

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, December 18, 2023

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

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

Others Present: Melinda Horrigan, Karen Conte-Moore, Kyle Butterfield, Nick Langhart, Bryce Kirby, Betsy Hannula, Lisa Rocheleau, Sue Millman, Mike Cooley, Carol Urban

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.

ANNOUNCEMENT:

SENATOR-ELECT PETER DURANT

Senator-Elect Peter Durant was present at this meeting, he was successful in the November 2023 election and has been sworn in as our new Senator, left vacant by Anne Gobi. Earlier today he met with department heads and other staff and attended this meeting to introduce himself to the Board. He has provided his contact information and said he has an office at the Gardner City Hall. He explained his role with the communities he represents as State Senator.

APPROVALS

WARRANTS:

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

Accounts Payable	#24-25A	\$564,798.44	12/18/23
Payroll	#24-25B	\$293,078.82	12/21/23

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

DECEMBER 4, 2023 MEETING MINUTES:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the minutes of December 4, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

AMENDED MEETING MINUTES OCTOBER 2, 2023 & NOVEMBER 7, 2023:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the amended meeting minutes of October 2, 2023 & November 7, 2023. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

OML Complaint – J. Normandin: The Board is in receipt of an Open Meeting Law Complaint from Jill Normandin. The complaint is alleging that the minutes from 10/2 and 11/7 are not sufficiently detailed and although these allegations were filed late, this Board has made some minor additions to these minutes in the meeting to add further detail. H. Billings read the response into record from Town Counsel.

M. Banks made a motion to approve Town Counsel's response of the OML complaint. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

APPOINTMENTS – COUNCIL ON AGING:

S. Albert made a motion to vote to appoint Carol Urban to the council on Aging for a term to end June 30, 2026.

M. Banks recused herself from the vote. H. Billings seconded the motion and passed unanimously.

PAYROLL AUTHORIZATION – DPW TRUCK DRIVER/LABORER:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the payroll authorization for Thomas Becotte for full time DPW Truck Driver/Laborer, filling a vacancy. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, December 18, 2023

2024 LICENSE RENEWALS:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the following 2024 License Renewals for Common Victualler, Class II & III, and Automatic Amusements. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Common Victualler:	Class II	Automatic Amusements
Wachusett Brewery	Albert's Used Cars	Westminster Country Club
The Angler	Westminster Collision	
The Woods of Westminster		
Westminster Country Club		
The Old Mill	Class III	
BluePrint	Albert's Used Cars	
VFW		
Wachusett Mountain Ski Area		
Westminster Pharmacy		
Town House of Pizza		
Stefano's Pizza		
Mike's Pizza		
Green Tea		
Dunkin Donuts (Main St)		
Dunkin Donuts (Village Inn Rd)		
Cumberland Farms		
Subway		
Sa More Ray's		

NEW BUSINESS

ARPA SPENDING PROCEDURES – OPPORTUNITY FOR SMALL PROJECTS & INITIATIVES:

At the direction of the Board, the Town Administrator has prepared a memo to our public service committees and commissions, asking for submittals for small projects and initiatives funding submissions. The memorandum is being sent to AG Commission, Crocker Pond, Historical Commission, Parks & Rec, Open Space & Hager Park. There are four levels of potential project requests: \$1,500, \$3,000, \$8,000 and \$14,000. These requests are due by February 16, 2024.

M. Banks made a motion to approve the distribution of memorandum to the committees & commissions. The motion was seconded and pass unanimously.

TOWN PLAYGROUND – NEXT STEPS:

The Board voted to allocate \$350,000, at a previous meeting, of available ARPA funds to the siting and construction of a new municipal playground.

M. Banks would like to discuss the potential next steps for this process to get it moving and prepared for the implementation in the warmer months. Next steps of deciding the location, the design of it, making it a multi-generational play space.

M. Banks suggested to charge Parks & Rec to research locations of town owned property, getting design quotes and report back to Select Board in the next several months.

M. Banks suggested the location of behind the Gazebo on Academy Hill and possibly improving the Gazebo as well.

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, December 18, 2023

B. Kirby asked if there budget constraints besides \$350,000 and if we can apply for park grants if it goes over budget. He also suggested the location of the town owned portion of Hager Park.

B. Hannula suggested that bathrooms be built as well instead of having porta-potty's.

C. Urban suggested UMass students for the designing of the playground.

K. Moore asked if the town would have to have extra insurance for the playground. S. Lahtinen stated that we would not.

B. Hannula asked what amount was left in ARPA funds and who would oversee the spending the funds. S. Lahtinen said there is \$450,000 in unallocated ARPA right now and the Select Board would oversee the spending.

NEW PAYROLL AUTHORIZATION FORM:

Our Personnel Administrator Cindy Martineau, has updated the Payroll Change/Request and Authorization Form for the Board to review & approve.

M. Banks made a motion to approve the updated Payroll Change/Request and Authorization Form. The motion was seconded and pass unanimously.

WINTER BONFIRE:

Fire Chief Kyle Butterfield was present at the meeting to discuss scheduling a Christmas Tree Bonfire on January 7, 2024 at the VFW Field. He and Audra Kirtland, Community Services Director, in conjunction with Parks & Rec will organize and advertise it. This all can be executed by statute.

ONGOING BUSINESS/MISCELLANEOUS

FINANCIAL POLICIES – ADOPTION:

These policies serve as a guidebook and manual for the efficient and effective financial management of the Town and for the Board to vote to adopt these policies.

Treasurer/Collector, Melinda Horrigan and Advisory Board Chair, Lisa Rocheleau are present at this meeting for this purpose. The town will be undergoing a Standard & Poor's Bond Rating call in January 2024 in advance of the long term borrowing for the Ellis Road Water Tank project. According to our auditors, the adoption of these policies is an important step in attaining to a AAA Bond Rating.

H. Billings reviewed portions of the Financial Policies, asking clarifying questions regarding the timing of financial procedures, the makeup of various funds and their revenue sources, as well as how these polices relate to our current practices.

S. Lahtinen, M. Horrigan and L. Rocheleau explained the various aspects of the policies as they related to each of their departments and Board memberships; detailing how the implementation would work.

S. Lahtinen stated that it would a good practice for these policies to be reviewed a minimum of every 5 years to remain current and legally applicable.

M. Banks made a motion to approve the Financial Policy as presented. The motion was seconded and pass unanimously.

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, December 18, 2023

EXECUTIVE SESSION - MGL C. 30A, § 21(3) TO DISCUSS STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO PENDING LITIGATION AS AN OPEN MEETING MAY HAVE A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE LITIGATING POSITION OF THE PUBLIC BODY) (NELSON)

M. Banks move to enter into executive session pursuant to M.G.L. C. 30A, Section 21(3), to discuss strategy with respect to pending litigation, and that the Board adjourn directly from executive session.

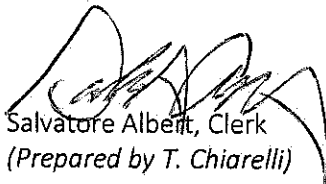
S. Albert second the motion.

H. Billings declared that to continue in open session may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body”

S. Albert voted in favor, H. Billings voted in favor, M. Banks voted in favor of entering executive session.

Entered into executive session at 6:17 PM

The meeting adjourned directly from Executive Session at 6:55 p.m.


Salvatore Albert, Clerk
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

EXHIBITS:

- Town Administrator's Report
- Warrant (2)
- December 4, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- October 2, 2023 Amended Meeting Minutes
- November 7, 2023 Amended Meeting Minutes
- OML Complaint – Town Council's response
- Payroll Authorization (1)
- Updated Payroll authorization form
- 2024 License Renewal Certificates
- Memorandum to Public Service Committees for ARPA fund requests
- Financial Policy