

Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, February 26, 2024

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

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen

EXECUTIVE SESSION - MGL C. 30A, § 21(2) TO CONDUCT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH NONUNION PERSONNEL (TOWN ADMINISTRATOR)

H. Billings called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM

M. Banks moved that the Board vote to enter into executive session pursuant to MGL C. 30A, § 21(2) to conduct negotiations with nonunion personnel, and that the board adjourn from executive session.

S. Albert second the motion.

H. Billings also declared that to continue in open session may have a detrimental effect on the personal privacy of the individual."

H. Billings voted to enter into Executive Session, S. Albert voted to enter into Executive Session, M. Banks voted to enter into Executive Session.

Entered into Executive Session at 4:32 PM

Executive Session adjourned at 5:00 PM

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

Staff Present: Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

Others Present: Karen Conte-Moore, Peter Normandin, Michael Cooley, Nick Langhart, Kim Samson, Leeann Lamsa, Betsy Hannula, Margherita Altobelli, John Fairbanks, Act Chief Jason Tamulen, Chief Kyle Butterfield, Alan Mayo, Lisa Rocheleau, tiffany Davis, Neepa Shah, Michelle Miller, Kim Caisse, Abby Conlin

CALL TO ORDER

H. Billings called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM in room 205 of the Town Hall. She announced that the meeting was being recorded by Ashburnham/Westminster Community Media and no other recording devices have been brought to her attention.

APPROVALS:

WARRANTS:

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

Accounts Payable	#24-35A	\$2,273,075.37	2/26/2024
Payroll	#24-35B	\$266,410.27	2/29/2024

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FEBRUARY 12, 2024 MEETING MINUTES:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the minutes of February 12, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

DEFICIT SPEND FY2024 SNOW & ICE BUDGET:

M. Banks made a motion to approve the DPW Commission's request to deficit spend the FY2024 Snow & Ice Budget to accommodate the remaining winter months. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

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CONTRACT – FIRE DEPARTMENT BUNK ROOM RENOVATION:

M. Banks made a motion to approve contract with Monadnock Commercial Building Co of Jaffrey, NH in the amount of \$49,753 for renovations to the Fire Department Bunk Rooms at the Public Safety Building. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

K. Butterfield was present and stated that the room was in great need of upgrading, there will be removal of three door and a better more secure door installed mainly to eliminate contaminants.

NEW BUSINESS:

EMERGENCY HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE – FRED SMITH POOR FUND TRANSFER:

M. Banks made a motion to transfer \$5000 of additional funding to cover the remainder of this heating season. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

As to date, the committee has fulfilled 15 requests from residents in need of home heating support totaling approximately \$7,500 since December 1, 2023. As the program continues until May 1st, the committee anticipates requiring the additional amount to make it to that time.

ONGOING BUSINESS/MISCELLANEOUS – Advisory Board has posted a meeting at this time, for the purpose of joint budget review

L. Rocheleau called the Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:09 PM, with Peter Normandin and John Fairbanks being present.

BUDGET REVIEW:

At the February 12th meeting with the Advisory Board the following departments were requested to be present at this evening meeting to discuss their requests.

Fire Department: Chief Butterfield has submitted a level funded budget. In addition to that has submitted a personnel; request for a day Captain in the department at an annual rate of approximately \$100,000.

Chief Butterfield level funded except for fuel based on what was used last year and the anticipation of what is being used this year. K. Butterfield made a suggestion that they transfer funds into the account as they did last year and in the custody of the Town Administrator, to set aside funds should it be needed for fuel/utilities due to inflation. The other increase was contractual obligations as it increases year to year and is required. He also stated he would eliminate the Captain's position at this time. S. Albert thanked him for removing that position.

Police Department: Acting Chief Tamulen is present to discuss his budget requests as there is a \$30,192 increase in expenses.

Acting Chief Tamulen stated that there has been many vehicle repairs to the cars & equipment. They are still waiting for the car they have already purchased but it's being equipped and the dealership is behind. They are still short a cruiser which is driving up repair costs Contractual subscriptions on the two trailers are necessary and he agreed to Chief Butterfield that if they could transfer funds for the anticipation of any fuel/utility inflation.

There was a discussion about the timing of ordering vehicles to accommodate the departmental needs.

Cemetery: Alan Mayo is present and has submitted requests for combining two part time positions to one full time position, leading to a \$44,145 increase in their salaries line.

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Alan Mayo said that hiring part time personnel has been a real challenge. Hoping in reaching out to High Schools and colleges for 18 and older that would be looking for part time jobs. He stated that if it was the Town's decision to put this personnel change on hold if need be.

He has some increases on utilities and he also agreed with K. Butterfield about transferring funds into a separate account to allow for inflation.

He is requesting a plow for the truck, as the only plow they have is on the backhoe and to drive the backhoe a distance to the other cemeteries, puts a big strain on the backhoe and could cause damage to it. He also stated that he would also assist DPW during the plowing season if he had the plow for the truck.

Library: Nick Langhart is present to discuss his budget justifications. There is an expense increase of \$18,976.00.

Nick Langhart stated that their budget increase for FY25 are some purchasing and contractual increases such as an outside marketing consultant of \$17,300 and this would include an additional \$13,600 to contract with an outside marketing consultant. In 2022 the Trustees identified a need for better marketing/communication/outreach to the public. In March 2023 we asked for a part time library assistant to focus on marketing and communication and the town recommended that we contract out for those services rather than adding staff. This is the quote we received.

Other purchased/contractual services of \$10,057. This includes an additional \$5,332 to fund new digital services, including Annual Website Maintenance for 12 months. Web hosting services, tech support, troubleshooting and site upgrades. A 12 month of Assabet widgets that add functionality to website of \$1,700.

They now have upgraded calendar that includes online event registration, online room reservations, online museum pass reservations. New eResources (Consumer reports online, Scholastic Teachables) for the community \$3,082

We continue to add new services and resources for patrons:

- New website allows patrons to complete many transactions virtually anytime/anywhere
- Meeting OWL technology and partnership with Fitchburg State ALFA network has broadened participation in adult programs
- Children's room staff are [piloting a Saturday story hour, at the request of working parents.
- Welcome to Westminster event brought back after a 20+ year hiatus to meet the needs of the large number of new residents.

ADJOURNMENT:

M. Banks made a motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:04 PM



Salvatore Albert, Clerk
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

EXHIBITS:

- Town Administrator's Report

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- Warrant (2)
- February 12, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Fire Dept Procurement Contract
- Library handout