

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

In attendance were Acting Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Dr. Carl F. Kowalski; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Lincoln D. Heineman. Acting Chairman Salvucci opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Acting Chairman Salvucci read the following into the record:

In accordance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20, this meeting is being held remotely in an on-line conference mode hosted on Zoom.com and members of the public are not able to physically attend. The meeting is being broadcast live on Comcast channel 12 and can be viewed via live stream at WHCA.tv. It will subsequently be broadcast on YouTube.com.

Acting Chairman Salvucci asked everyone in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence.

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to approve bill and payroll warrants. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to accept correspondence in the Read File. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Update: COVID-19

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of communication received from the State that as of March 1, municipalities will no longer be administering the COVID-19 vaccine; and that it will instead be focusing on larger vaccination sites. This was disappointing news as Whitman had an effective vaccination plan in place. As of last week, all Whitman first responders have received both doses of the vaccine. The Fire Department is planning a small vaccine clinic for those residents who are truly homebound. A reverse 911 call will go out later this week with more information. Whitman is still in the red; however our incident rate is going down.

Timeline for Reopening Town Buildings

Mr. Heineman stated that at a meeting of the Board of Health this morning, it was the consensus of the Board to recommend the Town be three weeks in the green before considering reopening Town buildings.

Acting Chairman Salvucci stated that all Town Hall and DPW offices have shields. The library and the Council on aging do not. Prior to opening, department heads must have a plan in place for disinfecting their buildings and offices.

Mr. Bezanson stated State is considering reopening schools in early April. This might be a good target for Town buildings as well.

Dr. Kowalski stated Whitman is still in the red, which makes him pause about getting excited about opening Town buildings. He feels we need to take the side of safety; and being three weeks in the green makes sense. He also stressed the importance of continuing to follow the recommendations of the Board of Health.

Mr. Heineman noted that some safety precautions still need to be taken in Town Hall; and further conversations will need to take place with respect to the library and senior center.

Mr. Evans stated the importance of continuing to follow the advice of the Board of Health and Chief Grenno. He also asked Mr. Heineman to ask our health experts if they consider gray to be green.

Mr. Heineman agreed to do so. He also advised the Board that he intends to reinforce “by appointment only”.

Acting Chairman Salvucci suggested Mr. Heineman meet with the department heads prior to reopening in order to discuss sanitizing procedures.

Mr. Bezanson suggested staggering the openings, beginning with Town Hall.

Update: FY21 Snow Removal Budget

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of a \$16,830.08 deficit in the Snow & Ice Budget. He has spoken with the Town Accountant and they have agreed on a placeholder of \$50,000.

BUDGET REVIEW

FY22 Budget Process

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of his intention to work with the Town Accountant and department heads in order to create a balanced budget to be presented at a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on April 13, 2021.

Acting Chairman Salvucci spoke of his preference of using free cash for one-time expenses only.

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to authorize Town Administrator Lincoln Heineman to proceed with the FY22 budget process in order to present a balanced budget at a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on April 13, 2021. **Second** Dr. Kowalski.

At this time, Dr. Kowalski read the following statement from Whitman resident Shawn Kain into the record:

The FY22 budget is complex but I believe that we should do everything in our power to maintain services in our community. The difficulties associated with COVID-19 have placed an incredible burden on many of our departments. In addition, today, more than ever, many adults, and many children depend on the services we provide. I know that extending the compromise on the regional agreement is a sore subject. But I'm asking you to respectfully reconsider that option.

I believe that doing so will help the schools maintain level services. Risking critical mental health and educational supports on a Hanson override doesn't feel right to me. And, if we stay close to the Madden recommendations, a compromise will not take away from other town

departments. I believe this option is for the common good and creates the least harm in Whitman during this time of need.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Shawn Kain
31 Forest Street*

Dr. Kowalski stated that he sympathizes with Mr. Kain. However, we voted to use the statutory method going forward after last year. With that said, he does think Mr. Kain's idea should be thought about.

Mr. LaMattina stated he does not feel Whitman is in any position to subsidize the school budget and he will not vote to do that this year. He went on to say that he does not believe that Whitman gave Hanson money last year. He believes the money was given to the students and Hanson knew it was going to have to pay going forward.

Mr. Evans stated that he appreciates Mr. Kain's comments; however, we do not know the projected deficit for either town and he feels it is premature to throw out hypothetical compromises when the numbers have not yet been received.

Acting Chairman Salvucci reminded the Board of a few capital projects, including replacing the sewer main project.

Mr. Bezanson agreed with Mr. LaMattina, and noted the need for a new DPW building.

Dr. Kowalski stated the taxpayers have a duty to the services they want provided. The survey previously taken indicated the taxpayers felt police, fire and schools were important. In addition, an override will be needed at some point.

Mr. LaMattina agreed, but stated we cannot have an override to help another town.

Non-mandated Busing

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that this issue has been on the Finance Committee's agenda for several weeks. Earlier today, the Finance Committee met with the School Committee and it is clear the Finance Committee will make a decision as to whether or not to recommend non-mandated busing to Town Meeting; however, policy decisions are up to the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee.

Mr. LaMattina asked Mr. Heineman to scan the document that was provided by the School Committee at the earlier meeting and forward it to the members of this board. He also asked him to contact Jeff Szymaniak and ask him to provide some direction. He then asked if the Board wishes to provide non-mandated busing, noting that eliminating it will result in a savings of approximately \$64,000.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Board to not eliminate non-mandated busing and to present the issue to Town Meeting.

ANNUAL/SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT

SSVT Debt Issuance

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of a number of capital issues at South Shore Vocational Technical High School, including new windows, replacement of the roof, electrical work and extra space. This will be a \$17 million project over time. The cost to replace the windows (\$80,000) will be paid from capital stabilization. The member towns will be charged only when

the project is complete. Mr. Heineman spoke with school superintendent Tom Hickey about an accelerated roof repair program put in place by the MSBA; however, because the school has been well maintained, they will not be able to obtain funding. Whitman's share of the cost is 24.57%.

Mr. LaMattina asked if there are any documents or a presentation in place.

Mr. Salvucci stated that he has asked Mr. Hickey to put together a video presentation for placement on the school website. It can also be presented at Town Meeting if necessary.

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that there have been a few small changes in the sewer force main project. He suggested meeting with the DPW Commissioners and Environmental Partners on March 9. He also advised of the desire to have a new DPW building on the Annual Town Meeting warrant, although he feels this is premature.

Mr. Evans noted it has been some time since the Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee has discussed this issue and a feasibility study has not yet been seen.

NEW BUSINESS

Constable Appointment: David Asiaf

Mr. LaMattina **MOVED** to approve the request of David Asiaf to be reappointed to the position of Constable for a three-year term, through February 28, 2024. **Second** Dr. Kowalski. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Police Policy 1.01

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to affirm a unanimous vote taken in Executive Session on February 9, 2021, to adopt Police Policy 1.01 Use of Force (Response to Resistance) by Sworn Personnel.

Second Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Whitman Fire-Rescue COVID Vaccination Agreement

Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to affirm a vote taken in Executive Session on February 9, 2021, to accept the Whitman Fire-Rescue COVID Vaccination Agreement between the Town of Whitman and Local 1769. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Planning Board Vacancies

Acting Chairman Salvucci announced two vacancies on the Planning Board.

March Meeting Schedule

The Board set their March meeting schedule for Tuesday, March 9, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

At 8:11 p.m. Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** pursuant to M.G.L., c.30A, §21(a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining of litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr.

Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.** Acting Chairman Salvucci declared that having this meeting in Open Session will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. The meeting will reconvene in Open Session for the purpose of adjourning the meeting.

Acting Chairman Salvucci read the following into the record:

In accordance with Governor Baker's March 12, 2020, Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. c.30A, §20, the Executive session portion of the meeting will be held in an on-line conference mode hosted on Zoom.com and members of the public will not be able to physically attend. No broadcast of Executive Session will be made.

At 8:45 p.m. Dr. Kowalski **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. LaMattina. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Dr. Kowalski – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; and Acting Chairman Salvucci – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk