minutes: Oct. 16, 2023

See Exhibit K, p. 87. Wile motioned to approve the Minutes as amended. The motion was properly seconded. The motion unanimously passed. (3 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain).

Town Manager Updates

L. Update on preparation of updated Capital Improvements Program

See Exhibit L, p. 91. Jennings provided an update on the CIP, saying he has not yet rolled in Page School and Water Capital Projects into the Program, and added that there still needs to be reconciliation between the water projects listed on the Priorities Matrix and those in the hydrologic study from the Summer. Getting everyone to feel confident in the Water Capital Plan is something the Manager has taken on since work from contracted vendors has not been as envisioned, and even now there is no deadline for the completed project. Additionally, these problems have been compounded by a lackluster water rates study. This is leading to additional work in an effort to make sure the results will be usable for financial planning. Parker asked if the Board of Water Commissioners fully understood the scope of these issues and Jennings said no, feeling that he and the Commissioners were almost pursuing “different targets”. All three members of the Select Board expressed frustration with the lack of results and the continued payment to Tata & Howard. **No motion was made at this time.**

M. Town Manager workplan / priorities for remainder of calendar year 2023

See Exhibit M, p. 92. Jennings provided the Board with a list of priorities regarding the remainder of the calendar (not fiscal) year. He touched on the near-complete status of Annual Audit, the upcoming Project Fairs and Forums (November 9 and 15), the Capital Improvements Program, employee trainings, the Saw Mill Brook land acquisition, personnel evaluations, and other upcoming items to wrap up. **No motion was made at this time.**

N. NHESP response to submitted "checklist" regarding routine maintenance of Ash Street

See Exhibit N, p. 93. The Town Manager told the Board that it needed to be submitted by January 31st, and felt it would be helpful to have the Board look at the traffic control plan. It was decided to return to the matter in January 2024. **No motion was made at this time.**

O. Update on recent Parks & Rec Commission discussion of Pickleball

See Exhibit O, p. 96. Reed opened by stating that pickleball facilities would be open to all, not just seniors, as the Park and Rec. Commission had thought. Wile expressed his concerns on how the scheduling for pickleball was being advertised. Wile reported his observations from attending a game and said the noise levels were minimal. Parker pointed out that ironically when the basketball courts that the pickleball games are being played on were being put in, there was a similar uproar about noise. The Board felt that the DPW building being vetted for a permanent court was a nonstarter. They bandied about pros and cons of other paved and nonpaved areas in Town for a court. **No motion was made at this time.**

P. Ongoing MassDEP review of resident appeal of ConCom approval to install water level control device at Macey's Pond

See Exhibit P, p. 99. Reed asked for clarification with DEP's involvement in the process, and asked if Health Agent Paul Seigny was managing the project or Michelle Greene the Conservation Agent. The device in question would regulate the height of the water at Macey's Pond despite interference from beavers. **No motion was made at this time.**

Q. Updates on other ongoing/active projects/initiatives

See Exhibit Q, p. 103. Reed pointed out that the Water Commissioner's report was not included in the Town Clerk's Town Meeting Report. Blatchford said he would be willing to add it to the Report. Additionally, Jennings announced that the School Building Committee was wrapping up its work and would meet as needed in the future. He shared with Wile, Parker, and Reed the final sets of their minutes. The Board concluded Item Q with discussion of ChargePoint usage. Jennings floated the idea of returning eventually to the discussion of adjusting cost-to-charge. Parker said that West Newbury charged a higher rate than other Towns in the areas. **No motion was made at this time.**

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

Wile requested that a future Agenda include an update on the Long Hill APR, ARPA funds and their potential usage on the Middle Street Bridge, and a request to the Finance Committee to do an analysis of Free Cash versus Stabilization Funds. **No motion was made at this time.**

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

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXe7j6P2Gxo>