

*Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, March 18, 2024*

**Members Present:** Salvatore Albert Jr, Heather Billings, Melissa A. Banks (via phone)

**Staff Present:** Stephanie Lahtinen, Tamie Chiarelli

**Others Present:** Karen Conte-Moore, Bryce Kirby, Sue Millman, Anthony Cleeves, Betsy Hannula, Audra Kirtland, Tim Masterson

**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:

S. Albert made a motion to approve the following warrants:

Accounts Payable	#24-38A	\$205,906.30	3/18/2024
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The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

FEBRUARY 26, 2024 MEETING MINUTES:

S. Albert made a motion to approve the minutes of February 26, 2024. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

CONTRACTS:

S. Albert made a motion to approve the contract with Stephanie Lahtinen, Town Administrator for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

S. Albert made a motion to approve the contract with Fire Chief Kyle Butterfield for July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

S. Albert made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the agreement with North County Land Trust for the administrative work associated with the LAND Grant award for 216 Ashburnham State Road. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

S. Albert made a motion to approve the Police Department Mutual Aid agreement. The motion was seconded by M Banks, but H Billings needed to read it through as she just received the agreement today and wanted to have it on the next Select Board meeting. S. Albert and M. Banks agreed to table it until next Select Board meeting.

S. Albert made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to enter into a 3-year electrical utility contract with Power Options. The current pricing is at \$0.11/kWh, which is significant savings over the last two years and will provide budget stability for all municipal buildings over the life of the agreement. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

S. Albert made a motion to execute the Joinder Agreement with MassDocs for the purpose of distributing the \$200,000 earmarked to support the construction of the Senior Housing Units on Community Way. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

SMALL PROJECTS REQUESTS – PRELIMINARY REVIEW:

The board reviewed the six board/committee submittals:

Historical Commission – Farmer's Co-op kitchen and restroom addition project

*Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, March 18, 2024*

B. Hannula (committee member) was present to explain further about their request. They sought out an architect to draw up plans for the kitchen & bathroom and that would include some misc repairs (windows, etc). B. Hannula mentioned that BOH Agent said that they should consider a commercial kitchen and it would be in an addition to the building. She said it could be used by AG Comm for their bigger projects (i.e. pickling).

Hager Park – Funding for highway signs to be installed on either side of Hager Park road to promote more hiking.

Conservation Commission – Request funding for two picnic tables for Muddy Pond including material to anchor them.

Open Space – 1. Funding for signage & maps on existing trails  
2. Funding for trail creation at LAND Grant Property

Parks & Recreation – 1. Clean gravel material to refurbish walkways around ballfield. All labor and equipment will be donated.  
2. Remodel existing boys & girls bathrooms at town ball field. Fixtures, floors, walls and partitions. Majority of labor to be donated.  
3. Drainage improvements to address flooding around existing snack shack building and between ballfields.  
4. Refurbish failing and damaged Gazebo concrete floor  
5. Replacement of all Gazebo railings and re-paint entire Gazebo

Bryce Kirby (P&R member) was present to explain further: the floor of the Gazebo is in really bad shape, as well as the railings & stairs and if not repaired it will be unsafe.

The bathrooms at the ballfield are in dire repair of the partitions and doors won't close or lock. The floors & walls and fixtures all are in need of much repair.

The drainage issue is bad where it caused some damage to the snack shack, the water did not ruin any appliances, but the floor does need repair.

Crocker Pond Committee – 1. Funding for signs/security  
2. Funding for a floating wheelchair  
3. Funding for three-sided sign/message center  
4. Funding for an adaptive swing set  
5. Funding for repair/resurface basketball court and erosion repair

H. Billings (Crocker member & chair) explained the concept of the floating wheelchair and mentioned that a resident donated a wheelchair designed to run over beach sand on a tarp.

The basketball court has never been updated and is in much need of repair.

April 8, 2024 should be the deadline for these approvals and the Select Board will review.

## **ONGOING BUSINESS/MISCELLANEOUS**

### BUDGET AND ARTICLE REVIEW:

The draft budget documents for FY2025, including the STM and ATM Articles list, warrants and general fund budget draft. These numbers reflect both AWRSD and Monty Tech Assessments, as well as various adjustments to several department budgets as requested at the last joint meeting. This includes a reduced amount in Police and Fire expenses, reduction in the Library budget of \$13,800 per AB vote and several other smaller adjustments.

The Select Board and Advisory Board will need to take action on the following items:

### STM Articles

*Town of Westminster – Select Board Meeting Minutes – Monday, March 18, 2024*

- ◆ Snow & Ice is estimated at \$200,000, this amount will not be finalized until the snow season is over.
- ◆ Prior year bill for DPW of \$1,250
- ◆ \$50,000 for Sewer enterprise Fund transfer to cover projected overage in fees from the City of Fitchburg
- ◆ Close and Consolidate Stabilization Funds per financial policies

ATM Article Submissions

- ◆ Create FT Assistant Health Agent – AB has approved the position request at a 30 hr/week full time status, that number is reflected in this current budget draft
- ◆ Create FT Cemetery Laborer – AB has denied this request pending a strategic staffing plan
- ◆ Petition Legislature for Appointed Clerk (Clerks salary line and stipends are level funded with COLA until appointed status is attained)
- ◆ iPads for Planning Board \$6,800 (free cash)
- ◆ Paramedic training \$33,000 (ambulance receipts)
- ◆ Assessors Software upgrade \$10,000 (free cash)
- ◆ Cemetery Plow \$11,000 (free cash)
- ◆ Building/Equipment Maintenance Fund requested by PD and FD at last meeting \$100,000 (free cash)
- ◆ Transfer Co-op Ownership to AG Commission

B. Hannula asked why it's not being transfer to Historical Commission.

S. Lahtinen stated that is was Con Comm's decision that they want it to be under ownership of Ag Comm.

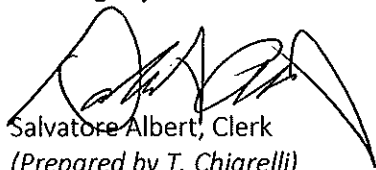
B. Hannula said that it's the Historical Comm that should be managing it based on a document from 1976.

She was going to look for it and get together in a meeting with Con Comm and AG Comm to discuss.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

S. Albert made a motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:14 PM



Salvatore Albert, Clerk  
(Prepared by T. Chiarelli)

**EXHIBITS:**

- Town Administrator's Report
- Warrant (1)
- February 26, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Contracts for Town Admin & Fire Chief (2)
- Police Dept Mutual Aid Agreement
- North County Land Trust Agreement
- MassDocs Joinder Agreement
- Small Projects Requests (6)
- Budgets
- STM Articles & ATM Articles