

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, March 13, 2023

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

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

Others Present: Stephanie LeClair, Bethany Rocha (Nat Grid), Nick Langhart, Candi Hitchcock

CALL TO ORDER

S. Albert called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM in room 205 of the Town Hall. He announced that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live by Ashburnham/Westminster Community Media.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

S. Albert made three announcements:

All Town Building will be closed Tuesday, March 14th due to the impending nor'easter storm.

"Welcome to Westminster" on Thursday, March 23rd at 6:30 PM at the Library. This is an opportunity for all Town boards, committees, commission and related groups to meet the public and hand out written material about their purpose and activities. There will be a brief program at 7:00. Recent residents will be receiving mailed invitations. We are inviting AWCN to broadcast this event.

"Candidates Night" on Thursday, April 13th at 6:30 PM at the Library. Candidates for all elected offices in Westminster (and for School Board, from Ashburnham as well), will be invited to attend and discuss their interest in the positions. The audience may submit questions in advance or from the floor. Dana Altobelli will moderate. We are inviting AWCN to broadcast this event.

PRESENTATIONS

National Grid – A1/B2 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project Presentation:

National Grid Representatives were present at this evenings meeting to give a 15-minute presentation on an upcoming project in the Town of Westminster to replace all of the outdated towers to upgraded poles and upgrade of lines and provided an estimated timeline of the project that includes two other states and other towns/cities and should be concluded in 2025.

APPROVALS

WARRANTS:

H Billings made a motion to approve the following warrants:

Accounts Payable	#23-37A	\$96,933.05	3/13/23
Payroll	#23-37B	\$270,683.39	3/16/23

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FEBRUARY 27, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

H. Billings made a motion to approve the minutes of February 27, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

NON-BINDING REFERENDUM FOR ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION (OLD TOWN HALL):

Based on the feedback and research done by the Select Board and Town Administrator, they have drafted more specific questions for the ballot. The first question includes a caveat that the Town will be using available grant funds for any repurposing of the building up to and including demolition; the second question requires that any potential buyer adhere to a historic preservation restriction for the building. Town Counsel has reviewed and approved this wording.

After much discussion, the following has been determined to be the final wording:

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1. Should the Town retain ownership of the Old Town Hall property at 3 Bacon Street for repurposing, up to and including demolition, utilizing available State, Federal or other grant funds?
2. Should the Town sell the old Town Hall property at 3 Bacon Street for repurposing with a historic preservation restriction?

M. Banks made a motion to vote on the questions as written, S. Albert seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS

REVIEW DRAFT MAY 6, 2023 ANNUAL AND SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLES:

The Select Board reviewed the articles list for the Annual and Special Town Meetings. Capital Planning voted unanimously to endorse Capital Article 22 at their meeting on March 7th.

FY2024 BUDGET REVIEW (CON'T):

The board reviewed the updated General Fund request sheet along with the Article list including funding requisitions. The Police, Fire, Ambulance and AWRSD have all reduced their budgets from their original requests based on feedback from this Board and the Advisory Board. Monty Tech has not submitted assessment numbers yet, but will soon.

- Agricultural Commission has submitted a request for \$5,000 to fund an Agricultural fund, similar to Conservation. After the Select Board discussed it, their request was reduced to \$1,500.
- The Library removed their request for a new part time staff member
- The Town has been asked to participate in a LAND Grant application that would protect 80 acres of open space along Phillips Brooks on Ashburnham State Road. The Town has to appropriate the total project and acquisition cost and will be reimbursed 70% (\$231,000) of the cost.

The Board discussed the gas budget and the amount per gallon it should be based on considering the lower gas prices this year. It was decided to be \$3.25 per gallon.

The Select Board will discuss/review budget again at their upcoming meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION


(M.G.L. C.30, §21(A)(3) TO DISCUSS STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO LITIGATION: TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS

Sam Albert made a motion to enter into executive session pursuant to G.L. c. 30A, Section 21(a)(3), to discuss pending litigation and adjourn from executive session. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously on a roll call vote.

The meeting went into Executive Session at 6:18 PM

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned directly from Executive Session at 6:38 PM


Melissa A. Banks, Clerk
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

EXHIBITS:

- Town Administrator's Report

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- National Grid Presentation
- Warrants (2)
- February 27, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- Emails from six board members referencing Old Town Hall questions
- Copies from past Annual Town Reports from 2005-2017 referencing Old Town Hall
- Draft Articles
- FY2024 Budget sheet