

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

In attendance were Chairman Carl F. Kowalski; Vice Chairman Daniel L. Salvucci; Clerk Brian J. Bezanson; Member Randolph G. LaMattina; Member Justin R. Evans; and Town Administrator Lincoln D. Heineman. Chairman Kowalski opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Kowalski 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.

Chairman Kowalski asked everyone in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. This was followed by a moment of silence dedicated to Sheila Kinch, a member of the Whitman Cultural Council and talented violinist with the Southeastern Philharmonic Orchestra, who passed away recently.

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

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

SCHEDULED HEARINGS/MEETINGS

6:00 p.m.: Sewer Force Main Project

Present for the hearing were DPW Superintendent Dennis Smith, Department of Public Works Commissioners Chairman Kevin Cleary, Member David Cook and Engineer Ziad Kary of Environmental Partners.

Mr. Kary provided a PowerPoint presentation of the sewer force main replacement. Following the presentation, Mr. LaMattina expressed concern with a water main replacement on Auburn Street as he did not recall that being discussed at the previous meeting of the Public Works Commissioners. Mr. Cleary explained it was always the intention to replace the water main; and agreed it was not voted on because the project is still in the design phase. Mr. Smith stated this issue was discussed in prior meetings. Mr. Evans stated the water main replacement was also discussed when the project was presented to the Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee, noting it makes sense to do it while the road is open. He also feels this would be a good time to look at retained earnings. Chairman Kowalski stated he was hoping the Board of Selectmen could vote this evening to support the project; however, without a vote of the Commissioners yet, it does not seem to be appropriate at this time. Mr. LaMattina stated that he is not arguing the voracity of the project, but it must be based on addressing the need. He also expressed concern with respect to the cost to the ratepayers, noting an approximate increase of

62 percent to the sewer rates. Mr. Heineman noted the next meeting of the Commissioners is scheduled to take place on April 13th, and asked if it would be possible for them to meet prior to then. Mr. Cleary stated that he will speak with the other Commissioners about rescheduling to an earlier date. Chairman Kowalski thanked Mr. Kary for the information provided this evening. At 6:53 p.m. Mr. Cleary, Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith and Mr. Kary departed from the meeting.

Because the Board had a few minutes before the public hearing was scheduled to begin, Chairman Kowalski took the agenda out of order.

NEW BUSINESS

License Renewal: Sleipnir Transportation

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the renewal of the Taxi/Livery License and Taxi/Livery Driver's Certificate for Eric C. Young, dba Sleipnir Transportation, 8 Danecca Drive, for the period April 1, 2021, through March 31, 2022. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Appointment to Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to appoint Justin Casanova-Davis to the Buildings, Facilities and Capital Expenditures Committee for a three-year term, through June 30, 2022, in order to fill an existing vacancy. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Authorization to Issue Temporary Outdoor Dining

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to authorize Town Administrator Lincoln Heineman to issue temporary outdoor dining licenses. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

The Board set their April meeting schedule for March 13, 2021, March 20, 2021, and March 27, 2021.

SCHEDULED HEARINGS/MEETINGS (cont'd)

7:00 p.m.: Application for Class II License – Sunlite Auto Sales, Inc., dba Auto Advisors and Associates (Maureen Foley), 909 Temple Street

Present for the hearing were the applicant, Maureen Foley; James Reid, owner of 909 Temple Street; and abutter John Delaney, 21 Glenwood Street.

Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to approve the application of Sunlite Auto Sales, Inc., dba Auto Advisors and Associates (Maureen Foley) for a Class II Auto Dealer's License on the premises located at 909 Temple Street subject to receipt of the advertising and mailing fees and final inspection/approval of the Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Ms. Foley advised the Board that she has been an auto dealer in Whitman since 2001. She has sold the property where she currently holds a license with a 44 vehicle limit and will be leasing space from Mr. Reid at 909 Temple Street. She is requesting a license for 5 vehicles at the new location as most of her sales will take place over the internet.

Mr. Delaney asked Mr. Reid if any changes will be made to the property.

Mr. Reid explained that because most sales will be online, there will not be vehicles for sale on display on the premises. When a vehicle has been purchased online, Ms. Foley will bring the vehicle on to the lot where the new owner will pick it up.

Hearing nothing further, Chairman Kowalski asked for a vote in connection with the motion on the floor. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

TOWN MEETING

Draft Warrant

Chairman Kowalski noted the draft warrant, which was received by the Board 10 minutes prior to the meeting, does not contain Article 2. Mr. Heineman advised Chairman Kowalski of his intention to present Article 2 at the April 13th meeting unless the Board would like it sooner. Chairman Kowalski stated he would like to see it prior to then.

Budget

Mr. LaMattina spoke of guidelines previously presented by Mr. Madden in order to begin producing sustainable budgets; and reminded the Board that a vote was taken to follow those recommendations over all departments.

SCHEDULED HEARINGS/MEETINGS (cont'd)

7:15 p.m.: Joint Meeting with the Planning Board to Fill an Existing Vacancy

Planning Board Chairman Adam Somerville and Members Elonie Bezanson and Elaine Bergeron were present for the meeting. Also present was Wayne Andrews. Mr. Andrews explained that he requested to be appointed as a member of the board because there are currently only 3. He previously served on this Board and has been a member of the Board of Appeals for the last 36 years. Mr. Andrews advised that he does intend to seek election to retain the seat. All members of both boards thanked Mr. Andrews for coming forward. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to appoint Wayne Andrews to the Planning Board through May 15, 2021, in order to fill an existing vacancy. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; Chairman Kowalski – yes; Mr. Somerville – yes; Ms. Bergeron – yes; and Mrs. Bezanson – yes. **So voted 8-0.**

TOWN MEETING (cont'd)

Budget

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that the school budget, which was certified last week, has a major impact on our budget. He will continue to work with the Town Accountant over the next few weeks.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Update: COVID-19

Mr. Heineman advised the Board the Town has been in the yellow for 4 weeks. After a downward trend the numbers have increased slightly. Residents of Stetson Terrace and Pine Circle received their first dose of the vaccine yesterday and residents of Harvard Court will receive their vaccine on Thursday.

SCHEDULED HEARINGS/MEETINGS (cont'd)

7:30 p.m.: Superintendent Szymaniak re: WHRSD Budget

Superintendent Szymaniak began by thanking the Whitman Fire Department for providing the teachers with vaccinations. He also provided the upcoming schedule for returning to in-person learning, noting parents will still have the option to keep their children in remote learning. He also thanked Mr. Heineman for his help with CARES funds; and Mr. LaMattina for helping to find desks for the Whitman Middle School. Mr. LaMattina expressed concern with comments made by School Committee member Dawn Byers at the March 17th meeting and suggested the School Committee take action. He also expressed his displeasure with Superintendent Szymaniak's and the School Committee's failure to follow the Madden Report when developing the school budget. Superintendent Szymaniak stated he misunderstood the Madden Report and admitted he realizes the budget numbers are over what Madden recommended. He is still waiting to hear on ESSER III funds and federal stimulus funds and hopes to hear something next week. He is unsure if he will have the information in time for the joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on April 13, but he feels the budget presented is fair to students after one year of virtual learning. He also thanked the Board for standing with him on the subject of non-mandated busing. Chairman Kowalski thanked Superintendent Szymaniak, noting 10 percent is a big impact to the Town, particularly after the Town bent over backwards last year. Superintendent Szymaniak stated that he understands and will bring these concerns back to the School Committee next week. Mr. Evans thanked Superintendent Szymaniak for exploring other opportunities such as ESSER III. He also suggested beginning the budget process earlier going forward. Mr. Bezanson appreciated the superintendent's report and noted the sobering numbers coming in, including those for public works projects and projects at SSVT. Mr. LaMattina stated we need to go back to the budget work that was done. We know what we take in and 75 to 80 percent goes to the schools. We thought we laid the groundwork on what the schools would ask for. Eventually we will need an override to bring back services, but not this year because people are struggling. He also discussed going through this each year about a month before Town Meeting and at best Whitman can fund \$700,000 this year – it will not be funding another \$800,000 or \$900,000. Chairman Kowalski reminded everyone the community survey results indicated the citizens value schools and low taxes. At some point, we will need to come together with a figure for an override. At 7:51 p.m. Chairman Kowalski thanked Superintendent Szymaniak for his presentation.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (cont'd)

Senior Work Program, In-Person Meetings

Mr. Heineman advised the Board the Council on Aging Director has asked to resume the Senior Work Program. He has also had several boards ask to resume in-person meetings. If allowed, meetings would have to take place in the Town Hall auditorium and CDC guidelines must be followed. Chairman Kowalski stated he is in favor of in-person meetings. Mr. Evans agreed, noting it makes sense to resume the senior work program and in-person meetings as the first steps of the reopening process.

American Recovery Plan

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that Whitman will be receiving \$1.5 million and at some point the Board will need to discuss how the funds will be used.

Location of Annual Town Meeting

Mr. Heineman advised the Board the Town Hall Auditorium can hold 135 people. If the Board wishes to hold Town Meeting in the auditorium, he can move forward with seeking a reduced quorum. He is also looking at the Whitman Middle School, the high school and outdoor tents. He will provide the Board with more details at a later date. Mr. Bezanson noted there are lights at the “dump” field. He also suggested the possibility of holding Town Meeting on a Saturday.

Desks for Whitman Middle School

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that desks for the Whitman Middle School were purchased with funds from the CARES Act.

Part-Time Payroll Clerk

Mr. Heineman announced the Treasurer-Collector has hired Teri Newell to serve as a part-time payroll clerk.

Outreach Coordinator

Mr. Heineman announced the COA Director will be hiring an Outreach Coordinator. The person who currently holds the position will be retiring effective April 1st.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that he has spoken with Ann Donner regarding the Strategic Plan. The plan is scheduled to be completed by the end of May; and Mr. Heineman suggested the members of the Board contact him or Ms. Donner if there is anything specific they would like added to the plan. Mr. LaMattina stated the Strategic Plan is the last piece of the puzzle. He also noted the Whitman Middle School had trapezoid tables being used as desks. Due to social distancing guidelines, the tables could not be used which led to the purchase of desks funded through the CARES Act.

Dog Complaints

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of two complaints he received involving dogs. He has reached out to the complainants and provided them with reports from the ACO's. A Brigham Street resident was comfortable with the recommendation of the ACO. Mr. Heineman will be speaking with a complainant and dog owner from Perry Avenue tomorrow and hopes to be able to resolve the issue.

Whitman Public Library: Removal of Historical Items

Mr. Heineman discussed an incident at the Whitman Public Library where some historical items were discarded and some were removed and given to the Dyer Library in Abington. When this issue was brought to his attention, he immediately contacted Library Director Marcie Walsh-O'Connor to inquire about the situation. He discovered that some materials had previously been discarded. Other items that were donated to Abington will be returned. In order to keep this from happening again, the Board of Library Trustees has agreed to set a policy regarding historical items that are kept at the library.

FEMA Grant

Mr. Heineman announced the Town received a \$37,000 grant from FEMA for an emergency generator at the Fire Department.

Assistant Town Administrator Position

Mr. Heineman advised the Board of his intention to post the Assistant Town Administrator position; and asked the Board to consider providing some feedback with respect to the job description. Chairman Kowalski asked Mr. Heineman to provide a proposed job posting.

Early In-Person Voting

Mr. Heineman advised the Board that the Town Clerk would like to hold in-person voting during regular business hours the week before the Annual Town Election pursuant to a vote of the Board.

Town Meeting (cont'd)

Warrant

Mr. Heineman reminded the Board the Annual Town Meeting warrant must be finalized before April 27. The Board agreed to meet on April 20th in order to vote on the warrant.

Mr. Heineman noted there are two petitions that will be added to the warrant as well.

Early In-Person Voting (revisited)

Mr. Evans noted early in-person voting took place last year. Mr. Bezanson stated there is a process in place where residents can vote on Election Day from 9am to 5pm or via absentee ballot. He does not feel the need to spend extra money on early in-person voting. Mr. LaMattina and Chairman Kowalski agreed. Mr. Evans suggested obtaining an estimated cost from the Town Clerk before making a decision. Mr. Heineman noted he has asked for estimates but has not received them yet.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT (cont'd)

Dog Waste

Mr. Heineman stated he has received several complaints regarding dog waste in the park. He had ticket books made and will be working with the ACO's regarding the issue this week.

Assistant Town Administrator Position

Mr. Heineman advised the Board he will be providing the Board with a proposed advertisement for the vacant Assistant Town Administrator position.

At 8:20 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** into **EXECUTIVE SESSION** pursuant to M.G.L., c.30A, §21a (3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or 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. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.** Chairman Kowalski declared that having this meeting in Open Session will have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body.

Chairman Kowalski 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 8:35 p.m. Mr. Salvucci **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. **Second** Mr. Bezanson. Roll call vote revealed: Mr. Bezanson – yes; Mr. Evans – yes; Mr. LaMattina – yes; Mr. Salvucci – yes; and Chairman Kowalski – yes. **So voted 5-0.**

Brian J. Bezanson, Clerk