

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Members Present: Salvatore Albert Jr, Melissa A. Banks, Heather M. Billings

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

Others Present: Lisa Rocheleau, Kyle Butterfield, Michael Cooley, Dan McCarthy, John Fairbanks, Bryce Kirby, Roni Beal, Betsy Hannula, Kathryn Fisher, John Lamont, Peter Normandin, Pat McQuirk, Paul McQuirk, Jerry Shea, Jo-Ellen Shea, Tracy Murphy, Sammi Dawley, Matthew Arsenault, Brian Vincent, Joe Serio, Michael Alario, Carol Bramante, Audra Kirtland, Jeanne Keena, Karen Conte-Moore, Gary McDonald

CALL TO ORDER

H. Billings called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM in room 205 of the Town Hall. She announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by Ashburnham/Westminster Community Media and no other recording devices have been brought to her attention.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

H. Billings made the following announcements:

Special Election–

- The polls will be open until 8:00 PM this evening for the special Election for State Senator.

Special Town Meeting–

- A special Town Meeting will be held next Tuesday, November 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM at the Westminster elementary School, the warrant is available on the front page of the town website; www.westminster-ma.gov

APPROVALS

WARRANTS:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the following warrants:

Accounts Payable	#24-19A	\$1,286,654.73	11/06/23
Payroll	#24-19B	\$261,023.14	11/09/23

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

OCTOBER 30, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the minutes of October 30, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT (OML)–J. NORMANDIN:

H. Billings read the OML complaint submitted by Jill Normandin and read the response provided by KP Law into the record. Town Counsel's response indicated that the complaint was not timely due to the fact that it was submitted past the allowable 30 days.

M. Banks made a motion to vote and approve the Town Counsel's response into record. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Betsy Hannula stated that on the August 14th minutes it didn't indicate her making a comment when she did and asked when the minutes are normally available to read.

John Fairbanks asked a question of how much it costs the town when we receive an OML complaint. M. Banks stated that the Town pays approximately \$500-600 to Town Counsel (dependent on the claim) for each complaint.

J. Fairbanks also asked with Jill Normandin not being a resident, how can she make these complaints. S. Lahtinen stated that anyone (resident or not) can file an OML complaint.

DECLARE SURPLUS PROPERTY – JOHN DEERE 4010 TRACTOR/MOWER:

Our Maintenance Supervisor is recommending the Select Board declare our 2002 John Deere 4010 Tractor/Mower as surplus property and available for disposal. Once declared surplus it will be posted on Muni-Bid for possibly \$5,000-\$6,000 on public auction.

M. Banks made a motion to approve the Tractor/Mower as surplus property. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

ONGOING BUSINESS

OLD TOWN HALL:

DEMOLITION PROCESS DETERMINATION:

Based on the vote of this Board the Town Administrator has been working with CEI, Inc. on the hazardous materials assessment and bidding documents. The estimate for the demolition is approximately \$450,000 +/-.

S Albert stated that due to the high cost of the demolition, the option should be omitted.

M. Banks stated that her position has always been to demolish the building and to put in a public playground, as one does not exist in Westminster. She too agreed that the cost for the demolition would be a very high cost for the town and the demolition should be omitted.

H. Billings also agreed that the demolition should be omitted.

S. Albert made a motion to discontinue the demolition process. The motion was seconded and pass unanimously.

ARPA FUNDING AUTHORIZATION FOR FUTURE PLAYGROUND CONSTRUCTION:

S. Albert made a motion to earmark \$350,000 of the ARPA funds for the construction of a public playground, the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

RFP REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the report and recommendation of the RFP Review Committee for the disposition of the Old Town Hall. It was stated in the RFP that the Board take a vote of the successful RFP selection.

S. Albert, first thanked the RFP Review Committee for taking the time to review the RFP's and making their decision. He reviewed the final scoring results of the RFP Review Committee:

Pillar & Post	93
Lee Properties	74
Community Arts	73

S. Albert thanked the RFP Review Committee for their time and effort. He stated that he was going to follow the recommendation of the RFP Review Committee and go with Pillar & Post.

M. Banks also thanked the committee and that she is also voting to award the RFP to Pillar & Post.

H. Billings was grateful to the committee and thanked the Town Planner, Tracy Murphy and relieved that the building is not be demolished, but her vote was going to Community Art's proposal.

Joe Serio spoke on the long history of Westminster, the history of the Old Town Hall and its importance to the community, and that saving the building as a community gathering place should be the most preferred option.

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Betsy Hannula stated that she was happy to know that the Old Town Hall is not being demolished, but disappointed that they will not have their gathering hall.

Matthew Arsenault also made a statement on behalf of his brother Thomas Arsenault, listed as Director of the Community Arts Foundation about the history and importance of the Old Town Hall to the town of Westminster and the merits of the CAF Proposal.

S. Albert made a motion to award the RFP Pillar & Post. M. Banks seconded the motion, H. Billings voted against. The motion passed on a majority vote.

Peter Normandin stated that it was his opinion that the Select Board did a great job with this whole process, saving the building and saving the Town's money.

NOVEMBER 14, 2023 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING:

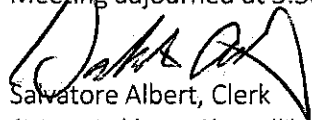
ASSIGN MOTIONS AND TAKE POSITIONS ON ARTICLES:

H. Billings read the articles and the motions. The Select Board was unanimously in favor of all the Town Meeting articles and motion assignment.

The Advisory Board held their meeting the prior day and voted in favor of all the articles and the transfer amounts in Articles 6-9 have all been voted and recommended by the Capital Planning Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM



Salvatore Albert, Clerk
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

EXHIBITS:

- Town Administrator's Report
- Warrant (2)
- October 30, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- OML complaint by Jill Normandin
- Town Counsel's response to OML complaint
- STM Article Motions